

Draft Social Assessment:  
Myanmar Decentralizing Funding to  
Schools Program

---

BY  
Enlightened Myanmar Research  
for  
the Ministry of Education

October 2014

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS .....	iv
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....	v
SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION .....	1
SECTION 2: METHODOLOGY FOR THE SOCIAL ASSESSMENT .....	4
SECTION 3: BASELINE DATA COLLECTION .....	6
1. Taunggyi Township .....	6
2. Sint Kaing Township.....	9
3. Bogalay Township .....	11
4. KyaungKone Township .....	13
5. Laputta Township .....	16
SECTION 4: CONSULTATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS .....	18
Results from Free, Prior, and Informed Consultations .....	19
Vulnerable Social Groups .....	20
Findings on constraints students face in accessing education and how they cope .....	22
Ethnicity and access to education .....	22
Constraints in Access to Education.....	24
Recommendations to improve access to education .....	30
SECTION 5: SOCIAL ASSESSMENT FINDINGS ON PROVISION OF STIPENDS TO STUDENTS .....	31
Organizational setting .....	31
Information dissemination process.....	35
Community participation at the township and village level .....	38
Feedback mechanisms.....	43
SECTION 6: RECOMMENDATIONS TO CONSIDER IN IMPROVING IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STIPEND PROGRAM.....	44
SECTION 7: FINDINGS OF THE SOCIAL ASSESSMENT ON SCHOOL GRANTS .....	49
Strengths of the school grant program .....	49
Constraints in school grant program .....	49
Implementation process of the school grant program .....	50
Recommendations for the school grant program .....	52
Annex 1. Summary of Literature Review .....	54
Annex 2. Consultation Results by Township.....	60
Taunggyi Township .....	60
Key issues and recommendations on access to education .....	60
Key issues and Recommendations on Stipends and School Grants Programs.....	61
Sint Kaing Township.....	64
Key issues and Recommendations on Access to Education .....	64
Key issues and Recommendations on Stipends and School Grants Programs.....	65

Bogalay Township.....	68
Key issues and Recommendations on Access to Education .....	68
Key issues and Recommendations on Stipends and School Grants Programs.....	69
Kyaung Kone Township .....	72
Key issues and Recommendations on Access to Education .....	73
Key issues and Recommendations on Stipends and School Grants Programs.....	74
Laputta Township .....	77
Key issues and Recommendations on Access to Education .....	78
Key issues and Recommendations on Stipends and School Grants Programs.....	79

### List of Figures:

Figure 1: Ethnicity in Taunggyi Township .....	7
Figure 2: Ethnicity in Sint Kaing Township.....	10
Figure 3: Ethnicity in Bogalay Township.....	12
Figure 4: Ethnicity in Kyaung Kone Township.....	14
Figure 5: Ethnicity in Laputta Township .....	17

### List of Tables:

Table 1: Number of interviewees in each township by ethnicity and gender .....	vii
Table 2: Number of schools and students in Taunggyi Township (2014-15 school year).....	7
Table 3: Number of student dropouts in Taunggyi Township.....	8
Table 4: Key stakeholders interviewed in Taunggyi Township (gender and ethnicity) .....	8
Table 5: Number of schools and students in Sint Kaing Township (2014-15 school year).....	10
Table 6: Number of student dropouts in Sint Kaing Township .....	11
Table 7: Key stakeholders interviewed in Sint Kaing Township (gender and ethnicity) .....	11
Table 8: Number of schools and students in Bogalay Township (2014-15 school year).....	13
Table 9: Number of student dropouts in Bogalay Township.....	13
Table 10: Key stakeholders interviewed in Bogalay Township (gender and ethnicity).....	13
Table 11: Number of schools and students in Kyaung Kone Township (2014-15 school year) .....	15
Table 12: Number of student dropouts in Kyaung Kone Township .....	15
Table 13: Key stakeholders interviewed in Kyaung Kone Township (gender and ethnicity) .....	16
Table 14: Number of schools and students in Laputta township (2014-15 school year).....	17
Table 15: Number of student dropouts in Laputta Township .....	18
Table 16: Key stakeholders interviewed in Laputta Township (gender and ethnicity).....	18
Table 17: Number of interviewees in each township by ethnicity and gender .....	19
Table 18: Numbers of ethnic minority interviewees by type .....	19
Table 19: Number of students enrolled in primary schools for the last 3 years in five townships.....	22
Table 20: Percentages of different ethnic groups in 20 villages .....	22
Table 21: Parents' costs for lower and upper secondary school.....	

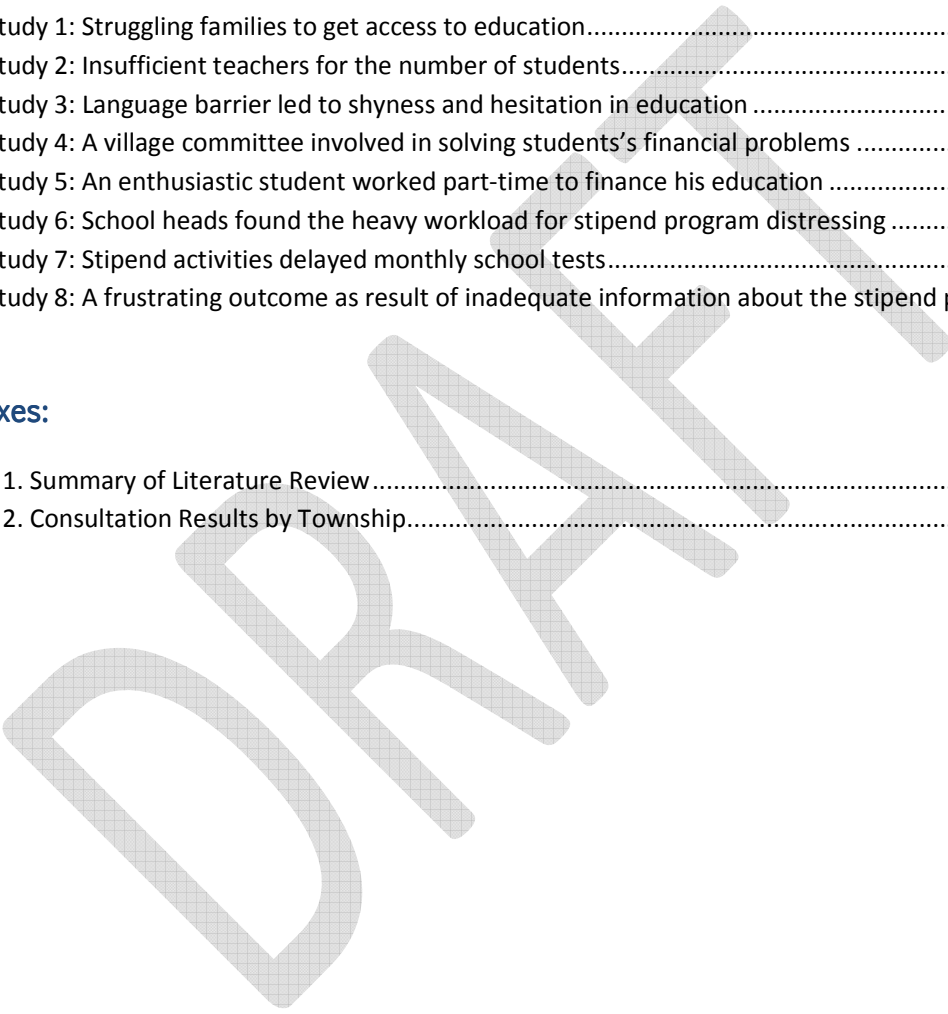
Table 22: Issues on access to education by township.....	27
Table 23: Number of ethnic Barma and non-Barma included in the stipend committees at the township and village levels.....	35
Table 24: Comparison between the number of schools selected for the stipend program and total schools in five townships .....	40
Table 25: Quotas for the number of students that could be awarded the stipend, by township .....	41
Table 26: The rationalized amount of school grant based on the number of primary students .....	51

**Case Studies**

Case Study 1: Struggling families to get access to education.....	21
Case Study 2: Insufficient teachers for the number of students.....	26
Case Study 3: Language barrier led to shyness and hesitation in education .....	27
Case Study 4: A village committee involved in solving students’s financial problems .....	29
Case Study 5: An enthusiastic student worked part-time to finance his education .....	29
Case Study 6: School heads found the heavy workload for stipend program distressing .....	33
Case Study 7: Stipend activities delayed monthly school tests.....	34
Case Study 8: A frustrating outcome as result of inadequate information about the stipend program .....	37

**Annexes:**

Annex 1. Summary of Literature Review .....	54
Annex 2. Consultation Results by Township.....	60



## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ATEO		Assistant Township Education Officer
CESR	-	Comprehensive Education Sector Review
CGSA	-	Country Gender Situation Assessment
CPPF	-	Community Participation Plan Framework
CSO	-	Civil Society Organization
DTEO		Deputy Township Education Officer
FGD		Focus Group Discussion
IDA	-	International Development Association
IHLCA	-	Integrated Household Living Condition Association
INGO	-	International Non-Government Organization
KII		Key Informant Interview
MMICS	-	Myanmar Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
NGO	-	Non-Government Organization
QBEP	-	Quality Base Education Plan
SA	-	Social Assessment
SGSC	-	School Grants and Stipends Committee
TEO		Township Education Officer
TGSC	-	Township Grants and Stipends Committee
UNFPA	-	United Nations Fund for Population

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The reform of basic education is one of many reforms being undertaken by the Government of Myanmar. The Ministry of Education is currently drafting the *Basic Education Sector National Education Promotion 20-Year Long-term Plan 2011-2031*. One of the key objectives of this plan is to enhance access to education through such measures as free and compulsory primary education and stipends to cover school costs for students in needy families. In addition, both to support free and compulsory primary education and improve teaching quality and the learning environment, the Ministry of Education (MoE) is providing grants to every school offering primary education. In total, \$US 18 million has been spent on the grants program to support improvements in more than 40,000 schools.

At the request of the MOE, beginning in 2014, the World Bank and the Government of Australia will provide on-budget, results-based financing to support: implementation of both school grants and the stipend program for students in all grades; periodic early-grade reading assessments; and professional development programs for township and school officials. In addition, a small secondary component will provide technical assistance to support capacity building for those responsible for implementing the educational improvement programs, as well as monitoring and evaluating program results.

A preliminary social assessment was conducted during the design stage of the grant and stipend programs in early 2014, but at that time no specific sites for implementing the programs had been identified. When the programs were approved to begin in the 2014-15 academic year, the government decided to implement the programs in eight townships: Seik Kyi Kanaung To in Yangon, Kyaung Kone, Latputta and Bogalay in Delta Region, Kalaw and Taunggyi in Shan State, and Mahar Aung Myay and Sint Kiang in Mandalay Region. Out of these eight townships, three were covered in the preliminary social assessment, and input from this first assessment as well as further consultations were used to formulate the community participation framework (CPPF) and develop operations manuals for the grant and stipend programs.

The social assessment summarized in this paper was undertaken in June and July 2014 in the five out of eight townships that were not covered in the early-2014 social assessment. These five townships, which have high poverty and student dropout levels, were Kyaung Kone, Laputta and Bogalay in Delta Region, Taunggyi in Shan State, and Sint Kiang in Mandalay Region.

The main objectives of this social assessment which were conducted primarily through focus group discussions (FDGs) and key informant interviews (KIIs)<sup>1</sup> were to:

**Objective 1:** Assess social issues that impact access to education for poor and disadvantaged children, including, but not limited to, ethnic groups, and especially in relation to the government's school grant and stipend programs. This assessment identified social groups including, but not limited to, ethnic groups who might face some risks of being excluded or benefiting from the programs. The assessment conducted focus group discussions and in-depth interviews with key stakeholders. The research team was also to utilize the literature review from the preliminary social assessment which was undertaken during the project's design phase in early 2014. The assessment was to cover information on education, financial and non-financial constraints to education services, discrepancies in enrollment, and any other access indicators related to social and economic groups, and potential measures to address these.

---

<sup>1</sup> Stakeholders included: township education officers, their deputies and assistants; township scholarship and stipend committee members from MoE, relevant government departments, and civil society organizations (CSOs) operating at the township level, and at the village level, with school heads, members of parent-teacher associations (PTAs), community leaders, and parents, and especially those parents who come from ethnic and disadvantaged groups.

**Objective 2:** Carry out discussions (free, prior, and informed consultations)<sup>2</sup> with key stakeholders, including but not limited to ethnic communities, in selected areas where the project would be implemented, and ascertain whether there was broad community support for the project.

**Objective 3:** Gather feedback on whether the pilot programs had been implemented in accord with the operational guidelines and the Community Participation Planning Framework (CPPF), and assist the MoE in developing a Community Participation Plan based on the social assessment carried out under Objective 1, and the consultations carried out under Objective 2.

**Objective 4:** Enhance research and monitoring capacity of Ministry of Education staff through conducting social assessments.

It was not the intention of this assessment to conduct a comprehensive and in-depth assessment of the social and economic situation of people within the target communities. Rather, it aimed to identify those social groups including, but not limited to, ethnic groups who face the risks of being excluded from the programs and unable to receive due project benefits, due to local socioeconomic, demographic, ethno-cultural, and other relevant reasons. SA identified such vulnerable social groups, and conducted free, prior, and informed consultation with them to gather information on potential positive and negative impacts of this project, identify potential barriers they may face in accessing project benefits, and develop measures to address them. The recommendations from the interviewees were also used to develop the program's Community Participation Plan (CPP) for these townships.

### **Methodology and caveats regarding the data gathered**

In the five target townships, the research team met with township staff—township education officers (TEOs), deputy education officers (DTEOs), and assistant education officers (ATEOs); school heads and teachers; and community leaders, including those from religious and ethnic minorities, to gather baseline data on the economic circumstances of households especially with school age children. The team also sought data on the number of students in each school, and the number of students who dropped out. In gathering these data, researchers sought to understand the views and concerns of vulnerable groups, including ethnic minorities, with regard to children's access to education and whether the stipend and school grant programs were likely to improve children's participation. The team also investigated the extent of community participation in the stipend and grant programs.

---

<sup>2</sup> "For all projects that are proposed for [World Bank] financing and affect Indigenous Peoples, the Bank requires the borrower to engage in a process of free, prior, and informed consultation. The Bank provides project financing only where free, prior, and informed consultation results in broad community support to the project by the affected Indigenous Peoples. Such Bank-financed projects include measures to (a) avoid potentially adverse effects on the Indigenous Peoples' communities; or (b) when avoidance is not feasible, minimize, mitigate, or compensate for such effects. Bank-financed projects are also designed to ensure that the Indigenous Peoples receive social and economic benefits that are culturally appropriate and gender and intergenerationally inclusive."

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/PROJECTS/EXTPOLICIES/EXTOPMANUAL/0,,contentMDK:20553653~menuPK:4564185~pagePK:64709096~piPK:64709108~theSitePK:502184,00.html>

**Table 1: Number of interviewees in each township by ethnicity and gender**

Tsp	KIIs	FGDs	M	F	ETHNICITY									
					Barma	Pa-O	Shan	Inn thar	Mon	Da-nu	Rakine	Kayin	Chinese	Barma Muslim
Kyaung Kone	22	10	52	55	75	-	-	-	-	-	-	27	4	1
Taunggyi	20	9	28	45	35	25	4	5	-	2	1	1	-	-
Sint Kaing	19	11	41	42	69	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	13
Bagalay	23	17	74	102	133	-	-	-	-	-	11	32	-	-
Laputta	29	16	79	70	136	-	-	-	1	-	-	12	-	-
Total	113	63	274	314	448	25	5	5	1	2	12	72	4	14

Source: Social assessment data

### Who are at risk of being excluded from the stipend and grant programs?

Discussions with TEOs, ATEOs, school heads, teachers, and community leaders indicated that the children most likely not to attend school regularly or to drop out were those in the following households: migrant laborers; day laborers; households with no land or valuable assets such as fishing boats and nets; households with family members in poor health and/or with disabilities; households with four or more children; and households in remote areas with no upper-level schools and no transportation or poor transportation to these distant schools. Although some of the children in households with these challenges did receive the stipend, they were still at risk of dropping out due to family financial and other difficulties.

In all five townships, the stakeholders listed above also indicated that: most children are able to access primary schools as these are normally available in their villages; that children tend not to go on to middle school and high school or to drop out before finishing when these schools are not in the village; and that the stipend program, which provides annually 1,000 Kyats when children enroll, and free school texts, note books, and other school supplies, had encouraged parents to enroll their children. Interviewees also indicated that ethnic Barma who are Muslim often remove their children from government schools after grade 5, the end of primary school, as they want them to attend Islamic schools. Barma Muslim interviewees told the SA team that they send their children to religious schools, which provide free room and board, as it is also their tradition for children to learn about their Muslim faith. Similarly, the research team learned that ethnic Pa O, who are Buddhist, often send their children to monasteries in the cities for middle school and high school. These schools provide free room and board and the children can learn about their Buddhist faith as well as improve their Myanmar language skills, and able to earn money working in the cities. In the case of both religions, most parents do not want to send girls to distant schools as they are worried about girls security when travelling. In all the five townships, interviewees informed that there were no ethnic, religious and communal conflicts in the areas.

In addition to identifying who are at risk of being excluded from education, this assessment also addressed three main issues: 1) access to education; 2) implementation of the stipend program; and 3) implementation of the school grant program. To assess these three, the study team gathered information at both the township and village levels.



## Access to education

Interviews with TEOs, ATEOs and school heads in all five townships reveal that government education policies and programs have helped to increase the number of children attending school in their area, especially the number of children at the primary level. However, stakeholders also indicated that a number of children still face challenges in continuing their education past primary school due to the financial and non-financial constraints listed in the paragraphs below.

**Financial constraints:** According to MoE staff, with regard to the Compulsory Primary Education (CPE) program, the children whose parents barely earn enough to feed their family are the children most likely not to attend school or to drop out. MoE staff said that even though these children receive free primary education, 1,000 kyat when enroll in school each year, as well as some school supplies, parents or guardians who are migrant laborers, day laborers, and/or have households with ill or disabled family members and/or many children, often cannot afford to send their children to school.

Township grant and stipend committee members (TGSC) noted that the children of migrant workers face the greatest difficulties of all the students in attending school. They said that although the children of migrants do enroll in school, they often attend irregularly or drop out completely as they have to move when their parents or guardians relocate for seasonal work, or for what they hope will be better long-term opportunities. Migrant parents said that when migrant workers resettle in a new place, their children may not enroll in school again as they cannot catch up with school work. Also migrant parents said that they may keep their children out of school unless they are sure that they will have sufficient funds to cover all school costs or because they need their children's earnings to support the family.

This study found that concerns about school costs were greatest for poor parents/guardians of middle and high school-age children. Unlike primary school, parents have to pay fees for these schools. Also, because secondary schools are often located some distance from where children live, village-level interviewees said that poor parents must pay transportation costs on top of the costs for school uniforms, lunches and snacks, and they usually cannot afford these.

## Non-financial constraints

With regard to non-financial constraints, stakeholders noted the following:

1. No middle or high schools in the area. Poor parents said that even if they could afford the costs, in many areas there are no middle and/or high school in the areas for the students to attend. Parents worry about children's safety if they have to send their children travel to other village at very young age especially for girls. Some parents also said they wanted to take their children to school, but they did not have the time for this.
2. Remoteness and transportation. In addition to the financial costs of transportation deterring parents from sending their children to middle and upper secondary schools, parents in some remote locations said that lack of transportation was a barrier to sending their children to school.
3. Illness and/or disability in the family were cited as non-financial constraints. Poor parents said that even when a middle and secondary school was close to home and children could get there safely on their own, if a family member was in poor health or disabled, families might keep their children out of secondary school because they needed their help at home.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup>It should be noted that in all five townships, there was no data available on children or parents with disabilities. Research team found only one family during the survey with poor family that has a disable child. The family did not send the child to school as there is no facility to support disable at school.

4. In townships with ethnic minority populations, authorities and parents cited language as a significant barrier especially for young students. From the literature review, across the country, Myanmar is the main teaching language. The initial years in primary school are considered the most challenging for children who do not speak Myanmar. This problem also reported during the survey in Pa-O and Kayin villages, were parents said that their children of grade 1 and 2 cannot keep up with the school as the curriculum is taught in Myanmar. This barrier could reduce student chances of doing well enough to continue on to middle and high schools. The survey respondents found very few ethnic Barma teachers who had learned the local minority language, which survey respondents estimated would require two or three years of study. If children do not speak Myanmar, they are at greater risk of dropping out and also being teased by fellow students.

5. Lack of teachers is a major concern and adds to the cost of education for parents. Although the government has appointed the required number of teachers to government schools, self-reliance schools (which are run by the local community and receive no government support); affiliated schools which (affiliated with government primary, middle and high schools); and schools which have added grades at community expense to educate children who cannot travel to more distant schools, all have no government-appointed teachers. Thus, local people (mostly the parents of school children) must hire and pay for teachers themselves. Contributing their share to pay for teachers is an additional financial burden for parents and keeps children from poor and vulnerable groups out of school.

6. Teaching staff also cited the poor quality of primary and middle school education as a barrier to upper secondary education. Interviewees said that in some schools, and especially those in remote areas, the quality of both education and of evaluation is poor. Although students do poorly, teachers pass them from grade to grade, and when these students reach secondary school, they lack the knowledge to keep up with their peers and they drop out.

### **Helping families to cope with financial and non-financial constraints**

Teachers, school committees, and civil society representatives stated that in some areas the community supports poor students to overcome barriers to education. Examples include Buddhist monasteries providing secondary students from distant communities with accommodation and food (mostly for males); the school committee actively seeking out poor families whose children have not registered for school or dropped out and providing students with financial assistance, books, notebooks, pens, etc. so that their families do not have to pay for these; arranging ferries or other transportation for students so that they can get to distant schools easily and safely; hiring teachers who speak the ethnic minority language as well as Myanmar; ethnic minority students who speak Myanmar well helping Barma teachers to communicate with ethnic minority children and prepare lessons in the minority language; and providing ethnic minority children with pre-school in Myanmar so that they learn the language well by the time they start school.

#### **1. Consultation on the stipend and school grant programs**

All participants of free, prior, and informed consultations said that although the stipend and grant programs are new, they welcomed and fully support the programs, and thought that they were especially useful in poor communities. Due to the fact that the program has just started and the process has not yet been fully developed, many steps of the implementation were not conducted according to the guidelines. There was, however, no evidence of intentional discrimination against the poor and vulnerable groups including those from ethnic or religious groups.

**Stipend program:** Participants of free, prior and informed consultations, both poor and ethnic minority households, expressed their appreciation for the stipend program. For example, in a discussion with the village elder and the school committee in Taungyi, interviewees said that the stipend program had enabled at least five students in their community to meet their education costs and not drop out of school as had been

expected. School heads and assistant township education officers in the four townships of Kyaung Kone, Latputta, and Bogalay in Delta Region, and in Taunggyi in Shan State, said that they expected that fewer students would drop out because of family financial difficulties, and some dropouts would re-enroll. While these are all positive comments on the program, the following concerns were raised in interviews with a variety of stakeholders:

**Township and school authorities have insufficient resources and time to manage the stipend and grant programs.** The TEOs, ATEOs and school heads that were interviewed for this study stated that they have limited time and resources to properly follow the guidelines for the new programs. Government officials and school personnel reported rushing through the stipend application processes to meet the deadlines, and, while doing so, had to drop their regular work of teaching and administration. These tasks included: forming a grants and stipend committee; collecting the data on schools in order to identify those which met the selection criteria; and training the heads of eligible secondary schools on how to select students for the stipend program. Among the problems these interviewees identified were time to prepare the documents required for the stipend program; difficulties in collecting the large amount of required baseline data; delays in receiving data from schools in their area; and inadequate understanding of the stipend program which resulted in not communicating it well to school staff. Township-level stakeholders stated that immediately after participating in stipend and grants-related training, they had to rush to accomplish all the prescribed tasks by the required deadline. The extra workload was so heavy for everyone involved that some TEOs said that they were afraid that some would resign. Some school heads also complained about the workload too and threatened to resign. Insufficient time to manage the programs has resulted in limited outreach and community participation, especially by local leaders, and most importantly the poor and vulnerable families.

**Limited participation of the community in the grant and stipend programs.** Both the township and the school-level stipend and grant committees were set up but not fully in accord with the new programs' operational requirements. At the township level, representatives of TGSCs and TEOs interviewed said that, although representatives from other government agencies and civil society organizations were asked to join, they did not participate in meetings, only the education ministry staff participated. While representatives of CSOs and other government agencies reported that they were informed in a very short period of time (mostly by phone). They did not receive any program documents and there was limited explanation about the programs, and about what their roles and responsibilities would be. They decided not to attend.

At the school level, participation of local leaders and communities varies; it seems to depend on the relationship among school heads, PTAs, School boards and communities. Establishing a functioning committee could be difficult too if links between the school head and the community were weak. In some areas such as in one of the Pa-O villages of Shan State, a school head speaks both Myanmar and Pa-O languages and has good relationship with community, and was able to reach out and recruit parents, local leaders into the committees. In some areas, on the other hand, research also found that school committees only have teachers as committee members. In addition, in minority ethnic areas, although the TEOs and school heads welcomed the establishment of the committees, to ensure maximum benefit for the school, they thought that members should speak Myanmar and the predominant ethnic minority language/s. Also in ethnic minority communities, school heads said that they needed more time to identify and motivate local leaders to join the committee and be proactive on educational issues. School heads also said that they had difficulty recruiting people to join the school stipend and grant committees and that they tend to think that they should be more selective in recruiting people with a background in education, or at least a strong interest. This could potentially exclude local leaders or CSOs who could help reaching out to parents, providing more information on their community to the committees, or monitoring the program in the areas.

**Dissemination of information was weak in most areas visited.** Research team found that there is limited information disseminate especially at the township level. As a result of poor dissemination of information about the township and school level committees, the roles and responsibilities of committee members were not well understood, and has discouraged members or potential members to participate. Research team also found that there was no meeting organized for community members at the township level, except for the committee members who in most part the members are education staff. Information has not been produced in local language as intended in the operational guidelines such as in Shan, Rakhine, Pa-O and Kayin languages (main ethnic groups in five townships). At the school level, in some areas where school heads have good relationship with local leaders and communities, research found that these school heads do reach out to monasteries, media, and village leaders to help disseminate the information on the program. Information about the program meetings were sent to parents through students, which works well with primary students. For parents of middle and high school students who stay in different villages from the school location, announcement on the meetings may or may not reach the parents. In addition, poor parents also complained that the meetings were organized during their busy working time (agriculture season); as a result, they could not attend the meeting.

**Training on the programs needs to be improved.** Education staff who attended the training informed that the training time was too short to absorb all information. Many of the information about the objectives, criteria and procedures were not so clear for TEOs and School heads to be able to implement the program as well as to provide information back to the communities. Some school heads, for example, reported that they did not understand why the TEO requested their school's dropout rate and were afraid that a high dropout rate would reflect badly on them for not keeping at-risk students in school. As a result, some school heads sent the TEO dropout numbers that were actually below the reality and, as a consequence, their school was not selected for the stipend program. Some school heads reported too that they were afraid that if they made mistakes on students' application forms, in the next year, their schools would be cut from the stipend program. Education staff requested that the program provided more budgets to include more committee members to the training.

**Misunderstandings about the selection criteria and other guidelines.** At almost all levels, TEOs, school heads, teachers, and parents, appeared to interpret and act on the programs differently because they understood procedures and student selection criteria differently. Stakeholders also were concurred that the quality of information provided to parents about the stipend program needs to improve as does training for the school staff and committee who provide the information and nominate students. Some parents reported that although they attended an information dissemination session about the programs, they did not apply for their children as they thought that they did not fit the criteria. Some school heads reported concerns about disagreements starting between parents and teachers because children were not selected for the stipend program. As people in the community were all equally poor, they said that the selection process could cause discord among people.

**The amount of the stipend was considered adequate for many, but likely insufficient for very poor households.** Most stakeholders indicated that the stipend was enough to cover the majority of students' costs for school uniforms, an umbrella, book, notebooks, etc., as well as pay for travel and even a little pocket money, but it was not enough to motivate very poor families to send their children to school, or to re-enroll them if they had had to drop out. These families needed their children's labor and/or earnings in order to help support the family.

**Concerns were raised about students being stigmatized if they received the stipend.** Some parents said that they did not apply for the stipend as they were afraid that their children would feel ashamed if the family was identified as very poor. In some cases, students who would have been eligible for the stipends, did not take an application home because they did not want fellow student to know that their family was poor. This was reported to happen more with high school students.

**Feedback on the new school grant program was largely positive:** School heads, teachers, parents, and education committee members expressed their appreciation for receiving a larger school grant for the 2014-2015 school year than had been the case in previous years. All interviewees said that the more the government supported the schools, the lighter the financial burden would be on parents. In addition, they were pleased that the budget categories covered by the grant had expanded from 2 to 12.

**The success of the school grant committees varied.** The assessment team found that participation in, and the effectiveness of the school grant committees varied depending on the number of committee members sharing the work, and also on the quality of the relationship between committee members, and with the school head. Committee interviewees noted that in the past, school heads took the lead in making decisions about the school grants, but under the new program, beginning in 2014, in many areas school heads made decisions about the grant program in collaboration with committee members.

**Improvements needed in the school grant program.** School heads and committee members reported that they needed more training to understand the technical aspects of the school grant program. In addition, in order to increase transparency and improve working relations with the school grant committee, committee members suggested that the program provide a travel allowance so that school committee members could go with school heads at the Township Education Office when they collected the grant money.

**Need to improve the mechanisms for making complaints about the school grants and stipends programs.** School committees interviewees stated that school heads need to properly record complaints and respond to complaints in consultation with the school committee, and that if the complaint could not be resolved by the school head and the respective school committees, the case should proceed to the respective school cluster head who the Township Education Office has assigned to monitor program activities. All records should be provided to the TEOs. In addition, people at the community level wanted to complain but afraid that there will be consequence. MoE would need to improve the complaint mechanism to ensure that people could send anonymous letter or complains to the TEO or to the DEPT directly. It should be noted the the feedback mechanisms seem to be understood and discussed among school committee members and education staff but not parents and people within the communities.

## **Conclusion**

As the school grant and stipend programs were given new operational guidelines only this year, all the concerned staff and stakeholders interviewed for this study provide broad community support for both programs, and also said that they have been working hard to ensure that the program achieves its goals for supporting students' access to education, and improving the process so it is as transparent and as fair as possible. As expected for the first year of new operational requirements, there were some difficulties in implementing the program. However, overall, the education staff, the poor, and ethnic groups welcomed and support the new stipend and school grant programs. The key suggestions for improvement were: improving information dissemination about the stipend and grant programs in both Myanmar and local ethnic languages; providing more training to develop the capacity of staff and committee members involved in the stipend and grant programs; in ethnic minority areas, paying greater attention to language barriers by hiring bilingual teaching staff; ensuring that representatives of poor and vulnerable groups, and especially

representatives of ethnic minority populations, and civil society organizations participate in school committees; and assigning staff at the township and the village level to be responsible for the stipend program so that stipend activities will be implemented effectively and other staff will not be burdened with work on top of their regular jobs.

DRAFT

## SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

The Ministry of Education (MoE) in Myanmar is currently decentralizing funding for education through two national programs which: (1) transfer funding for various operating expenditures through townships to schools based on enrollment numbers, and (2) transfer funding through townships and schools to pay cash stipends to poor children and provide scholarships to high achieving students. The school grants program has its origins in the need to provide schools with operating funds following the government's decision to make primary education (grades 1–5) free, beginning in school year 2009-10.

Both these initiatives were established through ministerial decrees during the 2009-10 school year. These decrees established the basic framework for the amounts and the flow of funds, but neither initiative seems to have been established as a formal program, with statements on objectives, detailed descriptions of responsibilities, performance indicators, and provisions for monitoring their impact on the education system.

### Objective of the Myanmar Decentralization Fund to Schools Project

The objective of this project, which is funded by the World Bank and the Government of Australia, is to help improve and expand Myanmar's existing school grants and student stipends programs in three primary ways by: (a) expanding the coverage of the stipend program, (b) improving the reliability and transparency of the school grants scheme; and (c) building the capacity of the MoE, townships and schools to implement these programs and monitor their progress. The project will 'top up' the MoE's budget allocation in support of the following specific programs:

**Expansion and Improvement of the School Grant Program (US\$74 million)** All schools with primary students currently supported by government budget funding are eligible for participation in the school grants program. Expansion of the program, therefore, will mean increasing the size of annual operating grants to schools from approximately US\$250, US\$300 and US\$400 per school for small, medium and large schools, respectively, to targets of US\$900, US\$1,200 and US\$1,800 per school, respectively, over a **4-year** period. MoE is considering re-organizing the three categories (small, medium and large) used during the first years of the program to make more categories in order to allow for higher, per-school allowances for larger schools and the World Bank supports this change.

Improving the program means introducing innovations from global experience, as well as improving the fiduciary management of the grants program and, in particular, its financial management. Innovations will be introduced to the program by revising its guidelines and by providing training. Specific innovations include: (i) introducing well-defined program objectives and performance indicators; (ii) tying grant funding to school improvement planning; (iii) introducing increased autonomy for school-level spending; (iv) promoting community participation and oversight through parent-teacher organizations; (v) standardizing financial reporting; (iv) providing funds for audits; and (vii) linking program progress reporting to MoE's own information systems.

**Expansion and Improvement of the Student Stipend Program (US\$ 19 million):** While all government-supported schools in Myanmar are nominally eligible to participate in the existing student stipend program, the small size of the program (**16,022** stipends to be awarded nationwide) effectively means that, while most schools apply for stipend funding, few schools are actually selected to participate in the program and those that do participate would have, in most cases, no more than two stipend students. Because the new student stipend guidelines will include an increase in coverage for each school and more rigorous targeting and administration, the new program will expand slowly to more schools and students. In school year 2014-15, the new stipend program will be extended to eight townships and is expected to cover 60 percent of schools and approximately 30 percent of grade 5-11 students in each township. An additional 12 townships will be

added in school year 2015-16 and 20 more in school year 2016-17 **and 2017-18 AY**. Over **4 years**, a total of 40 townships out of Myanmar's 330 will be supported. The total number of stipends provided by MoE is expected to increase from **about 16,022 currently**, to about 200,000 over **4 years** (in total, Myanmar's schools currently educate about 8.2 million students). Townships will be selected based on dropout rates and poverty indicators, which will be agreed with the Bank as part of the Bank's disbursement-linked indicator (DLI) selection process.

**Capacity improvement support to strengthen monitoring and implementation of programs (US\$ 4 million):** This project will focus on training, and on conducting a baseline assessment of early grade reading. For the training, MoE will design and begin implementing a national training program during school year 2014-15. This will introduce the new school grants and stipends program to township officials and school headmasters, and program content will be prepared as part of the process of preparing program guidelines. In the case of the school grants, the training will also benefit from the example of similar training programs already introduced in Myanmar by UNICEF. This training is expected to follow the cascade approach used by UNICEF in which training providers are trained at the central level, and then deliver training at the region or township levels. **Over 4 years**, MoE is expected to deliver training to approximately 1,000 township education officers, assistant education officers and accounting clerks, as well as approximately 43,000 school head masters.

Assessment data that capture student learning achievements and progress are a critical building block for school planning and effective resource targeting. During project preparation, the Bank provided MoE with technical assistance and trust fund financing to undertake an initial baseline early-grade reading assessment (EGRA) in Department of Basic Education (DBE) 3 (Yangon area). During the **4-year** project period, MoE will carry out baseline surveys in DBEs 1 and 2 (lower and upper Myanmar) as part of the project, and this will provide a complete map of the distribution of children's early grade reading skills across the country. The project's funds will help pay for travel costs and allowances for enumerators (who will likely be graduates from teacher training colleges). The Bank will continue to provide technical support through a parallel technical assistance program (see objective 4 below). In tandem, the Bank will administer a technical assistance program to support program design, monitoring and evaluation.

### **Objectives of the Social Assessment (SA)**

The Ministry of Education and the World Bank agreed to conduct the social assessment with the following four objectives:

**Objective 1:** Assess social issues that impact access to education for poor and disadvantaged children, including, but not limited to, ethnic groups, and especially in relation to the government's school grant and stipend programs. This assessment identified social groups including, but not limited to, ethnic groups who face risks of being excluded or benefiting from the programs. The assessment conducted focus group discussions and in-depth interviews with key stakeholders. The research team was also to utilize the literature review from the preliminary social assessment which was undertaken during the project's design phase in early 2014. The assessment was to cover information on education, financial and non-financial constraints to education services, discrepancies in enrollment, and any other access indicators related to social and economic groups, and potential measures to address these.

**Objective 2:** To carry out discussions (free, prior, and informed consultations)<sup>4</sup> with key stakeholders, including (but not limited to ethnic communities), in selected areas where the project would be implemented, and ascertain whether there was broad community support for the project.

---

<sup>4</sup> "For all projects that are proposed for [World Bank] financing and affect Indigenous Peoples, the Bank requires the borrower to engage in a process of free, prior, and informed consultation. The Bank provides project financing only where free, prior, and



**Objective 3:** To gather feedback on whether the pilot programs had been implemented in accord with the operational manuals and the Community Participation Planning Framework (CPPF), and assist the MoE in developing a Community Participation Plan based on the social assessment carried out under Objective 1, and the consultations carried out under Objective 2.

**Objective 4:** To enhance research and monitoring capacity of Ministry of Education staff through conducting social assessment.

DRAFT

---

informed consultation results in broad community support to the project by the affected Indigenous Peoples. Such Bank-financed projects include measures to (a) avoid potentially adverse effects on the Indigenous Peoples' communities; or (b) when avoidance is not feasible, minimize, mitigate, or compensate for such effects. Bank-financed projects are also designed to ensure that the Indigenous Peoples receive social and economic benefits that are culturally appropriate and gender and intergenerationally inclusive."

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/PROJECTS/EXTPOLICIES/EXTOPMANUAL/0,,contentMDK:20553653~menuPK:4564185~pagePK:64709096~piPK:64709108~theSitePK:502184,00.html>

## SECTION 2: METHODOLOGY FOR THE SOCIAL ASSESSMENT

This study used the literature review from the Preliminary Social Assessment conducted in May 2014 to guide and verify some of the findings in this social assessment (for the findings of this literature review, please see annex I). For data collection in the field at both the township and school/village levels, this assessment primarily used qualitative research methods—focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KFI). In addition, case studies were undertaken to gather more information on specific findings from the field research. The SA researchers conducted a total of 63 FGDs and 113 KIIs with a total of 588 individuals. Of these, 448 were Barma and 140 were from other ethnic groups. Of the total interviewees, 274 were male and 314 were female. Out of these numbers, 30 KIIs are with government agencies, namely TEOs (1 per township), ATEOs (1 per township), and school heads (4 for each township).

The key stakeholders interviewed by the research team to identify vulnerable groups, and families with school-age students, were township education officers (TEOs); assistant township education officers (ATEOs); township and school-level advisory committees; school heads; teachers; and community leaders, including ethnic and religious leaders. To provide information and gather input and recommendations for the new programs, free, prior, and informed consultations were conducted with township education officers, township grant and stipend committee (TGSC) members from relevant government departments, representatives from civil society organizations (CSOs) at the township level, and with school heads, members of parent-teacher associations (PTAs), School Grants and Stipends Committees (SGSC), community leaders, and parents, and especially parents from ethnic and disadvantaged groups.

It was not the intention of this assessment to conduct a comprehensive and in-depth assessment of the social and economic situation of people within the target communities. Rather, it aimed to identify those social groups including, but not limited to, ethnic groups who face risks of being excluded from the programs and unable to receive project benefits, due to local socioeconomic, demographic, ethno-cultural, and other relevant reasons. SA identified such vulnerable social groups, and conducted free, prior, and informed consultations with them to gather information on potential positive and negative impacts of this project, to identify potential barriers they may face in accessing project benefits, and to develop measures to address them. The recommendations from the interviews were also used to develop the Community Participation Plan (CPP) for these townships. In these five townships, interviewees informed that there were no ethnic, religious or civil/communal conflicts within the areas.

### Criteria for selection of the assessment area

The Ministry of Education selected five townships where the project will implement the stipend program during the first year for social assessment. These were Kyaung Kone, Latputta and Bogalay in Delta Region, Taunggyi in Shan State, and Sint Kiang in Mandalay Region.

### Limitations of the study:

- Limited data were available at the township and school levels. The research team received general data on areas they visited from the Township Administration Office. Education data were provided by the TEOs and school heads. Unfortunately detailed information on socio-economic status in the township was not available. The team gathered input from interviews with key informants and from focus group discussions with stakeholders from government, civil society and villagers, at the township and at the village levels.
- Gathering accurate information on school dropouts was a key issue for the study. Many of the schools heads admitted that they provided a lower number for dropouts than the reality as they thought this

would demonstrate good performance of their school. Out of the 20 schools visited, nine had new headmasters, and of these, two stated that at the time of the assessment, they had no information on student dropouts.

- As the assessment was scheduled during the rainy season when roads were muddy and flooded and rivers were difficult and dangerous to cross, in both Shan State and Ayarwaddy Region, access was difficult and caused delays in visiting communities.
- Language was a barrier for the research team in the Pa-O ethnic villages of Shan State. The team had to ask the ATEOs to coordinate FDGs and KIIs, and translate what people said, and this meant that research in Shan State took longer than in other areas.
- Village administrative leaders were often very busy with their work and had little time available to provide the team with information on their villages.
- Villagers were not always properly informed that the assessment team was coming. As the assessment team had a tight deadline to meet, they often had to schedule their meetings with government officials on weekends and holidays.
- As a consequence of recent conflicts in other areas of Myanmar, township and village administrators did not allow the research team to stay overnight in their villages, which made accomplishing their work more challenging.

DRAFT

## SECTION 3: BASELINE DATA COLLECTION

In the five townships selected, baseline data were collected by the village, school, township administration officers, and the township education officers. As stated above, the data received from each township and school was, in general, very difficult to obtain and need to be verified for accuracy. Data collection during the field survey focused mainly on four aspects: general geographic conditions, socio-economic conditions, ethnic and other social groups who face risks of being excluded from the project, and the educational institutions in each township. This section provides general information about each township and the people interviewed. The baseline information gathered in this section was used to discuss with key project stakeholders to identify poor and vulnerable families with school age children, including those in ethnic minority groups.

Because the five townships selected for this study have mixed ethnicities, the research team was able to gather information and advice from ethnic minority interviewees. It should be noted here that school registrations only record the gender of students, and not their ethnicity or religion. In principle, the ethnicity and religion of a student should be added to their registration record during their enrollment, however the research team found that these data were not properly compiled at either the school or township levels in all of the five townships assessed in this study.

### 1. Taunggyi Township

#### Geography and population size

Taunggyi Township is situated in the southern part of Shan State and is a mountainous area surrounded by mountain ranges. The city covers 747.83 sq. miles and has a population of 343,976, of whom 120,021 are male and 173,955 are female. Taunggyi Township has two main parts—the old uphill area (Taunggyi's business district) and the new city, Aye Thar Yar. These two are separated by mountain ranges and driving from one community to other takes about 20 minutes. The Parents and students who were interviewed for this SA, reported travelling by motorbike, bicycle or foot when going to other villages.

#### Socio-economic information

Taunggyi is the capital of Shan State. Major government offices and a military base are located in this township. According to the township administration office and education offices, as the labor force composition includes daily laborers (65%), growing crops and raising livestock (18%), working in cottage industries (11%), merchants (4%), and government employees (2%). According to the TEO, most of the well-to-do families in Taunggyi are ethnic Chinese or Indian<sup>5</sup> who own trading businesses. There is no manufacturing industry and no airport in this township, although it is a growing tourist destination. There are large sized tea plantations and fruit orchards such as orange farms. Poor and vulnerable groups, who are the majority in this township (65%), are predominantly landless daily wage earners. The poor usually work as wage laborers in the agricultural sector such as tea plantations as well as portering on market days. They work as temporary labor on farms and then move on to find the next available jobs such as working in restaurants in the city or construction elsewhere. Workers typically have unstable income; when jobs are available, they earn about 2500 -5000 kyats per day. Families of these daily wage earners usually have about 2-5 children. They often leave their children with grandparents or take them along to work.

#### Ethnicity

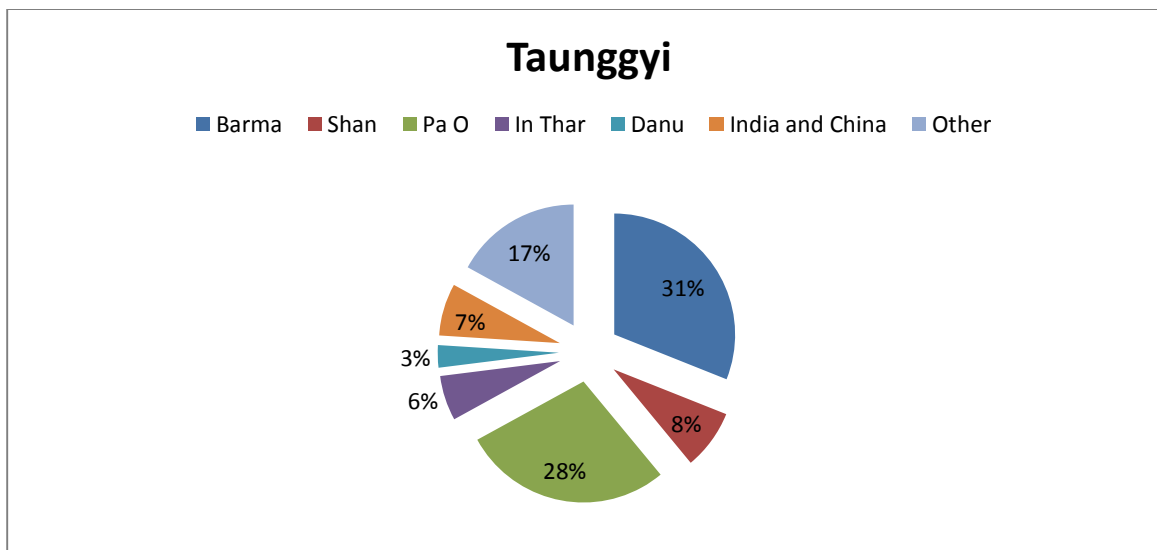
The main ethnic populations in Taunggyi are Shan, Barma and Pa O. Other ethnicities include In Thar, Pa Laung, Da Nu, Ko Kant, Wa, Li Su, Kachin, Kayah, Rakhine, Chin, Mon, Chinese and Indian. Each ethnic group

---

<sup>5</sup>Indian here means people of Indian descent who are long term residents of Myanmar.

has its own language and traditions. However, the Myanmar language is commonly used for communication between different ethnic groups. According to the township administration office, the main ethnic groups in the state are Shan (7.5%), Barma (31.44%), Pa O (27.94%), In Thar (5.47%), Danu (3.18%), Indian and Chinese (7.3%) and others (17.17%). All four major religious groups are found in Taunggyi—Buddhists (94.34%), Christians (1.55%), Islam (3.86%) and Hindus (0.24%).

**Figure 1: Ethnicity in Taunggyi Township**



*Source: Township education office, Taunggyi*

### Educational Facilities and Access in Taunggyi Township

For all of the villages the research team visited (4 schools in total in the villages of Kaung Hto, Saung Pho, Ben Kan, Taung Ni), the township education office reported that children have good access to primary education. If a middle school is located in their village, children in that village have good access but children in other villages do not. However, according to the TEO, student slack good access to secondary education, even when a high school is located in their village because there are major barriers—educational costs, distance to school, limited transportation, and the low quality of education received in earlier grades.

In the 2014-2015 school year, three affiliated<sup>6</sup> high schools were upgraded to government high schools and eight post-primary<sup>7</sup> schools were also upgraded to one affiliated middle school and seven middle schools. In addition, new schools opened in this township—one primary school, six affiliated primary schools and one private (but free-of-charge) school. Altogether in the 2014-2015 school year, 286 schools were operating in Taunggyi Township, and serving a total of 77,261 students.

**Table 2: Number of schools and students in Taunggyi Township (2014-15 school year)**

Total no. of schools	286 schools
Basic education high schools	25 schools
Affiliated basic education high schools	5 schools

<sup>6</sup> An affiliated school means a branch school of a government primary, middle or high school which ideally administers it. Affiliated schools are not authorized to hold final examinations and thus students have to take their examinations at their respective government school.

<sup>7</sup> Post-primary schools are government primary schools with middle school grades added to them to reduce the cost of building middle schools.

Basic education middle schools	17 schools
Affiliated basic education middle schools	25 schools
Post-primary schools	42 schools
Primary schools	145 schools
Affiliated primary schools	11 schools
Monastic schools	10 schools
Non-formal primary education	10 schools
Total no. of students (primary)	39,285
Total no. of students (Lower secondary)	28,642
Total no. of students (Upper secondary)	9,334
Total no. of teachers	2,667

Source: Township education office, Taunggyi

The team visited four schools in Taunggyi, all of which receive the stipend. Out of 286 schools, stipends are provided to 2,225 primary students, 6,582 secondary students, and 1,913 upper secondary students. The DTEO also reported that Taunggyi Township has very low numbers of dropouts as indicated below.

**Table 3: Number of student dropouts in Taunggyi Township**

State and Region	Township Name	Primary		Secondary		Upper-Secondary	
		2013-2014		2013-2014		2013-2014	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Shan	Taunggyi	33	20	50	35	45	30

Source: Taunggyi township education office

### Key stakeholders interviewed in Taunggyi Township

In Taunggyi, the research team conducted nine focus group discussions. A township-level discussion was conducted in the township education office with township committee members, and eight village-level discussions were conducted in schools. Out of the 73 persons the team interviewed, more than half (38 persons) were from Myanmar's ethnic minority groups.

**Table 4: Key stakeholders interviewed in Taunggyi Township (gender and ethnicity)**

	FGDs	KIs	Males	Females	Ethnicity						
					Barma	Pa-O	Shan	Inn thar	Danu	Rakine	Ka yin
Township-level	1	4	7	4	5	-	3	1	1	1	-
School-level	8	16	21	41	29	25	1	4	1	-	1
Total	9	20	28	45	35	25	4	5	2	1	1

Source: Social assessment team (at the school level, the team conducted one focus group discussion with the school committee and one focus group with the poor and ethnic parents in each township).

## 2. Sint Kaing Township

### Geography and population

SintKaing Township is in Madalay Region and covers 173.18 sq. miles. The township has a total of 27,646 households, and a population of 127,145, of whom 60,251 are male and 66,894 are female.

### Socio-economic conditions

The Township Education Office and Assistant TEO informed research team that people in this township earn their livelihoods as daily laborers, paddy farmers, growers of vegetables and other crops, merchants, traders, and owners of other small businesses, and government employees. In total, 40 percent of the population relies on agriculture, 50 percent are laborers, 5 percent have government jobs, and 5 percent are daily laborers. According to the TEO, most the better-off people are Barma who have large farms and orchards. The daily laborers work in agriculture, including grazing cattle, tilling, seeding, and harvesting pulses, or working as peddlers in the towns. In the off-farm season, to ensure that their families have enough income, day laborers work in construction as masons and carpenters, and in automotive repairs. The poor and vulnerable groups are largely the daily laborers whose incomes are irregular, and are migrants from other places. Sint Kaing is big township. Most people involved in agriculture grow beans and paddy. Similarly to other townships studied, daily laborers are usually landless and work in farms. Normal daily rate is between 2,000-5,000 kyats. They migrate after the harvesting seasons to urban areas to find work.

The main livelihoods of the local communities in four villages studied in Sint Kaing township mainly depend on the agriculture. Those people who possess the farmlands are practicing agricultural activities while the landless people engage in agriculture as common labors. The farmers usually grow paddy and pulses two to three crops throughout a year. The landless labors in the villages studied can earn 2500 MMK (for women labors) to 3000 MMK (for men labors) a day. In all villages studied, the common works are found to be available throughout a year. The men labors usually engage in cleaning the gardens, taking care of the cattle and daily waged agricultural works while the women labors engage in weeding in the crop fields, harvesting of pulses and as peddlers. The labors in the villages studied usually go to the nearby towns for works in masonry, carpentry and steel industries when a crop growing season is finished (i.e. after paddy reaping or pulse harvesting). Thus, the common labors in this area can get the jobs throughout a year. However, their works mainly depend on the nature of the agricultural activities and they cannot get the jobs every day even in the peak seasons of agricultural works. Some schoolchildren from the poor families are found to engage in common laborer such as weeding and harvesting in crop fields after they dropout from their schools.

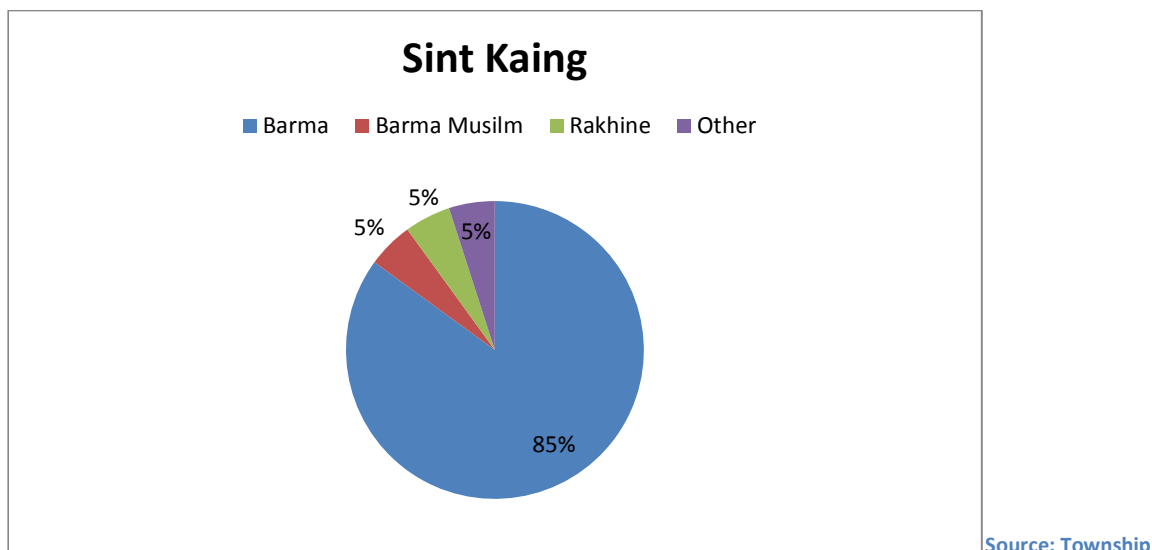
### Ethnicity

With regard to the ethnicity of Sint Kaing's population, the TEO reported that 85 percent are Barma, 5 are Bamar Muslim<sup>8</sup>, 5 percent are Rakhine and others are 5 percent. The main religions are Buddhism (94.5 percent), Islam (5.24 percent) and Christianity (0.26 percent). Figure 3 depicts ethnicity in SintKaing.

---

<sup>8</sup> Muslim population in Sint Kaing Township identified themselves as Bamar Muslims.

**Figure 2: Ethnicity in Sint Kaing Township**



education office, Sint Kaing

### **Educational Facilities and Access in Sint Kaing Township**

According to school heads, the TEO and ATEOs, children in all the Sint Kaing villages assessed in this study have good access to primary education. Because they have comparatively better transportation than Taunggyi Township, most students in this township reported to attend middle school even if these schools were not located in their village. However, according to the people, many students from remote village are not accessible to lower secondary and upper secondary schools. People reported that they can be accessible only when lower and upper secondary schools are located in areas not far from their village. In one village visited, Kywal Naphar, students needed to cross a big river to attend middle school, and most parents are not comfortable allowing this. So, majority of the primary students did not go to middle schools. The villages in Sint Kaing Township include some Barma Muslim villages where children often stop attending government schools after Grade5. Parents said that they prefer to send their children to Muslim religious schools as it is their tradition and have free food and accommodations. In one Muslim village; about 15-20 students had left the government school to attend a Muslim religious school. In the Barma Muslim communities, Barma Muslim parents do participate in school committees, however, they feel that school programs should be managed by school heads and teachers, and that parents should provide support when they are requested.

In the 2014-15 school year in this township, two new basic education high schools were opened and 10 post-primary schools were upgraded to affiliated basic middle schools. In addition, two affiliated primary schools and two Buddhist monastic schools were opened.

In total, in the 2014-15 school year in Stint Kaing, 20 schools were operating with 917 teachers educating 14,910 students.

**Table 5: Number of schools and students in Sint Kaing Township (2014-15 school year)**

<b>Total no. of schools</b>	<b>122</b>
Basic education high schools	4



Affiliated basic education high schools	5
Basic education middle schools	2
Affiliated basic education middle schools	14
Post-primary schools	2
Primary schools	82
Affiliated primary schools	3
Monastic school	10 schools
Total no. of students (Primary)	12,8604
Total no. of students (Lower secondary)	7,183
Total no. of students (Upper secondary)	1,852
Total no. of teachers	917

Source: Township education office, SintKaing

**Table 6: Number of student dropouts in Sint Kaing Township**

State and Region	Township Name	Primary		Secondary		Upper-Secondary	
		2013-2014		2013-2014		2013-2014	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Mandalay	Sint Kaing	23	18	27	25	13	6

Source: Township education office, SintKaing

**Table 7: Key stakeholders interviewed in Sint Kaing Township (gender and ethnicity)**

	FGDs	KIIs	Gender		Ethnic		
			Male	Female	Barma	Barma Muslim <sup>9</sup>	Shan
Township Level	1	2	5	3	5	2	1
School Level	10	17	36	39	64	11	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>1</b>

### 3. Bogalay Township

#### Geography and population

Bogalay Township is located in Ayayawady Region, it covers 868.88 sq. miles, and has a population of 327,519. It looks like an island because it is surrounded by a network of rivers and has relatively good water as well as road transportation.

#### Socio-economic conditions

According to the township education office, 60 percent of the population relies on agriculture, 20 percent on fishing, 5 percent on trading (retail/wholesale shops) and 15 percent on daily labor. Because of its location in the delta, the township is a significant location for farming and agriculture related business. It is one of the biggest rice producing areas in Myanmar. Farmers can grow two crop seasons. Rice is grown for household

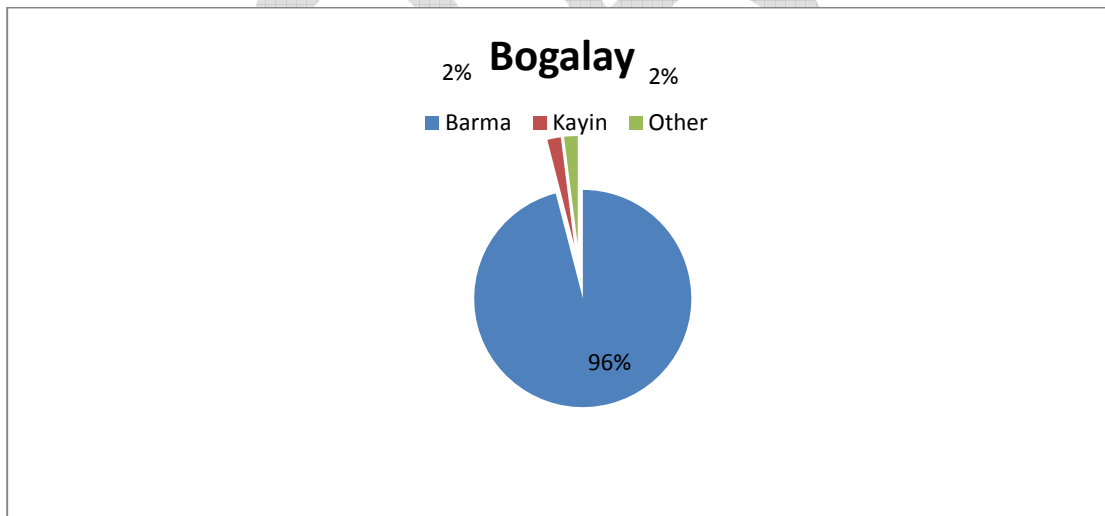
<sup>9</sup> SA team separates Barma Muslim from general Barma as they tend to take their children out of primary schools after to attend Islamic school.

consumption and is sold in local markets. There are a number of rice mills in the township. Daily laborers engage in agricultural work such as sowing, transplanting, and harvesting paddy. There are several landless women transplanting groups working to provide labor for farm owners. Landless daily laborers earn about 2,000-5,000 kyats per day. Leaders of these transplanting groups are often women who negotiate with farm owners and also manage group members. When the agricultural season ends, to maintain their family income, many laborers move to other places (mostly Yangon). Young people aged 20-30 migrate to work in construction (masonry, carpentry, etc.) and on salaried work in restaurants and industrial zones (garment factories). Most cases, these daily wage earners and seasonal migrant workers accumulate significant levels of debt, but they have nothing in the way of productive assets to support the servicing of these debts. Farmers who own land are more credit-worthy and can obtain loans from formal lenders. Landless laborers rely on land owners and shopkeepers for credit, and sometimes from NGOs. If there are NGOs working in the area, they usually help to establish savings groups. The poor are able to participate in savings groups as long as they can provide regular repayment. They can borrow depending on their ability to repay. They can borrow usually up to 50,000 Kyats from NGO saving groups. Besides from NGOs, they can also borrow some money from farm owners or shop keepers. In most case, they are able to borrow about 10,000 kyats for their consumption and education for children. They also borrow from informal money lenders in the village. The amount is about 10,000-30,000 kyats with interest rates ranging 10-20% per month. Most of the ethnic Indians in Bogalay own retail shops and engage in trading. This township was one of the hardest hit by Cyclone Nargis in 2008. It was estimated that about 10,000 people died in Bogalay.

**Ethnicity**

About 96.18 percent of the population in Bogalay Township are Barma. Kayin comprise 2.37 percent of the population and ethnic Indians and others are 1.47 percent. The major religions are Buddhist (96.91percent), Christian (2.4percent), Hindu (0.43percent), and Islam (0.27percent).

**Figure 3: Ethnicity in Bogalay Township**



Source: Township education office, Bogalay

**Educational Facilities and Access in Bogalay Township**

Most local children have good access to primary education and many students live in villages with an accessible lower and upper secondary school. However, according to poor parents in the community, access to lower and upper secondary education is limited for their children as they have low incomes and cannot afford school fees, transportation costs, school uniforms, and food, while some better-off households were able to hire private tutors after the primary level. In the 2014-15 school year in this township, four post-

primary schools and two affiliated middle schools were upgraded to basic education middle schools, and 13 new affiliated primary schools, six primary schools, and two high schools were opened. In total, 485 schools were operating with 1,594 teachers educating a total of 64,551 students.

**Table 8: Number of schools and students in Bogalay Township (2014-15 school year)**

<b>Total no. of schools</b>	<b>485 schools</b>
Basic education high schools	9 schools
Affiliated basic education high schools	4 schools
Basic education middle schools	9 schools
Affiliated basic education middle schools	47 schools
Post-primary schools	59 schools
Primary schools	304 schools
Affiliated primary schools	25 schools
Monastic schools	22 schools
Non-formal primary education	6 schools
Total no. of students (Primary)	42,530
Total no. of students (Lower secondary)	17,957
Total no. of students (Upper secondary)	4,064
Total no. of teachers	1,594

Source: Township education office, Bogalay

**Table 9 : Number of student dropouts in Bogalay Township**

<b>State and Region</b>	<b>Township Name</b>	<b>Primary</b>		<b>Secondary</b>		<b>Upper-Secondary</b>	
		<b>2013-2014</b>		<b>2013-2014</b>		<b>2013-2014</b>	
		<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
Ayarwady	Bogalay	23	18	27	25	13	6

Source: Township education office, Bogalay

**Table 10: Key stakeholders interviewed in Bogalay Township (gender and ethnicity)**

<b>Sr.</b>	<b>Particular</b>	<b>KIIs</b>	<b>FGDs</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Ethnic</b>		
						<b>Barma</b>	<b>Kayin</b>	<b>Rakine</b>
1	Township Level	0	2	12	0	11	0	1
2	School Level	23	15	62	102	122	32	10
	<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>11</b>

#### 4. KyaungKone Township

##### Geography and population

KyaungKone Township is situated in the Arayawady Region and bordered by TharPaung, YaeKy, KyonePyaw, Aine Me, and KangyiDaunk Townships, which link with Kyaung Kone Township by road and railway. The

township covers about 262.79 sq. miles and has a population of 157,966 (73,655 males and 81,432 females) and 41,474 households.

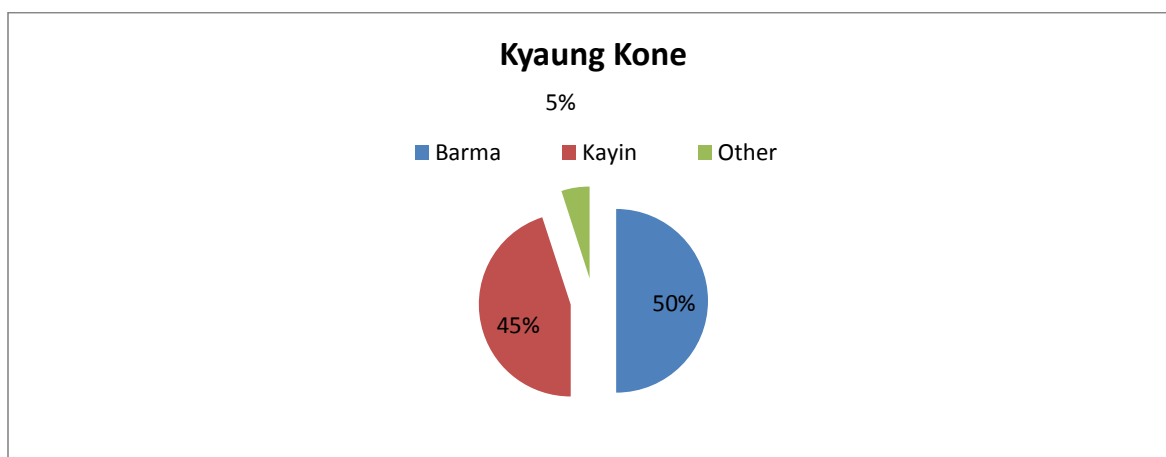
### **Socio-economic conditions**

Kyaung Kone is a small township. According to the Township Education Office, the main sources of employment are agriculture (70% -mainly growing paddy and perennial crops), fishing (10%), raising fish, rice milling, small trading (retail/wholesale shops), and about 20% casual labors. Most of the Barma and Kayin ethnic groups grow paddy and other field crops such pulses. Some Kayin ethnic minority farm perennial crops such as fruit and nuts and the Barma are largely fishers. The vulnerable groups (the poor) according to the TEOs, ATEOs and local leaders are mostly day laborers who are landless and work in the paddy fields (sowing, transplanting, reaping, etc.), on fishing boats, and engage in subsistence-level fishing for home consumption and sale. Most of the day laborers in the area are Kayin and Barma. People do small-scale fishing to sell at the markets as well as for their own consumption. In the delta area where the main livelihood is rice farming, both male and female daily wage earners work in the fields. Landless women in rice farming areas often form women's transplanting groups and work with land owners. Leaders of the groups deal with land owners and manage their members, including providing advance money, shelter, and in some areas day care to ensure that members remain with the group until the work are completed. These transplanting groups disperse and regroup according to farming seasonality. Young men in the delta areas, on the other hand, migrate for work in the cities. They earn about 2000-5000 Kyats per day. Young families often leave their children with grandparents when they migrate to other areas. One Kayin family, for example, leaves three children with a grandfather. Two children are in grade 11 and 5, but one is kept at home as he is handicapped from polio. The research team could not get data on orphans or single parents from the TEO, but were able to interview two poor single parents. In one Barma family, a father is a casual labor. Daily income barely feeds four children. His oldest daughter is in the fourth grade and has received stipends. He wants to take her out from school to take care of the younger siblings, cook and do household chores even though she would probably receive stipend again. After Nargis, many areas in the delta have received support from NGOs and INGOs. One activity that NGOs usually promote in the area is a small savings group targeting women.

### **Ethnicity**

According to the township administrative office, about 50% of the total population in Kyaung Kone Township are Barma, and 45 percent are Kayin. The rest of population (5 percent), are Kayin-Barma, Rakhine, Chinese, and Barma Muslims. Most of the laborers in the area are Kayin and Barma. Most older Kayin in this township were reported to speak Myanmar well. However, in one Kayin village visited, researchers found that young children could not speak Myanmar well.

### **Figure 4: Ethnicity in Kyaung Kone Township**



Source: Township education office, KyaungKone

### Educational Facilities and Access in Kyaung Kone Township

The township education office informed the research team that most of the children in this township have good access to primary education. However, according to the people at the village level, lower and upper secondary education cannot be easily accessed unless the school is located in the village. Even in villages that have a middle school, students have poor access because their parents cannot afford school plus transportation costs, and some parents keep their children out of school because of concerns about their safety when travelling to school. Parents reported that the schools need more teachers. In some areas, parents reported to have hired additional teachers. Poor parents struggled to provide contributions toward this cost. The main teaching language is Myanmar. Young children in one Kayin village, Ywar Thar Aone, where the primary school head is Kayin, cannot speak Myanmar well. A missionary has helped to build a kindergarten school with bilingual teachers to help ease the language problems for these young children prior to entering primary school. In Kyaung Kone Township, there are 180 basic education schools with a total of 29,975 students.

**Table11: Number of schools and students in Kyaung Kone Township (2014-15 school year)**

<b>Total no. of schools</b>	<b>180 schools</b>
Basic education high schools	4 schools
Affiliated basic education high schools	3 schools
Basic education middle schools	3 schools
Affiliated basic education middle schools	12 schools
Post-primary schools	10 schools
Primary schools	146 schools
Affiliated primary schools	-
Total no. of students (Primary)	20,558
Total no. of students (Lower secondary)	7,276
Total no. of students (Upper secondary)	2,141
Total no. of teachers	1,040

Source: Township education office, Kyaung Kone

**Table12: Number of student dropouts in Kyaung Kone Township**

Township Name	Primary	Secondary	Upper-Secondary
---------------	---------	-----------	-----------------

	2013-2014	2013-2014	2013-2014
Kyaung Kone	21	50	25

Source: Township Education Office, Kyaung Kone

Note: No information available on sex of students

**Table13: Key stakeholders interviewed in Kyaung Kone Township (gender and ethnicity)**

	FGDs	KIIs	Males	Females	Ethnicity			
					Barma	Ka Yin	Chinese	Indian
Township Level	2	1	9	5	5	5	4	Nil
SchoolLevel	8	24	43	50	70	22	Nil	1
Total	10	25	52	55	75	27	4	1

Source: Social assessment team

## 5. Laputta Township

### Geography and population

Laputta Township is located in the Ayarwady Region, covers 1,058.322 sq. miles, has 79,021 households, and a population of 328,865 people, of whom 168,638 are male and 160,227 are female. The township is linked with others in the region by both water and road transportation.

### Socio-economic conditions

According to the township education office, about 69.5 percent of the population work in agriculture (mainly growing paddy) while 11.5 percent work in the fishing industry, 7.5 percent harvest salt, and 11.5 percent are traders. Daily laborers depend primarily on agricultural work (sowing, transplanting, and harvesting paddy and as contract laborers on other crops). They also work in the fishing industry (catching fish, crabs and other seafood). In the off-farm season, agricultural laborers move to other places to work on construction (masonry, carpentry) and as salaried workers in restaurants and industrial zones (garment factories). The Kayin and Rakhine minorities work primarily in agriculture and other forms of daily labor, while ethnic Indians usually are traders (owning retail/wholesale shops). The main livelihoods of the local communities in four villages studied are paddy growing in rainy season. Summer paddy and chili are also grown in those farmlands which are irrigable in the summer seasons. Salt-making and aquaculture (shrimp ponds) are practiced in those areas of saline soils where paddy growing is not feasible. The landless groups who are able to invest in fishing equipment can earn by fishing with varying incomes which depend on the amount of fish caught. Other landless people who are not able to invest in fishing equipment have to earn as common laborer or contract farm workers (for the whole growing season) in agricultural works. The daily waged labors in those villages can earn 2500-3000 MMK a day. The most available agricultural works include paddy sowing (transplanting) and paddy reaping. Men labors can get agriculture-related jobs for a period of 6 months while the women labors can have the good jobs of 2 months period.

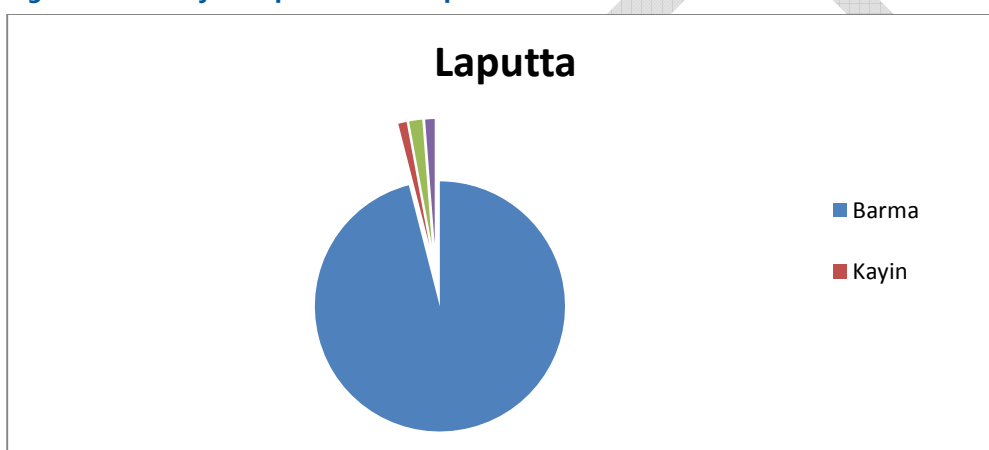
In the off-farm seasons in which period the jobs are not available, the men labors often join the crab-catching which needs the low-cost fishing equipment and consequently low investment. Though the man leading a household typically engages in crab-catching, even the schoolchildren are found to join this job in some households. Some of the students are also found to join the crab-catching in school holidays. Crab-catching can earn 4000-6000 MMK a day depending on the amount of crab caught. But, this small business is seasonal and only available for four months throughout a year.

When the jobs are scarce in their own or nearby villages, some households in the studied villages seasonally migrate to other places of Ayawady Region for wage laborer in agriculture and common labors in fishing boats. Some families together with their children travel in far places for one to two months to do fishing in rivulets. The family head (man) and/or the girls and boys who are ex-students of some families in the study area have to go to big cities including Yangon city for work. In those cities, they used to work as common labors in construction sites, workers in industries and workshops and waiters in teashops. Many of them migrate to big cities for long term (one to two years) while some return to the their villages when seasonal agriculture-related works are available.

### Ethnicity

Barma comprise 96 percent of the population, Kayin 1.09percent, Rakhine 1.68percent, Indian 0.15percent, and Barma Muslims 1.08percent. The major religions are Buddhist (97.68percent), Christian (1.09percent), Hindu (0.15percent), and Islam (1.08percent).

**Figure 5: Ethnicity in Laputta Township**



Source: Township education office, Laputta

### Educational facilities and access in Laputta Township

According to the TEO, although most of the children in this township have good access to primary education, the children of migrant workers often cannot access primary education because their parents cannot afford education-related costs or because they need their children's labor so that the household earns enough income. Most students whose parents send them to school, are able to complete the highest grade of school in their village, however, they usually do not enroll in higher grades if the school is in another village. Poor parents cannot afford secondary school expenses, including transportation, and even if parents can afford secondary education, they are afraid to let their children travel to school across rivers that are dangerous in the rainy season.

In the 2014-15 school year, one post-primary school was upgraded to an affiliated middle school, while 24 new affiliated primary schools, one primary school, one affiliated middle school, and one affiliated high school were recognized as government schools in Laputta Township.

**Table14: Number of schools and students in Laputta township (2014-15 school year)**

<b>Total no. of schools</b>	<b>411 schools</b>
Basic education high schools	7 schools

Affiliated basic education high schools	8 schools
Basic education middle schools	2 schools
Affiliated basic education middle schools	37 schools
Post-primary schools	66 schools
Primary schools	229 schools
Affiliated primary schools	47 schools
Monastic schools	7 schools
Private (free of charge) schools	8 schools
Total no. of students (Primary)	19,442
Total no. of students (Lower secondary)	9,779
Total no. of students (Upper secondary)	1,391
Total no. of teachers	509

**Table15: Number of student dropouts in Laputta Township**

State and Region	Township Name	Primary		Secondary		Upper-Secondary	
		2013-2014		2013-2014		2013-2014	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Ayarwady	Laputta	1437	1242	263	230	624	517

Source: Township education office, Laputta

**Table16 :Key stakeholders interviewed in Laputta Township (gender and ethnicity)**

	KIIs	FGDs	Males	Females	Ethnicity of participants		
					Barma	Kayin	Mon
Township Level	0	2	19	1	20	0	0
School Level	29	14	60	69	116	12	1
Total	29	16	79	70	136	12	1

Source: Social assessment data



## SECTION 4: CONSULTATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS

social assessment(SA) team collaborated with the township education offices in organizing and facilitating free, prior, and informed consultations with relevant stakeholders in the five target townships and 20 schools. These focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs) were held at both the township and the village/school level. In some areas, the township officers also served as translators for meetings with ethnic minority leaders and villagers. The SA researchers conducted a total of 63 FGDs and 113 KIIs with a total of 588 individuals. Of these, 462 were Barma (14 persons identified themselves as Barma Muslim) and 126 were from other ethnic groups. Of the total interviewees, 274 were male and 314 were female. Out of these numbers, 30 KIIs are with government agencies, namely TEOs(1 per township), ATEOs (1 per township), and school heads (4 for each township).

**Table17: Number of interviewees in each township by ethnicity and gender**

Tsp	KIIs	FGDs	M	F	ETHNICITY									
					Barma	Pa-O	Shan	Inn thar	Mon	Da-nu	Rakine	Kayin	Chinese	Barma Muslim
KyaungKone	22	10	52	55	75	-	-	-	-	-	-	27	4	1
Taunggyi	20	9	28	45	35	25	4	5	-	2	1	1	-	-
Sint Kaing	19	11	41	42	69	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	13
Bagalay	23	17	74	102	133	-	-	-	-	-	11	32	-	-
Laputta	29	16	79	70	136	-	-	-	1	-	-	12	-	-
Total	113	63	274	314	448	25	5	5	1	2	12	72	4	14

Source: Social assessment data

**Table18: Numbers of ethnic minority interviewees by type**

Ethnic minority interviewees by type	Number of interviewees
Township stipend and grant committee members	19
School stipend and grant committee members	29
Village heads	4
Parents with low incomes	45
Students awarded a stipend	6
Village elders	2
Community members	35
Total interviewees	140

Source: Social assessment data

### Results from Free, Prior, and Informed Consultations

The free, prior, and informed consultations held in all communities with vulnerable groups, including, but not limited to ethnic minorities, indicated strong appreciation and broad community support for both the stipend and school grant programs. There were no sign of discrimination against religious or ethnic minorities in the implementation of the programs. Respondents also reported that although the stipend amount is not very large, the program has shown positive signs of enabling students from poor families who

face financial and other difficulties to enroll in school, stay in school, and return to school if they had dropped out. Stipend money has helped vulnerable families to cover student costs for school uniforms, an umbrella, shoes, school texts, note books and other supplies, lunches, snacks and transportation. Poor respondents also said the getting an education was important for children. However, consultation with stakeholders revealed that poor and vulnerable groups, including ethnic minorities, often face greater challenges than just financial ones in enrolling their children in school and supporting them while they complete their education.

This section on the results of consultations with local communities, government officials and other relevant stakeholders is divided into three subsections. These are on: i) the constraints students face in accessing education; ii) the views of local communities and relevant agencies on implementation the stipends program; and iii) the views of local communities and relevant agencies on the school grants program.

## Vulnerable Social Groups

The Social groups that are identified as vulnerable groups that should be covered by government stipend program are:

1. **Daily laborers and Migrant workers.** In all the five townships surveyed, families of daily laborers and migrant workers that have school-aged children are the most vulnerable groups for the program. This is not only because they are poor and have unstable incomes (2,000 – 5,000 Kyat per day) and debts, or because the majority of them are landless. In order to survive with financial difficulties, their coping strategy is to migrate for work. In the delta areas where three townships are located, and in Sint Kiang township of Mandalay region, the main livelihood is agriculture – rice paddy – and fishing. After their production seasons, these workers will migrate and often take young children out from schools to travel with them. In agricultural areas, one of the most important labor groups is the women’s transplanting group whose members are mostly landless women. They work under their group leaders who deal directly with farm owners on wage rates and numbers of days of work. The group disperses after the tasks are completed. Then they move on to find other work in the areas. These daily wage earners do not have time and tend to have less interest to send their children to school, beyond being able to read and write, as they need their children to help earn income for the family or take care of siblings. These daily laborers and migrant workers said that June and July are their busiest agricultural time. They cannot afford to participate in school activities or meetings especially when meetings are held during the day time. These parents cannot afford school costs for middle and high schools which cover transportation and fees.
2. **Poor single parents.** Single parents that the research team interviewed are also daily laborers. They represent one of the priority criteria (orphans/single parent) of the stipend program, and education staff both at the township and school level would pay more attention to reaching out to these single parents for the stipends program. Due to economic hardship, there is a potential that these children might have to leave the program to work and earn income for the families. One single parent interviewed who is a daily wage earner and is ill; he plans to take his oldest daughter who receives stipends out from school to take care of siblings.
3. **Children of ethnic minorities.** In all five townships, the research team found that the majority of ethnic groups interviewed can speak Myanmar except in Pa-O villages of Shan State. In Pa-O and Kayin villages interviewed, the research team also found that the curriculum is taught in Myanmar, teachers cannot speak local ethnic languages, and young students were reported to face difficulties in learning. Children lose interest in learning and do not do well in class, which has impacted their ability to continue their education in middle and high school.

4. **Families located in remote areas where there is no middle or high school.** Research found that these families in remote areas are at risk of children dropping out from school as there is no middle school or high school located in their villages. Parents do not feel comfortable allowing these children to travel to other villages themselves, and in many cases there are no transportation options available.
5. **Families with disabled members.** TEOs and schools do not have data on families with disabled members. However, they reported that if a family has disabled person, it often takes a child out of school to take care of the disabled family member. In case of disabled children, families usually do not enroll students in school as the school does not have facilities to accommodate these children. Out of all five townships, the research team found one family which has one disabled child, due to polio. He did not attend school.

### Case Study 1: Struggling families to get access to education

#### Case (1.1)

A family of five with only one earning person in a village of Laputta township, Ayawady Region revealed the best image of a common livelihood system striving by a poor and vulnerable family. The household leader of that family was the only person to fulfill the daily needs as a wage labor in farming industry. As the farmers in the village practiced rainy paddy only, he had a contracted farm job for a growing season of four months, for which he could earn 120000 MMK. After the growing season for rainy paddy was over, he had to move to other villages where summer paddy was grown. He could get a contracted farm job for another 4 months in other villages. His earnings from contracted farm laborer were mainly used for daily food of the whole family and school expenses for his elder son who recently graduated from primary school.

As they intended their son to work for family, they first decided not to send him to lower secondary education (Grade 6) in 2014-2015 school-years. However, the motivation from a village elder as well as a member of school trustee committee changed their mind and they sent their son to school. The trouble started from the time of enrollment. They borrowed 30000 MMK from their employer by using their yard as collateral, which was used for buying school uniforms, text books, note books and a bag. As the village could accommodate only a post primary school instead of a middle school, there were a limited number of government-appointed teachers. The students had to bear the rational costs for hiring the additional teachers, to which a Grade 6 student had to contribute 3500 MMK per month. This amount of money imposed a heavy burden for a poor family. Finally, the student himself had to join in crab-hunting in school holidays, which could earn 2500-5000 MMK a day. On the other hand, a perception that a Grade 6 student could work and substantially help the livelihood of a family was growing. As a consequence, the parents expressed their strong decision on "not to send their son to school next year".

#### Case (1.2)

Another case was revealed by a grandmother of 63 years old, who was nurturing her two grandsons. She was a common laborer for paddy sowing and other seasonal works but she was striving to send her two grandsons to school. School text books, note books and other accessories for her two schoolchildren were supported by their relatives and neighboring friends in the village. The elder grandson had graduated from primary school and joined his lower secondary education (Grade 6) in last year (2013-2014 school years).

As the village could accommodate only a post-primary school, the students had to bear the rational costs for hiring the additional teachers. Thus, the grandmother had to contribute 2500 MMK per month for her Grade 6 schoolchild. Because of hardship in her livelihood, she sometimes missed to pay for rational contribution in some months. The school authorities noticed her struggling conditions and did not force her to pay for that money. For the whole year, the grandmother had failed to contribute a total of 20000 MMK. She was not sure whether the school authorities would demand her to repay those debts or not.

In this year (2014-2015 school year), the elder grandson was studying in Grade 7 and he was awarded a stipend by thanks of school supporting programs. Thus, the grandmother expressed her great relief from a big burden of rational contribution (for the hired teachers) and other school expenses this year.

### Findings on constraints students face in accessing education and how they cope

#### Although efforts have been made to improve access, enrollments appear to have declined.

Consultations with school heads and TEOs revealed that the number of the enrolled students have increased, especially at the primary level since the government implemented free primary education, and began providing a grant of 1,000 Kyats per student when a child enrolls each year, and free school texts and note books. Interviews with community members and parents confirmed these findings. They also found that proximity to school was important (primary schools located in their children’s own village means that do not have to provide children with lunches and pocket money or pay for transportation). In school year 2014-15, secondary school fees and other expenses were significantly reduced by the school authorities and the teachers were more flexible in enforcing regulations (such as allowing students to wear their own clothes rather than a uniform).

However, the data on 3 years of student enrollments, which were provided by the township education office in each township, did not show improvement, especially in Bogalay and Laputta Townships. In both townships high numbers of students dropped out of school in school year 2013-14, and in 2014-15. In Bogalay enrollments declined from 61,726 to 42,530, and in Laputta from 57,741 to 42,229.

**Table19: Number of students enrolled in primary schools for the last 3 years in five townships**

School year	Taunggyi	SintKaing	Bogalay	Laputta	KyaungKone
2012-2013	40,906	12,025	61,726	57,741	16508
2013-2014	40,246	12,220	43,728	41,907	18194
2014-2015	39,285	12,604	42,530	42229	18047

Source: Township Education Offices in five SA target townships

With regard to declining enrollments, educational officials explained that 2014-15 enrollment data had yet to be finalized at the time that this assessment was conducted in June 2014 (the beginning of the school year), and that more students were expected to enroll in the coming months. In township offices in Ayarwade Region and Shan State, education officials indicated that enrollment numbers could drop significantly during the year when the families of many children migrated to work in agriculture, and the children had to stop going to school.

#### Ethnicity and access to education

The five townships selected for this study have diverse ethnic populations, as shown in Table 19, below.

**Table20: Percentages of different ethnic groups in 20 villages in the five townships assessed for this study**

Township	Village	Barma	Kayin	Inn Thar	PaO	Shan	Chin	Mon	Rakhine	Chinese	Barma (Muslims)	Nepali (Gorakha)
----------	---------	-------	-------	----------	-----	------	------	-----	---------	---------	-----------------	------------------

KyaungKone	1	46.2	41.35						6.45	6	
	2	80	20								
	3	0.1	99.9								
	4	93.2	6.8								
Taunggyi	1	75.21							21.82		2.97
	2		0.13	0.06	99.81						
	3	13	4			83					
	4	7		4.75	86.4	1.85					
Sint Kaing	1										100
	2	100									
	3	100									
	4	48.55								51.45	
Bogalay	1	96.54									3.46
	2	99.85	0.15								
	3	16	83							1	
	4	10						90			
Laputta	1	100									
	2	75	4				0.5	0.5			20
	3	100									
	4	86	14								

Source: Village administration offices in the villages visited by the SA team

Interviews with ethnic minority representatives and relevant government agencies revealed that ethnic minorities are keen to send their children to school. Ethnic minority parents enroll their children in school, and in some areas, parents were reported to be very active in school committees such as in Pa-O villages of Shan State. However, ethnic minority parents, teachers and school committees expressed the following concerns.

1. In Kyaung Kone, Taunggyi and Bogalay townships, teachers and parents reported that early grade students, especially in grades 1 and 2, struggle to understand instruction in Myanmar. Kayin parents said that it is important for their children to learn to speak, read and write Myanmar when in school. Some Kayin parents reported sending their children to pre-school (kindergartens) so they could start learning the Myanmar language prior to starting grade one in a government primary school. However, these poor parents were only able to do this because the cost of pre-school was free.

2. More bi-lingual primary teachers might be needed. In one primary school visited by the SA team, a teacher said she struggled to communicate with ethnic minority students and had to ask the bi-lingual students to help her teach ethnic minority students in her class. School heads and school committees also reported the need for bi-lingual teachers to help young students cope with the unfamiliar Myanmar language.

3. Ethnic Pa-O in Shan state, who are predominately Buddhists, reported sending their children to a Buddhist monastery for secondary education. Similarly, Pa-O people used to send their children to big cities to study and also work to earn money for their family. Monastic schools in Yangon were named as the

schools where Pa-O student take secondary education as these are cheaper than government schools. Some parents also sent their children to live with family in big cities so that children could enroll in secondary education. Pa-O people said that they believed that their children could have good opportunities for both education and employment in Yangon and other big cities and that they would learn the Myanmar language very well in these places. About 15-20 children in the Pa-O village visited by the research team have left the village for cities. A concern raised, however, was that monastic schools in big cities provide few opportunities for girls' education, and that students in monastic schools are mostly boys. Similar to the Pa-O, the assessment found that ethnic Barma, who are predominantly Muslim, often send their children to an Islamic school after grade 5. These religious schools offer free accommodations and food for students as well as teach them about their religion. Even when a government high school was located in a village where Muslim Bamars are the majority, students from other villages attended the school rather than the Muslim students living in the village because the male Muslim high-school age students were all sent by their parents to religious boarding schools. Note that these students were sent to other schools not because of discrimination but because more because of the costs of education and opportunities for them to learn about their religious.

### **Access to education by gender**

Parents and teachers who were interviewed said that that gender was not a consideration when deciding whether to send or remove a student from school. The main factors leading to the removal of a student were the level of financial difficulty facing the families, the availability of a job for the student, and the student's degree of interest in education. The education staff stated that in their experience, boys were more likely to dropout than the girls because boys grow up physically faster and are ready to work at an earlier age. Education staff also said that boys tend to have less interest in education than girls.

Teaching staff interviewees said that boys and girls were taught as equals, and that no priority was given to either. Although the data on school enrollment provided by the Township Education Offices and schools show that more girls are enrolled than boys. This may be the case if middle and high schools are located in the same community where girl students live. However, individual families said that gender was a factor in deciding whether a child should continue with school. Some parents were concerned about the safety risks of sending their daughters to if the school was in a distant community. Some parents interviewed on the other hand said that because their young daughters were not strong enough for heavy physical labor, that they should continue their education. Limitations on girls' education in middle and high school also rise when parents opt to send children to religious schools, such as Islamic schools in Sint Khiang township and Buddhist Monastery schools for Pa-O families.

### **Constraints in Access to Education**

In the five townships studied, the research team did not find that parents, especially poorer parents from diverse ethnic and religious groups, were discriminated in getting access to education. The main constraints are financial resources and other logistics such as remoteness, transportation, safety and insufficient numbers of teachers. One major issue in three diverse ethnic townships, namely Taunggyi, Bogalay and Kyaung Kone, is a language barrier for young ethnic children as the curriculum is taught in Myanmar and teachers cannot speak local ethnic languages.

**There is a strong link between poverty and access to education.** This study found from interviews with all stakeholders that access to education was very much dependent on the economic circumstances of families. Better off families could afford to send their children to a distant high school and cover all educational expenses, whereas poor families, such as migrant laborers, families with a single income earner, and families with many students, could not afford the costs of education. In general, better off families ensure that their

children receive an education no matter what the cost. If secondary education is not close to home, affluent parents pay for their children to live in a hostel or with relatives. In poor households, students had to drop out of school when they were old enough to work to help support their family. Also, sometimes, when students understood their family's economic burden in sending them to school, they decided to drop out. For reasons such as these, children from poor families do not have good access to secondary education. TEOs said that although poor parents bore the economic burden of sending their children to primary school, they commonly did not send children to school past lower secondary school (Grade 7 or 8).

**School costs.** High school teachers in Kyaung Kone Township stated that school costs are usually not a major barrier to sending their children to primary school, however, the costs for middle and high school are prohibitive as they are much higher. Poor parents also said that providing their children with school uniforms, a school bag, and money for lunch and a snack in another village is expensive. Parents said that sometimes they withdraw a child from school as they need the child's labor to help with housework or to support the family.

**Table 21: Parents' costs for lower and upper secondary school (whole year)**

Expenditure	Annual cost
Education-related expenses spent at the beginning of the school year (uniform, backpack, umbrella, raincoat, sandals, lunch box)	30,000 Kyats to 50,000 Kyats
Stationary (4,000 Kyats per month x 9 months)	36,000 Kyats
Tuition (5,000-10,000 Kyats X 9 months)	45,000- 90,000 Kyats
Pocket money (200 Kyats per day)	32,000 Kyats
School and religious ceremonies (when the PTA organizes a ceremony to pay respect to teachers, and for two important lunar festivals per year, students give their teacher a present)	5,000 Kyats
Contribution towards school teacher's salary if the community has to hire teachers, rather than the government (3,000-5,000 X 8 months)	24,000-40,000 Kyats
Transportation if the school is in another village (4,000-10,000 Kyats x 8 months)	32,000-80,000 Kyats
Approximate total for all expenses if the student lives at home while going to high school in another village	177,000-288,000 Kyats
Approximate total for all expenses if the student must board in town for the whole school year (included accommodation, meals, health care, etc.)	800,000-1,500,000 Kyats

*Source: Social assessment study data, based on the interviews with parents in poor villages in all five townships.*

**Many students from poor families leave school after they finish primary education and sometimes sooner.** School staff who were interviewed said that sometimes students leave to take a seasonal job to help support their family. Students also have to abandon their education due to their parents' work—when poor parents migrate seasonally to other places for work, their children usually have to accompany them, and the children drop out of school.<sup>10</sup> In addition, teachers said that students were removed from school for periods of time for reasons that included helping with household cooking and housework, caring for younger children; and taking care of family livestock. In their interviews, in two villages migrants did not express strong views in favor of educating their children.

<sup>10</sup> Dropout here does not mean the formal removal of a student from school with an official letter but instead, children stop going to school without informing the school authorities.

**Lack of middle and upper secondary schools in villages.** Parents said that proximity to home is a key factor in deciding whether to let their children continue in school past the compulsory primary grades. In Kyar Inn Village, in Bogalay Township, which has a middle school, PTA members said that if a family member was seriously ill, they did not enroll their children or removed them from school. PTA members also said that if secondary education was not close to home, poor parents were afraid to let young children travel long distances by road or river, and if they did not have time to take them to and from school themselves, they kept their children out of school.

**Proximity to school is an important factor in access to education.** In rural Myanmar, and especially remote areas, villages are often long distances from each other. Although students are able to attend primary school in their home village, they often have to go to other villages for middle school and high school. Travel to distant schools is by foot, water (motor boats) or road (motorbikes or bicycles). A number of parents said that could not afford to provide their child with a motorbike for travel to secondary school or even a bicycle. The parents of young schoolchildren said that they were reluctant to send their children to distant schools because of concerns about children's safety. Parents were also concerned about the costs of sending their children to middle and high school, and either did not enroll their children or eventually withdrew them. Not only do parents need to pay for school supplies (a school bag, school uniforms etc.), they also need to pay for a daily lunch and snacks.

Children in Kywe Na Phar, a small village of about 60 households who earn their living from agriculture (mostly growing paddy), perennial crops and irregular day labor, must make a long journey if they want to attend middle or high school. Since this village has only a primary school, students must travel 16 miles to the town of Sint Kaing for middle and high schools, and this travel is challenging and dangerous for children. First, they have to cross the Dote Hta Wady river by ferry and then ride a bicycle the rest of way. Parents said they were afraid to let their children make this journey on their own, and especially during the rainy season when the roads are muddy and dangerous, and the river rises quickly and can cause the ferry to capsize.

**Lack of teachers is a major concern and adds to the cost of education for parents.** Although the government has appointed the required number of teachers to government schools, self-reliance schools (which are run by the local community and receive no government support); affiliated schools which (affiliated with government primary, middle and high schools); and schools which have added grades at community expense to educate children who cannot travel to more distant schools, all have no government-appointed teachers. Thus, local people (mostly the parents of school children) must hire and pay for teachers themselves. Contributing their share to pay for teachers is an additional financial burden for parents and keeps children from poor and vulnerable groups out of school.

### **Case Study 2: Insufficient teachers for the number of students**

A primary school (kindergarten to grade 5) in a village in Laputta Township has too many students for the number of teachers, and parents are now paying for additional teachers themselves. In the 2014-2015 school year, the primary school was upgraded to a post-primary school by adding grade 6, and the school now has over 90 students taught by only two government-paid teachers (the school head and one teacher).

To cope with the overload of students, the primary school's school trustee committee hired an additional teacher which the NGO, Save the Children, supported with a monthly salary. When grade 6 was added this year, the trustees had to hire another outside teacher, paid collectively by the parents. The amount charged per household varies. A family that possesses paddy fields has to contribute 5,000 Kyats per



month, while a landless family that earns a living from day labor has to contribute 3,000 Kyats per month. The families of grade 6 students have to contribute 3,500 Kyats per month.

### Language barriers

In three out of the 20 villages (two Pa-O villages in Shan State and one Kayin village in Ayeyarwady) which had a significant ethnic minority population lack of Myanmar language skills led students in lower and upper secondary school to drop out. School heads, teachers and school trustee committee members in these villages all stated in their interviews that the language barrier was significant because most of the teachers are ethnic Barma and cannot speak the minority language well enough to teach or communicate effectively. Interviewees in these villages also said that learning the local language requires 2 to 3 years of study and if ethnic minority students do not speak Myanmar when they start school in kindergarten or grade 1, they usually lag behind for the rest of primary school, impacting both their understanding of subjects and their ability to socialize beyond their own ethnic community. In addition, interviewees said that if students do not understand their teachers well, they become bored and eventually drop out.

### Case Study 3: Language barrier led to shyness and hesitation in education

Most of the residents in Saung Pho Village of Taunggyi Township are Pa-O, but in the state middle school located in this village, of the 17 teachers, including the school head, only three (the school head and two teachers) are ethnic Pa-O. The rest of the teachers are ethnic Barma and speak only Myanmar. Although Myanmar is the language used in the school, the Pa-O teachers struggle to teach in Myanmar and the Pa-O students struggle to learn in the language. The language barrier for Pa-O students is especially acute in kindergarten and grade 1, resulting in students having great difficulty learning and consequently falling behind the Myanmar-speaking students. Feelings of fear and shame cause minority students to run away from school. As a consequence, PTA members and the abbot, who heads the village's Buddhist monastery and a highly respected person in the village, have to find the runaway students and motivate them to return to school. The Abbot stated in his interview that "Although the students work hard and want to learn, they feel ashamed because of their inability to learn in the Myanmar language."

In addition, the poor quality of education at the primary- and middle-school levels makes it hard for students to cope with study in high school. The student evaluation system is weak, with teachers usually passing students grade after grade, even when they are not qualified to pass to next level. High school teachers stated that as a consequence students struggle to learn and keep up when they reach upper secondary school and tend to drop out.

**Table 2: Issues on access to education by township**

Issues	Township name	# of township	# of villages	Remarks
Language constraints	Taunggyi, Kyaung Kone, Bogalay	3/5	4/20	Pa O and Kayin villages in particular face with this constraint.
Teacher shortage	Taunggyi, Bogalay, Latputta	3/5	5/20	Affiliated/post primary and affiliated upper secondary schools have to depend much on community contributions for hiring additional teachers.
Financial constraint	All	5/5	20/20	All townships visited face this problem.

Remoteness, poor transportation, and not having middle and high schools in the area.	Taunggyi, Sint Kaing Laputta	4/5	12/20	12 villages in Taunggyi, Sint Kaing, Laputta and Bogalay face with these constraint (3 villages in each township). All four villages visited in Kyaung Kone are accessible even to high schools which are located not too far from their villages.
--	------------------------------	-----	-------	--

### Coping strategies for accessing to education

#### Community efforts to help village students to complete secondary education

Access to education was found to be largely dependent on whether a school was located in the village. The maximum grade completed by children depended on the level of the school in their village. For a number of reasons, students could not go far beyond their home village for secondary education. These included transportation costs, dangers in travelling to a distant school, poverty of the parents, and lack of good Myanmar language skills. In six of the 20 villages visited during this assessment the village had only a primary school and most of the children had stopped school after primary school. Similarly, in nine of the 20 villages assessed which had middle schools, most children completed middle school but did not study beyond that level. In the case of high schools, almost all are located only in major towns and few village students enroll in these schools. To help village children achieve a higher level of education than primary school, many villages are working on their own in various ways to solve this problem.

An affiliated middle school in Min Hla Su Village in Bogalay Township in Ayawady Region was officially recognized as a middle school in the 2014-2015 school year. Thus, the government hired teachers to expand the existing teaching staff. Until 2013-2014, the village community hired their own teacher to teach grade 9 students in their affiliated middle school. Fortunately, an NGO has offered to pay for the grade 9 teacher's salary. Since the students who completed lower secondary education (grade 9) had to go to the capital of Bogalay Township for high school, only a small number of students from better off families (30 percent of middle school graduates) could afford this. The students from middle income and poor families did not continue on to high school in the town because of the high costs, parents' concerns about safety enroute to school or because they needed their children's labor or earnings (planting paddy, farm labor, infant care, guarding the house, catching fish or crabs, or migrating to an industrial zone in Yangon City to work in a garment factory).

So that a large number of village children can complete high school, **school board of trustee members**, the school head, and village parents have made a concerted effort so that all students can complete an upper secondary education (grade 10) in the 2014-2015 school year. These volunteers efforts include forming of a working committee with 9 to 10 proactive residents; consultation and cooperation with the high school in Lay Pin Ma Village rather than soliciting help directly from the education department; Curriculum preparation (taking curricula from Pho Di Kwe Village school); hiring two teachers, which will cost each grade 10 student's family 180,000 Kyats for a year. Since their high school is an affiliated school, students' final examinations would be taken at Pho Di Kwe Village high school.

The working committee has arranged a temporary school by renting a building in the village 30,000 Kyats per month. In this school year, 17 out of the 29 students who passed their lower secondary education exams (grade 9) will enroll in upper secondary (grade 10) education in their native village. However, all of the eligible students cannot continue to grade 10 because their parents cannot afford the 180,000 kyats for the

year. A school committee member expressed hope that their bridging school could be upgraded to a government high school by the Education Department so that the government could cover teachers' salaries and reduce the costs to parents.

### **Coping with economic hardship**

While many students have had to stop their education before high school graduation for economic reasons, some students (and their parents) who want to continue on to higher education have struggled hard to continue their education by different means. The students themselves, their parents and/or village members have helped to ease students' financial problems. Poor students themselves earn money for their school expenses in various ways that include catching crabs, planting and harvesting during school holidays. In some villages, the PTA supports the costs of school supplies and provides other necessary assistance to the poor students.

#### **Case Study 4: A village committee involved in solving students' financial problems**

In KyaungHto Village in Taunggyi Township, members of a school committee formed by proactive residents are improving access to education. The committee promotes better access by mobilizing financial support from its members and others in the community. Committee members start the process by visiting the families of students who have dropped out of school to find out why children left. If the parents have good reasons for their child stopping school they do nothing further about this. However, when students are highly motivated to keep learning and parents agree, the committee finds ways to help the student continue their education. If the family is facing financial difficulties, the committee and the school head hold a meeting to raise support for student, including donating school texts, notebooks and other supplies for the whole school year. Thus, the committee helps financially-challenged students to continue their education.

#### **Case Study 5: An enthusiastic student worked part-time to finance his education**

In Aung Naing Village in Laputta Township of Ayawady Region, children who wanted to continue their education past primary school began working part time to pay their school fees and expenses. This occurred after the village primary school was upgraded to a post-primary school for the 2014-2015 school year, and students could continue on to lower secondary classes.

Because the school committee had to hire outside teachers for the additional grade (grade 5), students' families were asked to pay 3,500 Kyats per month to cover teachers' salaries. Since poor families who earned their income from irregular and seasonal jobs could not afford to pay so much money per month, their children started earning money themselves to pay for their school fees and other expenses by catching crabs on weekends and during school holidays.

### **Coping with teacher shortage**

#### **Parents and communities try to help improve access to education by hiring more teachers on their own.**

The PTA for a middle school in Saung Pho Village in which offered grades 6 to 9, decided to help students complete high school (grade 10) in their own village rather than travel to another village for this. To achieve this, the committee hired additional teachers for 150,000 Kyats per month to expand the existing middle school and they worked out a system to pay the new teachers' salaries. This system divided households in the village into four categories, depending on their income. Class I families who were the most affluent in village, were asked to pay 5,000 Kayats per month, Class II families were asked to pay 4,500 Kayats per month, Class III families were asked to pay 4,000 Kayats per month, and Class IV families, one with the lowest income, were

asked to pay 3,000-3,500 Kayats per month. Through this system, the committee was able to raise the funds to pay the teachers and enable students who were keen to complete their high school education to do so.

### **Coping with Language**

During this study, three villages out the 20 assessed demonstrated a way to reduce the language barrier to education. They set up a pre-school in their village or asked senior students who spoke both the ethnic language and Myanmar well to assist teachers who could not speak the local ethnic minority language. In one village with a Kayin ethnic majority, the Christian church in the community set up a pre-school which taught Myanmar. Pre-school at the church helped children learn Myanmar well enough to cope much better in their first year in the government primary school. Also in this village, the senior students (in grades 4 or 5) help the teachers who cannot speak the Kayin language to teach the younger students who are still learning Myanmar. They also sometimes translate lessons for the teachers.

### **Recommendations to improve access to education**

- Upgrade existing middle schools to upper secondary levels so that the students can access secondary education in their own villages;
- Deploying and/or appointing additional and sufficient teachers to schools upgraded by the education department;
- Hiring teachers who can speak the ethnic minority language in schools where significant numbers of students are struggling with Myanmar.
- Providing transportation for students who want to continue their education, especially in remote areas, where travelling too distant schools is too expensive and dangerous.

## SECTION 5: SOCIAL ASSESSMENT FINDINGS ON PROVISION OF STIPENDS TO STUDENTS

Because the assessment was conducted when the program processes had already started, the assessment was able to gather input from the stakeholders on the initial implementation of the programs. The implementation process, however, was completed and the lists of stipend awarded students were finalized after the assessment was concluded. The operational guidelines for the pilot stipend program were set out in the program objectives—to improve community participation, to conduct this in a transparent and equitable manner, and to enhance the capacity of all the stakeholders. This social assessment examined community participation in the program, based on the community participation planning framework, as well as the program's operations manual. More thorough qualitative monitoring and evaluation will be conducted in future to review the implementation of the both the stipend and the grant programs.

### **Organizational setting**

This pilot stipend program is supposed to be implemented in a decentralized manner through township-level committees and school-level committees. The township grant and stipend committee (TGSC) for the Selection of Students for the Scholarship and Stipend Program appraised the application forms which were submitted by the school-level committees using specified criteria. Then, the list of selected applicants was submitted for approval to the respective District, State or Region education office through the project leader. The responsibility of the township-level board also included responding to feedback and complaints regarding the selection of the students. In addition, the TEO had to compile lists of students proposed for the regular scholarship program, and those proposed for pilot stipend program.

The duties and responsibilities of the school-level committee for the selection of students for the scholarship and stipend program included distributing stipend-related information to the local community, explaining the stipend selection process, receiving application forms, selecting students according to the criteria and quota set by the township, submitting the list of awarded students to the township level, registering the awarded students after getting approval from the township level, signing agreements with the awarded students which set out the terms and regulations governing the stipend, disbursing the monthly stipends, providing overall supervision of the activities, resolving complaints, and handling stipend termination cases, if necessary.

### **Township Grant and Stipend Committee (TGSC)**

All townships used a structure for TGSC which was set out in the project implementation guidelines. In fact, TGSC for the scholarship and stipend programs was an extension of the selection committee for the regular state scholarship program. In addition to the existing members of this committee, more members were added which were representatives from the administration department, the township development committee, and civil society organizations operating in the township.

Due to time limitations, all townships appointed selection committee members from outside the education sector asking them by phone or letter to join the committee. Unfortunately information on the stipend program was not effectively distributed, and few members outside the education section were aware of stipend program. Even if members knew they were on the committee, with the exception of those in the education sector, the assessment team found that few knew much, if anything, about the stipend program or their responsibilities as selection committee members. The Township level committees should be able to properly include representatives from religious/ethnic groups, and civil society organizations to help communicate and reach out to poor and vulnerable groups within their areas.

### **School Grant and Stipend Committee (SGSC)**

The study team found that all of the 20 schools which they were assessing had formed a SGSC but not fully in conformity with the project's implementation guidelines. Community leaders in many areas were not included in the committees as stated in the guidelines. This has limited the participation and voice of local communities in implementing the program. However, the committees in three middle schools in Ayeyarwaddy regions had included additional community representatives such as village elderly and respected persons and active persons with exposures to dealing with outside actors including government departments and allowed non-committee members to participate in the selection process. The school-level committee members also had differing understanding of their roles and responsibilities regarding the stipend program. In some cases, while the committee members (who were also school trustee committee members) were well aware of the stipend program, representatives from remote villages knew much less. For example, the school committees in Taunggyi and Sint Kaing Townships reported to have had little understanding of their duties. The underlying cause they said is a clear understanding of the program described to them.

### **Constraints in forming the committee for the selection of students for the stipend program**

Both the township- and school-level committees encountered many difficulties in forming the stipend committees by following the project implementation guidelines. Due to limit timing for school heads to form committees according to the guidelines, some schools are able to recruit representatives from local leaders including ethnic and religious leaders and leaders from civil society organizations, but some cannot. School heads in most case tend to want to recruit members who have interests in education. They said this process would take a bit more time to search for proper members. As for participation of the poor, in general, poor and disadvantaged groups are not represented in school committees. Research team found that limited participation of the poor and vulnerable groups is not intentional. Discussions with poor parents and members of the school committees revealed that: 1) the poor themselves feel that they cannot contribute their time, labor and money for the school as they are still struggling to make ends meet; 2) school committee tends to look for members who are interested in education, respected by villagers as well as can contribute time, labor and money according to school's needs. School heads and local leaders said that participation of poor and the vulnerable groups is not realistic at the committee level and that they should only be participating in school-organized meetings instead. So, the mentioned reasons are posing a constraint to single parents and poor parents to be members of school committee despite that those poor usually are considered first priority to receive stipend.

**Communication:** According to TGSCs, it was mandated in the project implementation guidelines to include representatives from other government line agencies and CSOs in the committee. In communication among the different departments and organizations, problems included difficulties in organizing a meeting, unfamiliarity with educational affairs, and absences from meetings. As other government departments and CSOs said that they did not get sufficient time and information to participate. At the same time, they were busy with their own activities, their representatives often could not attend the coordination meetings organized by the township education office. In addition, representatives from other organizations were not familiar with formal practices in education sector, and thus, they had difficulty in effectively participating in meetings on stipend program. For example, the members from CSOs and other government department staff besides from education department do not know exactly about school drop-out data, how to identify student drop out or how to count them.

**Insufficient time:** The Township Education Office had insufficient time to collect and analyze data, schools were slow in submitting data, the data sets required were large and burdensome to collect, and there was limited understanding of the program. After participating in a State/Region level training session, the township education staff rushed to meet the very tight time deadline for completing the various activities. These included forming the township-level committee, collecting data to select the eligible schools, confirming and informing the selected schools, and training heads of the selected schools about both the

school grant and the stipend programs. Thus, insufficient time was allocated to forming the township-level committee, and consequently committee members were badly informed and participation was limited.

**Failure to conduct the main duties:** Assistant township education officers told the study team that they had seldom met to perform their core duties (training, monitoring and evaluating) during initiation of the stipend program because the stipend-related activities were acutely time-bound and they had to rush through all the activities to meet the deadline. At the sub-township level, the TEOs reported that one third of the school cluster heads in remote areas expressed their frustration with the heavy workload related to the stipend program, and said that they intended to resign from government work.

#### **Case Study 6: School heads found the heavy workload for stipend program distressing**

The heads of school cluster at the sub-township level (who were in-charge of a number of schools) served as a network of managers linking the township education office and remote schools in order to support the successful implementation of the stipend program. They were responsible for distributing relevant information on the stipend program to schools, collecting required data in a prescribed period and participating themselves in the stipend program to select students from their own schools. As the schools at the sub-township level were situated in remote areas and far from each other, travel was a major constraint in coordinating activities. The school heads at the sub-township level expressed their frustration with the heavy workload that resulted having dual responsibilities for coordinating the stipend program and carrying out their regular administrative and teaching duties. In one case, a school head indicated that the workload was so much that he intended to resign from his job.

#### **School-level constraints**

Similar problems with the heavy workload were encountered at the school level. The main challenges school staff identified were insufficient time to properly organize community participation and failing to be able to carry out the main functions. However, SA researchers found that school level authorities' lack of concept on social inclusion and the membership criteria for participation in the school committee is posing limitation for participation of the poor and the disadvantaged groups. Poor parents, or single mothers such as landless women who work in transplanting groups, may not be able to attend the meetings or receive the information as the school meetings were organized during their working hours. Parents of students who are staying in other villages may not be able to attend the program information sessions as well.

**Insufficient time to properly organize community participation:** As the school-level committees were formed in a very short time, school heads could not invite proactive community members who had a keen interest in education. School heads also reported having some concerns about the participation of informal village leaders and elders who might interfere with the selection process. In many cases, the education staff, village elders and administration leaders were the stakeholders most interested in the stipend program. Some parent representatives in the committees were not fully aware of the stipend program and could not participate actively in the committees.

**For three reasons parents were not interested in stipend program.** First, the respective school heads often failed to adequately inform parents because the school heads had so little time to form the committee. Second, the remoteness of the villages made it difficult for people to travel to meetings. Some parents living in distant places could not participate in the meetings and other activities. Third, in some communities parents felt that the duties and responsibilities of the program should rest with the school, not parents.

**Failure to conduct the main functions:** As the school heads and teachers were responsible for collecting various data, filling out the application forms for the stipend, and screening the application forms to select the beneficiary students, they could not adequately undertake their regular work of teaching students and follow their work schedule. The following case study reveals this difficulty.

### Case Study 7: Stipend activities delayed monthly school tests

The head of a school in Min Hla Su Village of Bogalay Township, which was selected for the stipend program, found that the program took up a great deal of time and interfered with regular school tasks such as holding the school's monthly examinations. As a consequence, the school head participated in township-level training on both the stipend and the school grant programs for a total of six days in June of 2014. The training in Bogalay Town conflicted with the monthly meeting of all the school heads which was held in the township education office in order to collect salaries for staff. When this school head arrived back at school, the school head had to lead formation of the stipend committee with various stakeholders, and also organize a series of coordination meetings so people understood the stipend program and could help to implement it properly. In addition, the stipend program had to be explained to all the students and parents through a general assembly meeting. This assembly had to be held twice because very few parents could attend the first meeting because there was too little time to inform them about it. Thus, the school head and the SGSC members had to organize the assembly twice. As a consequence of these and other burdensome activities connected with the stipend program, the school's monthly tests which were scheduled for the first week in July had to be delayed until mid-July.

"The work of the stipend program consumed even our holidays." (a teacher)

"We worked for stipend program for such long hours that we could not always return home." (a teacher)

"I did not want to participate in the stipend program committee as members could not get their regular work done and we spent a lot of money on travel expenses to collect data. Data collection increased our school expenditures so that they were higher than other schools that were not participating in the stipend program." (a school head).

The quotes above from four different people demonstrate the burdensome workloads which the stipend program imposed on school heads and the teaching staff.

### Inclusion of ethnic communities in township- and school-level stipend committees

The social assessment team held discussions and individual interviews with ethnic minority communities during the data collection process because a number of schools selected for the study were situated in ethnic minority villages. Ethnic minority SA respondents confirmed that the stipend committees were set up but fully not in accord with the mandates prescribed in the implementation guidelines. For example, not all township and school committees include representatives from local leaders and ethnic groups. Research found in some schools, the committee members are only school heads and teachers. Due to limited timing as mentioned previously, the information on the criteria of the membership in stipend committee are not well reached to ethnic group leaders. Ethnic leaders interviewed for this study, however, did not feel that they were discriminated against in forming the committees, both at the township and the school levels. In some villages in Shan State, the school level stipend committees were constituted with community representatives who could speak both the local ethnic language and Myanmar well. This decision was made because the committee members had to meet and communicate with many different types of people, including community members, officials such as township education officers, other government staff. The SA team found that at the township level, representatives from ethnic groups and civil society did not participate in the committee meetings. They were invited informally through phone. At the school level, SA team found that ethnicity of the stipend committee members usually reflects the majority of the population in the township and village. For example, most of the committee members were Barman in the Barma villages, and similarly, most members were Shan in Shan villages. Table 20 illustrates the diversity of stipend committee members' ethnicity. However, this table does not indicate that the committees have representatives from ethnic or religious groups who can communicate and help implement the program in their communities. It just shows the ethnic background of members who are involved in the committees whether it be school heads, teachers, or civil society.



**Table 3: Number of ethnic Barma and non-Barma included in the stipend committees at the township and village levels**

Interviewees	Township-level stipend committee members (5 townships)	School-level stipend committee members (20 schools)
Non-Barma	19 <sup>11</sup>	52
Barma	46	194
<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>216</b>

Source: Social assessment data

### Information dissemination process

The information about the stipend program was disseminated using some methods prescribed in the implementation guidelines. The impact of the information distributed was found by the SA team to be very weak with regard to reaching all stakeholders. The Ministry of Education provided training to the school head and a teacher from each selected school. After that, the school head had to take responsibility for forming a SGSC and disseminating relevant information to the public. The implementation guidelines listed the following methods for disseminating information related to the stipend program:

- The respective teachers should convey the relevant information through their students during class time;
- Announcements should be made in the school's general assembly;
- Advertisements should be made on the school notice board;
- Pamphlets should be distributed to parents through the students;
- The stipend program should be presented at annual meetings of parent-teacher association;
- Community representatives should announce the stipend program during the community meetings and advertise the program in suitable public places;
- Representatives of ethnic minorities should use their ethnic language in distributing the stipend program to their ethnic communities.

### Information receiving and disseminating patterns in township level

The five townships implementing the pilot stipend program were under the management of the Basic Education Departments 1 and 2. All the pilot township education offices received official letters from DBE announcing that their townships had been selected for the pilot stipend program. However, instructions for them to attend the State/Region-level training on the programs were given to them by phone instead of by formal letters. CSO representatives and community leaders said that they received phone calls inviting to be part of the committee. There was limited information explained or sent to them. Committee meetings were reported to have only education staff attended. The sign announcing stipend program was found only in one township and it was found in the TEO office's compound which is considered not easily accessible to general public.

**Relevant information on the stipend program was not fully disseminated to all stakeholders for several reasons.** First, the process of informing TEOs about how to organize a township-level committee and

<sup>11</sup>The non-Burma members counted in this tables for the township level especially are representatives of schools, township education offices and such organizations as Women Affairs

collect data on the student dropout rate for the township was determined by township working procedures<sup>12</sup> and the deadlines were too tight. After receiving the State/Region-level training, the township education officers had to rush to form the TGSC, compile data on the student dropout rate, select eligible schools for the stipend program, and organize and facilitate trainings for stakeholders. Thus, information on stipend program was not disseminated to all the stakeholders.

Second, the township education officers did not have enough time to distribute the stipend program-related information to all the schools by informing the school heads in monthly general meetings, calling the schools and, in some townships, informing the schools through the cluster school heads. Information on the training they were to attend had given to the heads of the selected schools by phone.

Third, the township TEOs and schools are not provided with the budget for developing pamphlets and signboards for advertisement about stipend. They do not have funds for the development of stipend application forms. School heads have to manage all these costs by themselves as it is crucial for the program. However, making pamphlets and advertisement boards are costly and TEOs and school heads are not affordable to do that. Those are the reasons for constraints in information disseminations despite that information dissemination instructions are stipulated by the ministry. Some of the consequences of this inadequate dissemination of information are described below.

### **Consequences of limited information**

**Delays in disseminating information resulted in some schools missing out on participation in the stipend program.** When the Township Education Office disseminated information on the stipend program by phone, some schools in remote areas with poor phone service reported to the SA team that they did not receive the information clearly and thus were deprived of being selected for the pilot stipend program. For example, the ATEO in Bogalay Township reported that two schools in remote villages said that they did not understand the deadline clearly for submitting their dropout data to the township office, and thus missed the deadline, and therefore were not selected when these schools with high dropout rates should have been.

**Limited understanding<sup>13</sup> of why dropout-related information was needed resulted in some schools submitting lower-than-actual dropout data and missing out on the stipend program.** Most of the stakeholders reported that the school level implementers were not well cleared with the purpose of collecting dropout data when they were initially asked to do that. When they were realized the purpose of the collection of data as one of the selection criteria for schools eligible for stipend program, they viewed that the selection criteria based on the current calculation of the dropout rate is very inappropriate. Stakeholders especially from the school committees disagreed with the way the calculation was formed (highest percentage). Some feel that this type of calculation could exclude many of the schools that have poor students from the programs. In addition, when the township education offices asked schools to submit their student dropout data, information on the reason why these data were required or how the data would be used was not properly provided to the schools. Even though student dropout data were fundamental in deciding whether or not schools were eligible for the stipend program, in some cases, the township education office itself did not realize why the dropout data were to be collected, and so could not explain this to the school heads. Thus, because high drops out rates can reflect badly on the school head and

---

<sup>12</sup> Township education officers and assistant TEOs received the information on implementation activities during their training at the State/Region level. Thus, they formed the township committee and selected the eligible schools by phone. Through using the phone some TEOs were able to arrange all the activities necessary after their return from the training.

<sup>13</sup> Causes of 'limited understanding include delays in information being passed on by the sub township-level heads, the remoteness of the schools which result in information not being passed on properly, and poor telephone service in the village,

teachers<sup>14</sup>, the dropout data submitted by some schools did not necessarily reflect the actual high number of dropouts. Consequently, schools that should have been selected for the stipend program based on their actual high dropout rate were not.

### **Case Study 8: A frustrating outcome as result of inadequate information about the stipend program**

One school selected fewer students than actually would have been eligible for the stipend program due to the school head's confusion over the selection criteria. This mistake occurred because the rush to implement the program led to a scheduling difficulty for the school head, and school head missed the first day of 3days of training on how to administer the stipend program. Having missed the first day of the training, the school head reported to struggle to follow the rest of the training and missed important information about the stipend. When the school head arrived back at the school, as required, the school head formed the SGSC and trained members on what she thought were the rules, and ran the selection process. The committee, led by the school head, then selected the same number of poor and needy students from each grade. Later, after the students were selected, the school head came to understand that each selected student could be awarded the stipend for a maximum of 4 years. In her interview with the SA team, the school head stated that if the school head had understood all the information on the stipend well, the school head and the rest of the committee would have selected more grade 6 students so that they could continue on with the stipend after grade six, and with stipend support, would be likely to finish both middle school and high school

### **Information dissemination process in school level**

**The school heads were responsible for distributing information on the stipend program and their performance largely depended on how well they understood what they learned in the training on the stipend program.** School heads received 6days training on school stipend and grant programs, which were organized by the Township Education Office. The SA shows that school heads' understanding of the rules and procedures likely differed because stipend-related activities differed from one school to another. Below are some examples of information dissemination problems and successes revealed in this study.

The SA found that instructions on information dissemination are not fully realized in schools. There are seven instructions regarding with information dissemination are given and only four of them are generally followed and three of them were not realized. In most of the schools, the advertisement about stipend on school notice board was not carried out in some schools; no pamphlets were distributed; and announcement on stipend was only made in Barma language.

### **Problems and successes in disseminating information about the stipend program**

**Students:** Parents were supposed to be informed by their children about the stipend, provided with application forms for each of their children, and invited to attend a meeting that would provide in-depth information on the stipend program and how to apply. While this approach worked fairly well with primary and some middle school students who usually attended schools in their home village and lived at home with their parents, this did not work well with high school students. Although the parents of primary and middle school students could come together for a meeting as they usually lived in the same village, this was not the case with high school students who usually came from a number of villages and bringing all their parents together for a meeting was not feasible. As a result, parents of high school students usually were unable to participate.

---

<sup>14</sup>As a regular procedure, each school has to submit its annual dropout data to the township education office and this can have negative consequences for school personnel. Whenever the student dropout rate is high, the school head needs to take official responsibility for this.

**Local administrators:** This study shows that in the 20 villages surveyed, information was fully disseminated through community participation in only 3 of them. In these 3 villages, respondents said that the village administrators effectively distributed information related to the stipend program. In these areas, the administrators announced the stipend program by using loud speakers, and sent messages on paper to every poor household of the village.

**Religious leaders:** In two Pa-O villages in Taunggyi Township, Buddhist clergy were effective in distributing information on the stipend program. In these two villages, Buddhist monks hosted discussions about the stipend program in their monasteries on fasting days (new moon and full moon) when people often came to the monastery to pray. The Buddhist Abbot himself in one of these villages had a high interest in education and worked hard to get information out on the stipend program. As a result of efforts by Buddhist clergy in the two Pa-O villages, the SA team found that most parents were well informed about the stipend program.

**Using the ethnic minority language helped improve information dissemination:** The school heads in two Pa-O villages in Taunggyi township spoke both Pa-O and Myanmar while presenting information on the stipend program to parents. This avoided misunderstandings about the program and the implementation activities as well. In addition, the school heads made dual-language explanations to the parents on how to fill out the application forms for the stipend. Thus, the parents were able to understand in detail what information they had to provide on the forms and also had a chance to get answers to any questions they had.

### **Community participation at the township and village level**

The Ministry of Education has sought to include civil society organization (CSO) representatives and local community members in implementing the stipend program. However initially for this school year, education staff at the township and village level said that they were not very successful in recruiting community and CSO representatives as participants in stipend program implementation activities. With regard to CSO representatives who were invited to join consultation meetings, due to the very tight deadline faced to hold consultation meetings, the invitation to CSOs was extended by education staff just before the meeting by phone and informally, so only small number of representatives attended. In three out of five townships surveyed, however, CSO interviewees expressed strong enthusiasm for participating in the stipend program.

**Community participation at the township level:** In all five townships visited, the township-level focus group discussions (FGDs) conducted for this study improved awareness of the stipend program among various stakeholders, especially representatives from government departments and civil society organizations. Apart from the education sector, however, other participants in the SA consultations had not heard of the stipend program before they attended the FGD. In fact, some who had been appointed as members of the stipend and grant committee only realized that they were supposed to be on the committee when the social assessment team interviewed them. The non-education sector committee members who did know that they were on SGSC were unsure of their responsibilities. However, like the CSOs, they were enthusiastic about the stipend program and keen to participate in helping it succeed. Below are some of the remarks made to the SA team.

“We, the local people, know very well which schools are poor and needy and should be supported. Thus, we would like to contribute our knowledge on selecting the appropriate schools (for the stipend).” Township committee member (chairperson of a development committee).

“If I had been included in school selection process, I would have proposed selecting the monastic schools also. Many students attend monastic schools due to various difficulties in accessing the government schools” Township committee member (CSO representative).

**Community participation at the school level:** The SA team found that community participation varied from one school to another. In many schools, the head of the village administration, informal village leaders, community representatives, and retired school heads were actively participating in the selection of stipend students, in addition to the school head, teachers and **the school board of trustee**. Two villages, one in Kyaung Kone and one in Taunggyi, have invited heads of monasteries to the information dissemination session. They have helped to distribute information to their communities. However in four of the 16 schools which the SA visited that were receiving stipends, the school heads and teachers were the only persons involved in implementing stipend activities. The study team found that the level of community participation was dependent on the general performance of a school head with regard to factors such as a ..good relationship with the community, good motivation skills, and being native to the village. In addition, it was necessary that the local community, including village administrative leaders and village elders were interested in the stipend program and had good relations and collaborated well with the school head.

### **Two key factors that enhance participation of the community in the stipend program—good information dissemination and good leadership from the school head**

The SA team found that community members' level of interest in the stipend program (i.e. non-stipend committee members) was a result of good information dissemination on the program and motivation by the school head. However, in only 3 out of 16 villages studied was there good understanding and active participation in the stipend program. The school heads in these three villages were found to be the members of the township-level stipend committee and/or leaders in sub-township-level schools and had good relationships with the local communities. Although these school heads were not native to the villages where they were working, they were very familiar with the local people because of their many years of service. These school heads were also found to have good understanding about the stipend program and the implementation guidelines, and they collaborated well with the most influential people in the community—village administration leaders, informal leaders and Buddhist monks.

**Community participation is weak for several reasons.** The SA team found that in 8 out of 20 villages which had little or no community participation in the stipend program. In some cases, the SA team found that the school heads recently took over their positions and were not familiar with the local communities yet the school heads therefore had trouble motivating the local communities to participate in the stipend program. Another problem in eight villages with low participation was that, in general, local people did not perceive that school affairs were something that concerned them. This especially found in two Barma Muslim communities visited. In 6 out of 8 villages with weak community participation is related to inactiveness of school heads and their efforts on organizing meetings with the communities. In 2 out of 6 villages, the community members also are not interested in education as they are interested more in business.

**Timing:** The stipend program began in June, which is the crop growing season—a time of year when most low income parents are busy working on their farms, or if laborers, on the farms of others. Thus parents did not have time to join meetings to learn about the stipend program.

**Limited participation of the poor beyond attending meetings:** The SA found that the poor, although the target of stipend program, did not usually participate in the stipend program beyond attending a meeting when time permitted on the program and filling out the stipend application forms. In some cases, even though the poor were given priority in selecting students for the stipend, parents did not apply for a stipend that their children would most likely receive because they did not want their family to be identified as poor which would be the case if their children received the stipend and other assistance. Filling out the application was another barrier for poor parents who often have very low literacy. Finally, the study team observed that poor people's participation was likely impacted by traditional attitudes which stigmatize the poor. As a result

of being stigmatized, poor people often do not engage in discussions, debate, ask questions, or raise their voices.

### **Women’s Participation in the stipend program**

According to the stipend guidelines, women are supposed to be included in the stipend committees, however, the social assessment team was not able to determine the extent of women’s participation because at the time the SA was conducted, the lists of committee members had not been finalized. However, the SA team did observe that men greatly outnumbered women on the stipend committees as, men are much more likely to hold the leadership jobs that result in their being asked to join the committee. Women do serve as school heads, teachers, government staff and village administrators, informal leaders, school trustees, and PTA leaders, but in Myanmar, these roles are much more likely to be held by men. In some villages, however, the SA team did find that women’s committee members were active participants in the stipend committee and related activities. As for poor women parents, because the selection of students coincided with harvesting time, landless women farmers such as those working in transplanting groups could not participate in the meetings.

**Community consultation on the stipend program was low at the township level.** The SA team found that Township Grant and Stipend Committee meetings were organized in three of the townships visited, namely Laputta, Taunggyi and Sint Kaing, while the Kyaung Kone and Bogalay meetings were not organized. Community participation and social inclusion in TGSC meetings could not be considered positive in all townships that held the meetings. Only Laputta’s TGSC is relatively good in terms of community participation given the inclusion of such civil society organizations as education supportive groups, in addition to the participation of such institutions as Maternal and Child Welfare Association, Women Affairs and Myanmar Red Cross. None of the consultation meetings were attended by representatives of ethnic and minority groups. Constraint on consultative meetings and community participation is limited time for inviting community participants. In the case of the other two townships that held TGSC meetings, SA researchers were told later in interviews that participants were limited to education sector staff, on the basis that only they understood the stipend program. Civil society organization and community representatives who were invited informally, and at the last minute, told SA researchers later that they knew nothing about the stipend program, that they did not understand it, and that they had other demands on their time. Also, even when township TGSC were held, these took the form of lectures about the program instead of open discussion.

### **The selection process for eligible schools and students**

**In the pilot stipend program, the rate of student dropout was the criterion used for selecting eligible schools in a township.** Thus, schools with high dropout rates were selected for the stipend program. All the townships except Taunggyi set the student dropout rate for selecting the eligible school. In Laputta Township, the remoteness and poor conditions of the schools were also considered in addition to the high dropout rates. The number of students for the stipend was calculated based on the dropout rate and total number of students in a school. The selection process for eligible schools had been completed by the time of social assessment, and thus the research team could analyze the number of selected schools and the percentage that they represented out of the total schools in the five townships.

**Table 4: Comparison between the number of schools selected for the stipend program and total schools in five townships**

Township	Total number of schools	Number of selected schools	Ratio of selected schools to the total
KyaungKone	182	92	50.5%
SintKaing	112	93	83%

<b>Laputta</b>	395	126	32%
<b>Bogalay</b>	433	235	54%
<b>Taunggyi</b>	269	269	100%

*Source: Respective township education offices in five townships*

It should be noted here that stakeholders in all townships felt that because the number of dropouts and the calculation of the dropout rate were not understood clearly, many of the schools that should be included in the stipends program because there are many poor students in the areas might have been missing from the selection process.

### **Selecting eligible schools based on the high dropout rate may not always be appropriate.**

A number of education staff (school heads, TEOs, and DTEOs) as well as CSO personnel, noted in their interviews with the SA team that selecting schools based only on the dropout rate would be a mistake under the pilot program as some schools that should get stipends would not qualify because on paper, they had too low a dropout rate to qualify. A number of school heads argued that selecting an eligible school for the stipend based on the high dropout rate would not be suitable because under the current system for keeping school records, data on dropouts was calculated only in grades 5, 6 and 10. If dropout data for a school was calculated for all, the dropout level would appear much lower as dropout rates for grades other than the required ones would not be taken into consideration. One school head noted as a result of his school not being selected for the stipend program, "Every school has poor and needy students who should get the stipend, not just the schools with high dropout rates".

A second important point about dropout data made by education sector interviewees was that school heads could make mistakes in calculating dropout data and submit lower-than-actual dropout data to the Township Education Office.

Third, as noted by a primary school head, student dropout rates could be misleading was because the school head and teachers reported a lower-than-actual dropout rate intentionally because they did not want to have to write the required official letter explaining why dropout rates were so low and be blamed for this.

Fourth, as one school head stated, using only dropout data, even though the data were accurate, could result in failing to select needy students. As this school head noted, dropout data in some schools could be too low to qualify because the school trustees and school heads were making a concerted effort to prevent students who are at risk of dropping out with reasons mentioned in earlier sections. Thus, as a result, although a school's dropout numbers were too low to qualify for the stipend, in fact, many students were in need of the stipend. Thus, many school heads strongly recommended that school selection be based on poverty levels as well as dropout rates.

### **Selection process for awarded students**

As the townships had differing numbers of students, the quotas for students who could be awarded the stipend also differed.

**Table 5: Quotas for the number of students that could be awarded the stipend, by township**

<b>Township</b>	<b>No. of primary students</b>	<b>No. of lower secondary students</b>	<b>No. of upper secondary students</b>
<b>Kyaung Kone</b>	720/2,0558	1,985/7276	606/2,141

<b>Taunggyi</b>	2,225/3,9285	6,682/2,8642	1,913/9,334
<b>Sint Kaing</b>	590/12,8604	1,624/7,183	418/1,852
<b>Bogalay</b>	1,830/42,530	4,155/1,7957	977/4,064
<b>Laputta</b>	1,539/1,9442	3,197/9,779	671/1,391

*Source: Township education offices of five studied townships*

### **Confusion over the criteria used for nominating students for the stipend**

As stated previously, because there was a very short timeframe between when the pilot program began and when students had to be nominated for the stipend, this assessment found that the education officials and community representatives who were responsible for managing the selection process, were often not well informed about the selection criteria, and could not provide accurate information to school heads and teachers who were responsible for filling out the application forms for nominating students. For example, as stated by a school head and some informal village leaders, the criteria gave priority to selecting students from orphanages but they said that these students did not need the stipend—it was students with poor parents who should get the stipend.

Some school heads, teachers, school stipend committee members, village administration and informal leaders, and community representatives involved in student selection, disagreed with application form questions on family assets that could disqualify poor and needy students. For example, some township-level stipend committee members in two townships argued against the criterion of home ownership that could disqualify students. They argued that even though parents owned a house, if they had many family members, they could be too poor to finance their children's education themselves. Another criterion which a school head said was confusing concerned lighting. Many poor people, he said, spend 100 MMK to charge a battery for household lighting, but do not explain this in the section of the form on electricity use and reduce the chances of their children qualifying for the stipend. A village administrator thought that the section of the form on parent's work was not clear and that poor tenant farmers were mistaken for landowners and therefore disqualified. He thought that the form should ask specifically whether parents were landowners or tenants. Parents owning a cell phone could also disqualify a stipend applicant. A teacher and a township education officer both thought that the form should identify whether this was 1,500 Kyats phone which the parents had won in lottery and thus not a sign that their children did not need a stipend. A family motorbike was another possession that would lose a stipend applicant points. A village committee member and a village administrator in Sint Kaing Township noted that a motorbike could be a low-priced, second-hand machine, and a necessity for the owner's livelihood that was family expense, rather than a sign of a good income.

**Identifying high school students who could apply for the stipend was considered challenging.** As mentioned previously, even though a high school student was poor enough to qualify for a stipend, some did not ask for an application form to apply for the stipend because they were embarrassed to be identified as poor. A school head also noted that high school students living in an orphanage, and therefore likely to qualify for the stipend, did not apply as they did not want the stigma of being an orphan. In addition, nominating high school students for the stipend was also considered a challenge because students came to high school from a number of distant villages, and having a community member from each nominated student's village confirm family circumstances was not possible. Also school staff said they did not have the time or resources to make a visit to the student's village to check on family conditions in case a student provided false information on the stipend application form. However, one teacher argued that making such visits to high schools students' families was unnecessary because teachers knew very well which students were poor and needed the stipend.



**Misunderstanding about the stipend criteria reduced parents' willingness to apply.** While the school-level committee explained the stipend criteria in the meetings, some parents did not understand these well and thought that their children would not meet the requirements and left meeting before it was over. In other cases, parents did not understand the application form well and thought from reading it that their child would not qualify and abandoned the application process. Some parents also complained about questions on the application form which they felt look down upon them.

## **Feedback mechanisms**

**No clear and effective mechanisms for making complaints about the selection of schools was reported to the SA team.** The list of the eligible schools for the stipend was announced on the notice board of the respective Township Education Office and there were no complaints about the choice of schools because the township stipend committee had followed the implementation guidelines in selecting eligible schools, and stakeholders perceived that this was properly the responsibility of the Township Education Office. Although there were no official complaints or objections, the schools which were not selected were not fully satisfied with the results. However, the dissatisfied interviewees said that they were reluctant to complain because in a hierarchical bureaucracy, this could have negative consequences for them in future. Interviewees felt that because the education staff in the township are the ones who implement the program, complaints should not be going to them to solve. Complaints and feedbacks should be sent to the DBE or DEPT in Nay Pyi Taw and Yangon. Perhaps another reason why there were no complaints at any of the Township Education Offices was because people with complaints did not understand how to make a complaint.

## SECTION 6: RECOMMENDATIONS TO CONSIDER IN IMPROVING IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STIPEND PROGRAM

The assessment found that due to the fact that the program has just started and the process has not yet been fully developed, the inclusion of local communities especially the poor and vulnerable groups in the program is limited. Implementation was not conducted according to the guidelines, including key aspects: recruitment of community representatives at the township and school levels; production of materials in Myanmar and local languages; consultations at the township level; information dissemination provided to local communities; participation of poor and vulnerable parents at meetings; and in the area of information provided through feedback mechanisms. There was, however, no evidence of intentional discrimination against the poor and vulnerable groups including those from ethnic or religious groups. The following are recommendations, based on discussions with stakeholders, for enhancing meaningful community participation as well as improving the program overall. Recommendations gathered from the consultations include:

**Recommendation for the stipend training and implementing process:** These recommendations could improve the effectiveness of education staff in implementing the program properly, including specifying time and steps for community participation.

- **Assign special staff for the stipend program:** Because the work for the pilot stipend program is difficult and time-consuming, there was not enough staff in the education sector to do the job. Therefore, the deputy township education officers took over the additional work and the office staff had to work long hours to accomplish the assigned activities related to the stipend. As a result, the mainstream duties of the education staff were hardly met. For this reason, both township and school staff suggested that a special staff is assigned for the stipend program.
- **Recruit retired education staff for the stipend program:** If special staff is to be assigned for stipend program, well-experienced and retired school heads and senior teachers should be recruited for this program. They are much more familiar with the education-related data and can handle the data easily, thus making the implementation more effective.
- **The training period should be extended to five days instead of three days, as well as including two representatives from the school level:** The training period should be extended to five days so that the stakeholders can absorb the stipend-related matters. In addition, the school heads and teachers suggested that the trainees should be two persons from each school.
- **The content of the training should also include the concept on social inclusion, the leadership and social mobilization.** This is to ensure that the implementers understand and make more effort to enhance community participation particularly the participation of the poor and the disadvantaged groups including ethnic and religious minorities.
- **The trainings should be delivered directly by headquarters:** The trainings related to the stipend program should be delivered by the national-level authorities instead of conducting a number of secondary trainings. By doing so, the stakeholders at the township level can fully understand the stipend program and implement it more effectively.
- **Trainings on the stipend and school grant programs should be conducted before the schools reopen:** The trainings related to the stipend should be delivered earlier (before opening of the schools). Thus, more time can be taken for stipend-related work. In addition, the guidelines set out in the training can be strictly followed and the data collection and field visits can be conducted in a reasonably sufficient time.
- **More time should be allotted to accomplish the stipend related activities:** The stipend related activities such as information dissemination, presentation of the program, and the selection process should be a minimum period of 45 days so that the committee members and teachers can concentrate on both mainstream duties and stipend activities.

## **Recommendations for the organization setting of the stipend committees that would help improve community participation.**

According to the Program Operational Guidelines, representatives from CSOs and major ethnic groups are supposed to be included in the committee. Results of the consultations show that this is not happening in most of the five selected townships. In addition, concerns and recommendations from the free, prior, and informed consultations with the members of the TGSC emphasize that there are too many members from the education sector, and only a few from township administrations and civil society organizations. Furthermore, the outreach to poor and vulnerable families has been very limited, partly due to limited resources, and the difficulties of travel and communications with remote schools.

### **For the TGSC.**

**DBE staff should attend the first TGSC meeting of each township to ensure that TGSC has appropriate committee members and that their roles and responsibilities are clearly understood.** Report on the recruitment and participation from communities will be submitted to DBE and DEPT after the first township meeting in each area.

**Ensure that in addition to the TEOs, ATEOs, and designated program staff, the TGSC includes representatives from major ethnic groups and civil society organizations, as stated/planned in the Program Operational Guidelines.** In addition, representatives from other governmental departments, media, as well as heads of school clusters, will be included in the TGSC.

- **The duty of the school selection process should be added as the responsibility of the CSOs representative in the operational manual guidelines.** The CSOs representative would like to participate in the school selection process because they believe that they could help in the selecting process.
- **The township education office should decide the members of the township stipend committee:** Depending on the background situation of the township, the TEOs and DTEOs suggested that they themselves should determine the criteria for membership on the township stipend committee because they know very well about who can actively participate on the committee or who can represent the whole population of the township.
- **Take enough time for selecting the active committee members:** An adequate amount of time should be taken to find active representatives from civil society and local leaders including but not limited to ethnic groups and to invite them to participate on the TGSC.

### **For SGSC.**

Similar to the township level, the guidelines have designated quite an extensive number of committee members, including representatives from local communities, local leaders, including representatives from ethnic minorities and social organizations. Concerns and recommendations received during the social assessments indicate a very large gap in the selection and recruitment process. Because of the short period of time for the school heads to recruit and set up the committee, the majority of planned representatives outside of the school circle were not included in the SGSC.

- **The number of teachers on a SGSC should be adjusted:** Many teachers are involved in a school stipend committee, which often face difficulties to make field visits (in order to select the awarded students) during school time. Thus, more number of parents, local communities representatives including ethnic representatives on a stipend committee should be increased

- **Bilingual persons should be included on the stipend committee:** It is important that committees located in mixed ethnic areas should include representatives from major ethnic groups such as Shan and Pa-O, for example. The persons (whether community representatives or teachers) who can fluently communicate in both Barma and local ethnic languages should be included on the stipend committees.
- **Increase the number of village administration leaders and community representatives on the committee:** The school stipend committees found difficulties in explaining the stipend program to the parents from other villages. If more village administration leaders (from other villages) participate in the stipend committee, the information can be more effectively disseminated to all the parents.
- **Take time for inclusion of active representatives from local communities:** Taking an adequate time, active community representatives who are interested in education affairs should be selected and invited to be included in school-level stipend committees.

#### **Recommendations regarding with feedback mechanism**

- TEOs and school heads must provide information on the feedback mechanisms to all stakeholders. Information on feedback mechanism are to be displaced in the places easily accessible to the public. The information and materials on the feedback mechanisms are to be produced in Myanmar and local ethnic language. In all public consultations, school heads and TEOs must provide information with regard to feedback mechanisms.
- The community member particularly the poor and the vulnerable are to be encouraged to give feedbacks by giving awareness that their feedbacks will be helpful for improvements of the program.

#### **Recommendations concerning the information dissemination process to ensure outreach to and better understanding of the programs by the poor and vulnerable groups including those from ethnic groups.**

##### **For dissemination of information at national level**

- **Use more media such as radio broadcasting:** Dissemination of information using more efficient means such as short educating films will be more effective. Now the information on stipends is announced from radio and television. But SA found few people acquired information disseminated from radio and TV. So, this means information disseminated from radio and television should use more attractive methods. For examples, dissemination should be in terms of short awareness raising movies and stories instead of displaying or announcing stipend information. The dissemination should also include messages targeted at vulnerable groups that encourage them to send their children to schools as they are provided with stipends from the State.

##### **For dissemination of information at the township level**

- **Announce the stipend program using signboards in local/ethnic languages:** In order to raise the awareness of the stipend program in the ethnic groups, the signboards should be written in both Myanmar and the respective ethnic language (s).
- **Install the signboards in places most accessible to general public:** The signs boards are to be installed at the place accessible to general public. The SA found the sign board advertised on stipend only in one township being installed in the compound of TEO office. So, it is highly recommended that sign boards on stipend are to be in every township in the places to which general public are easily accessible.
- **Distribute the pamphlets on the stipend program in crowded areas:** TGSCs suggested that the activities such as placing signboards in the crowded areas, advertising with pamphlets and flyers in tea shops, etc., can be effective for raising awareness of the stipend program.
- **Organize a forum for village administration leaders and social leaders so they can broadly distributed the information on the stipend program:** In order to disseminate the information about

the stipend program to local communities, the village tract administration leaders and social leaders should be invited to a meeting, through which they effectively distribute the information to sub-village leaders, and thus to the local communities.

#### For dissemination of information at the school level

- **Hold the meetings at a feasible time for the parents:** If the parents are invited to a meeting during their working season (mainly in agriculture), they cannot participate in the meetings. Thus, holding the meetings at a convenient time for the parents can enhance their active participation in the stipend program.
- **Invite all local communities through influential religious leaders:** School committee members suggested that the assembly meetings with the local communities should be held with the help of influential religious leaders in order to disseminate the information related to the stipend program. This suggestion was also supported by the assistant township education officer.
- **Use ethnic language in announcing the stipend related activities:** Local languages should be used in disseminating the information about the stipend program. Ethnic leaders, bilingual teachers and parents should be targeted to help with the dissemination of programs information to ethnic groups.
- **Stipend information are to be put also on school notice boards.** Stipend information are to be given through school notice boards which should be place accessible to general public. The notice board should be placed near the enrollment areas in times of school enrollment so that parents who came to school for enrollment will be seen easily.
- **The budget for dissemination about the program is to be provided with township and the school level implementing entities:** It is urgently required to provide budget for the dissemination about the programs such as producing vinyl sign boards and pamphlets. At present, implementers are unable to realize instructions on dissemination with the lack of budget.
- **Stipend Applications forms are to be provided by the ministry:** The stipend application forms are to be issued by the ministry. Currently, school heads are to copy the application forms from the operation manuals using money from their own pocket or school funds. In addition, the stipend program should be explained to poor parents who are working in remote places or on their farms. (A school committee member suggested this.)

#### Recommendation concerning the selection of eligible schools

- **MoE should provide some flexibility for TGSC to adjust the selection criteria suitable for their local context.** For example in Laputta, there are not many students dropout, but there are many poor students. TGSC decided to add poverty and remoteness criteria beyond the dropout rate for their township selection process.
- **Adjusting the calculation of the dropout data.** It was suggested that the dropout data required by the township education office should be prepared by taking the difference between those of July (time of stable enrollment) and February (time of final examination) so that consistent and correct dropout data for each school can be submitted.  
**The dropout data for the whole school should be used in the selection process:** Currently, the dropout data of three grades (grades 5, 9 and 11) are being used in selecting the eligible schools. It is suggested to use the dropout data of the whole school in the selection process in the coming years.
- **High priority should be given to schools with a large number of students:** When selecting the eligible schools for the stipend program using the dropout data, the schools with a large number of students should also be taken into consideration.
- **Monastic schools should be included in the stipend program:** When the eligible schools are selected for the stipend program in township level, the monastic schools (where many poor and orphaned

students are being looked after by the Buddhist monks) should also be taken into consideration at the same level as poor schools and remote schools.

- **All grades in primary education should be taken into account:** The heads of primary schools suggested that all the grades in primary education (grade 1 to grade 5) should be included in the stipend program. Currently, the stipend program covers only grade 5 students.

### Recommendation concerning the selection criteria of awarded students

- **The condition of the clothes of a student should not be included in the selection criteria** because some (poor) students could wear relatively fair clothes which were provided (even donated) by their relatives or other well-wishers. (In some cases, the life style of the families may differ from one another.)
- **Regarding the possession of phones:** Most of the phones used in the village were bought with 1500 MMK as a result of a sales promotion (lottery-like drawing system). Otherwise, the local people would not be able to buy a phone in the outside market. Thus, an additional question of how a family possessed such a communication asset (For example: phone, TV, etc.) should be included in the application form.
- **The housing condition should not be one of the criteria for student selection.** Almost all the houses in Taunggyi area were brick buildings which were made of locally available calcareous gangue. The local people in this area traditionally used those calcareous rocks in building their houses. (In Ayawady Region, many houses were supported by various donors after the cyclone Nargis.)
- **As the possession of a motorbike does not reflect the actual status in the local context, this criterion should be reconsidered in the application form.** Almost all families in Sint Kaing township had at least a motorbike but with varying values. The well-off could buy the relatively expensive motorbikes while the poor, as motorbikes were essential for their livelihood, had to buy the old motorbike with low prices (60,000-70,000 MMK).
- **Preliminary questioning of their possessions should be done privately for each of the students.** In some schools, the teachers used to ask the individual students of their possessions in front of the class before filling the stipend application forms. Because of shyness and embarrassment, many students tended to lie as if they had some possessions. Thus, such kind of preliminary questioning should be done privately for each of the students.
- **Awarded students should continuously receive their stipend in the new township:** When an awarded student moves to other township by various reasons, that student should continuously receive the stipend in the new township.
- **Additional questions to reveal the reasons should be added in the selection criteria for the students:** In some cases, it is necessary to ask the additional question of “why” in filling in the application forms for the stipend: for example, for the criterion of “possesses a hand phone or not”, many (poor) parents have hand phones worth 1500MMK because of a phone sale by drawing system.
- **Family size and monthly income of a family should be taken into consideration:** The school heads suggested that it would be more appropriate to include the number of family members and monthly income in the selection criteria for the stipend. Some poor families mortgaged their own farmlands and worked as farm labor (though they were termed as farmland owners in the selection criteria). Similarly, some poor families mortgaged their house, but they were termed as house owners in the selection criteria.

## SECTION 7: FINDINGS OF THE SOCIAL ASSESSMENT ON SCHOOL GRANTS

In all of the 20 schools visited, the school heads and school committee members interviewed appreciated the school grant program very much because of the increased budget for the school. They also said that being able to apply the grant to 12 budget lines was an improvement over the previous year. Similar to the stipend program, there was no evidence found during the assessment that the process was intentionally discriminate the poor and vulnerable groups including those from ethnic and religious groups from the program. Changes in the school grants regulation have helped to reduce parents' financial contribution to the school.

### Strengths of the school grant program

#### **Having a larger school grant relieved the burden of costs previously paid by school heads, school committees, and parents**

In previous years, parents had to contribute their own money for small school expenses such as buying brooms, water pots, etc. In addition, the expenses for monthly tests were also paid by the students, but the school heads were reluctant to collect money for these. In the 2014-15 school year, the school grant covered all these small expenses and the school heads said that they were relieved. Also, thanks to this year's grant, the school heads and school committee members did not need to seek donors to pay for miscellaneous expenses.

"We were very happy to receive this larger grant. Now, we can allocate 50,000 Kyats from the grant for repairing the road to the school without diverting money from other school expenses" (Teacher from Ka Ka Yan Village, Laputta Township).

"The 12 budget lines allowed in the school grant can cover all essential expenditures by the school. Until this year, the committee members donated their own money for the necessary expenditures of the school" (School head of Aung Naing Village, Laputta Township).

"The parents volunteered to clean the school so, as a result, the budget line for this under the school grant could be allocated to other necessary things such as school maintenance". (Administrative head, Wat Chaung Village, Kyaung Kone Township).

The school heads reported that division of the 2014-15 school grant into 12 budget lines was easier to manage and keep tracking of spending than was the case with the grant for 2013-14. In addition, as the latest grant was managed by a dedicated committee, transparency had significantly increased in using the grant for school affairs.

We did not know how to use the school grant last year. Now, we have clear budget lines and both the committee members and the parents know how we should use the grant (School committee member, Aung Mingalar Village, Bogalay Township).

### Constraints in school grant program

#### **As the school grant for 2014-15 was based on school data for 2013-14, those schools upgraded for 2014-15, received a smaller grant than they should have.**

The amount of a school's grant for 2014-15 was based on the status of the school. TEOs and ATEOs reported that as the school grant for 2014-15 was based on school year data from the previous year, schools upgraded to higher levels in 2014-15 received too small a grant. For example, a branch primary school in the

2013-14 school year, which was upgraded to a primary school for the 2014-15 school year, received a grant of only 400,000 Kyats instead of 800,000 Kyats which it should have as a primary school.

**Some of the budget lines were not clearly understood.** Although the school heads received training on budgeting for the school grant, this was not long enough for all to understand the budget lines well. In some cases, the school heads were confused about which expenditures fell under which budget line. For example, some villages had no access to government-supplied grid electricity and they did not know if the fuel costs for the school's generator could be included under the electricity budget line.

- Electricity in Kan Bat village costs 600 Kyats per unit (by private generator), while it costs only 25 Kyats per unit in Laputta town, which is on the government grid. The difference in electricity expenses caused trouble in budgeting because the actual, much higher expenditure was not eligible. To make up for the deficit, the school head collected some of the money from the snack shops around the school and paid what was left of the deficit himself. (Administration head of Kan Bat Village, Laputta Township)
- In the past, the school grant program budget allowed travel claims for distances over 5 miles. In reality, travelling costs had to be spent even within a distance of a 5 miles range. In such cases, there were difficulties in using the school grants.
- Expenditure caps also made it difficult to use the grant; for example, the school grant program required a tendering system to spend over 100,000 MMK for any purpose.

In the past, schools used to inform parents of what was needed for the schools and requested donations. The new school grants have helped lift many of these burdens from parents. Members of the school committees and parents requested that the school heads provide clear explanation on what could be covered and what could not be covered by the school grants under the 12 line items, as well as provide the information about the decisions and expenditures to the communities.

### **Constraints on roles and responsibilities of school heads and school committees.**

Smooth operations of the programs depend mostly on the relationships among school heads, school committees, and parents. In some areas, where school heads and committees do not have good relationships, consultation on the decisions to use the school grants did not happen. School heads feel that they have the sole responsibility on what and how to use the grants, and that they would have external parties auditing their decisions; while the school committees feel that as they have been providing support to the schools to meet the schools' needs, they should be involved and be informed. Under the school grants operations guideline, school heads need to work closely with school committees. Information with regard to school grants, especially roles, responsibilities, and procedures, were not provided to the community clearly which caused these tensions.

## **Implementation process of the school grant program**

### **Formation of the committees**

The township-level committees (TGSC) were formed but not according to the guideline, with the members mostly from the education sector. At the school level, the SGSC also facilitate the management of the school grants. If a school did not receive the stipend, the school grant committee was formed with representatives from the parents, village informal leaders, and village administration heads. Thus, it could be said that the school grants were being managed by the participation of the local communities. The school grants were scheduled to be provided twice a year. The amount of the grant was determined by the number of primary students, and this method was consistently used in all townships. In most places, school level committees reported to have been working with school heads in deciding about the school plan and items to be provided from school grants. In some areas, school level committees said that the school heads made



decisions with teachers on school grants, and did not consult with school level committees. Note that the poor and vulnerable parents or the school communities have not been included in the school grant process.

**Table 6: The rationalized amount of school grant based on the number of primary students**

No. of primary students	Amount of school grant (MMK)
Under 100	800,000
Between 101 and 200	1,000,000
Between 201 and 300	1,200,000
Between 301 and 400	1,400,000
Above 401	1,600,000
<b>Branch primary schools</b>	400,000

*Source: Township education office*

For the 2014-2015 school year, three out of five townships studied by the social assessment team had already received the first batch of school grants provided by the new program. The other two townships had not yet received the grants, but the preparation work such as budget estimates and notices about the grant program were being undertaken.

#### **Community participation in the decision-making process for use of the school grants**

Though the school grants were being managed by the school stipend/school grant committee, the school head made the key decisions where he/she grabbed the leading role. In some cases where the committee had a leading role, the decisions on how to use the school grants were jointly made by the school head and the committee. Most schools visited by the assessment team revealed that the school heads were consulting with the committees prior to the use of the grant such as for buying things, use for labor wages, etc. Thus, the trend of the decision-making process was changing from one person (school head) to inclusive and collective nature.

#### **Withdrawal and use of the school grants**

The school grants were limited to use under 12 budget lines including in-country travel allowance; labor wages; hire/purchase fees; transportation; office equipment; telegraphs and telephone bills; electricity; newspapers and books; teaching equipment; food; exhibitions, contests and award giving ceremonies; and other expenditures. All the schools visited were using the school grants in conformity with the prescribed 12 budget lines. In some cases, there were difficulties in using the grants according to the budget lines; for example, some budget lines were not clearly understood, some of them were not suitable in the local context such as local transportation cost is not allowed to use beyond 5 miles.

#### **Flow of school grants from township office to school level**

The township education offices, after receiving notification from the Myanmar Economic Bank, which served as intermediary for the Ministry of Education, withdrew the school grants and re-distributed to the individual schools. In all townships studied, the assistant TEOs took their responsibility to inform the respective schools and to hand over the school grants. The school grants were normally collected by a team of a school head and two committee members. However, the school head alone was collecting the school grants in many cases. The underlying reason was the limitation of expenditures for the accompanying committee members, said the school heads.

"I would like the committee members to accompany me when I collect the school grant from the township education office. But, I may need to bear their travelling costs because the travel allowance determined in the

budget line was eligible for the education staff only. Thus, the travel cost for them (committee members) is the problem" (A school head)

### **Feedback mechanism for the school grant program**

The township education officers, during the trainings on the school grant program, clearly mandated the school heads that any complaint for the school program must be resolved by the school heads jointly with the school stipend/grant committee. Thus, the feedback mechanism was not yet in place for the school grant program. Township education officers reported that in case the complaints were not resolved by the school-level committee and school head, the sub-township level leaders (school heads acting as a leader for a group of schools) should take an intermediary role to solve the problems. The school heads had no direct communication with the township education office regarding the complaints arising from the school grant program because the sub-township-level school heads were mandated to intermediate the education affairs at the school levels. This is in the guideline but may not be appropriate. Committee members said that they should have channels to communicate directly to the TEO.

### **Monitoring and evaluation**

The monitoring and evaluation mechanism was already in place in the education sector. The expenditure and account records submitted by each school were audited by the township-level auditor's office. The assistant TEOs monitor the equipment and material purchased and activities done under the school grant program while they conduct their mainstream duty of monitoring the schools in the township. This monitoring process however has excluded parents and communities, which has limited their awareness of what the budget was used for and how much. School plan and itemized expenditures should be discussed between the school heads and committees and be announced at the school assembly, and displayed at the school boards. SGSC members should monitor how the funding is used.

### **Recommendations for the school grant program**

- **More details and clear explanations should be provided for each of the budget lines.** The prescribed 12 budget lines were found very useful for the school heads who were handling the school grants jointly with the school committee. However, some of the budget lines were not applicable for the specific local context. For example, in many villages, there is no electricity. The school has to use cash to pay for fuel for generator. So there is no electricity bill to fit the budget item.
- **Community participation in the decision making should be made clearer by the MoE to the school heads through training and monitoring by TEOs.**
- **The complaint mechanisms should also have a reporting system for all levels to be informed about the cases.** Although the cases should be resolved by the lower level, but all cases and how they get resolved must be documented and sent to the higher level (township education office). TEOs could review the cases if there are any requests or issues.
- **School heads and school level committees must inform parents and communities about the school plans, itemized expenditures, and budget.** This information can be announced at the school assembly and display at the school board.

# ANNEXES

DRAFT

## Annex 1. Summary of Literature Review

### Preliminary Social Assessment (May 2014)

#### 1. Legal and Policy Framework

##### The 2008 Constitution

The fundamental law of Myanmar is the Constitution of 2008, which serves as the foundation for Myanmar's transition towards democracy. The Constitution of 2008 describes the obligations and duties of the Union with regard to education, and the right of all Myanmar citizens to education. Most importantly, in clause 366, the constitution describes its obligation to citizens regarding their right to education (Chapter 8: Citizens, Fundamental Rights and Duties of Citizens):

Article 366. Every citizen shall, in accord with the educational policy laid down by the Union:

- a) have the right to education;
- b) shall be given basic education which the Union prescribes by law as compulsory;
- c) have the right to conduct scientific research, explore science, work with creativity and write, to develop the arts, and conduct research freely [with] other branches of culture.

Again in Chapter 1, the constitution describes the obligations of the Union towards the provision of education, which links with the health sector:

28. The Union shall:

- a) earnestly strive to improve [the] education and health of the people;
- b) enact the necessary law[s] to enable [the Nation's] people to participate in matters of their education and health;
- c) implement [a] free compulsory primary education system;
- d) implement a modern education system that will promote all-around correct thinking and a good moral character, contributing towards the building of the Nation.

Notably, supporting compulsory primary education is one the duties of a citizen set forth by the Constitution, and the Government of Myanmar is obliged to implement the free compulsory primary education system. More importantly, as democratic value, the government is required by the Constitution to enact necessary law to ensure that citizens have the opportunity participate in matters related to the education system. As a significant step in the reform process in the education sector, the Law for Free Compulsory Primary Education is being discussed in Parliament.<sup>[1]</sup>

##### Other education-related laws include:<sup>[2]</sup>

- Basic Education Law of 1973 (amended in 1989) that currently mandates the education system as 5 years of primary-level education, followed by 4 years of lower secondary-level education, and 2 years of upper secondary-level education,
- University Education Law of 1973 (amended in 1998) that mandates ministries in specific sectors (currently 13) to manage universities in their sector,
- Law of Myanmar Board of Examination of 1973,
- Education Research Law of 1973,
- Private Education Law of 1984 and 2006 (which prohibits teachers in public schools from practicing fee-based teaching after school hours),

- Agricultural and Vocational Education Law of 1974 (amended in 1989), and
- Private School Registration Law of 2011.

### Recent trends in legal and policy reform in Myanmar

Education-related laws, which were promulgated under previous governments, are not well suited to the country's present situation. Parliament is currently discussing new law on basic education, education research, the Examination Board, and university education, and importantly, on the advancement of national education through a designated parliamentary committee. The new law on free and compulsory education is being drafted, and the Department of Myanmar Education Research Bureau (DMERB) has been taking the lead in the Comprehensive Education Sector Review (CESR) which finished its phase-1 review in early 2013. The CESR Phase-1 working committee has prepared the Comprehensive New Legal Framework for the Education Sector (2014).<sup>[3]</sup> Notably, the framework covers decentralizing management, cooperation with development partners, and recommending further research to improve the education sector.

All these significant reform steps were shaped by the reform agenda of the new government led by President U Thein Sein. The President's 10-point education policy,<sup>[4]</sup> which was announced in the Union Parliament in March 2011, serves as a strong initiative to speed up the reform process in the education sector. This reform has been taking place in line with reforms in other sectors which are covered by the "Framework for Economic and Social Reform-FESR", which was drafted in November 2012. The draft FESR underlines the GOM's promise—"Education is a top government priority" and it "has already increased public expenditure on education significantly and will increase public expenditure further in the coming years."<sup>[5]</sup>

As concrete action towards all of these policy-level reform initiatives, a 20-Year Long-term Plan has been drafted by the Ministry of Education. The key action points of the plan were primarily based on the President's 10-point education policy and also the previous 30-Year Long-term Plan. The current 20-year plan covers the following key actions which are currently being implemented:

- a) Initiation of the compulsory primary education program,
- b) Awarding of scholarships and stipends,
- c) Opening more basic education schools and upgrading existing schools,
- d) Enhancing the role of Township Education Offices by establishing District Education Offices,
- e) Promoting professional qualifications for basic education teachers,
- f) Applying a Child-centered Approach at the primary level,
- g) Allowing private schools to open, and
- h) Holding discussions on education development.

Briefly, the current steps in the government's legal and policy reform agenda clearly reflect the urgent and long-term efforts to improve the three main areas of education: access, quality and management.

### Constitutional and legal support for the education of ethnic groups

It is estimated that there are more than 130 ethnic groups in Myanmar, though the government usually identifies eight as the major ones. The Bamar are the largest ethnic group, comprising around 69% of Myanmar's population. The national percentages for the other seven ethnic groups are: Shan (8.5%), Kayin (6.2%), Rakhine (4.5%), Chin (2.2%), Kachin (1.4%) and other groups (0.1 %).<sup>[6]</sup> However, the 2008 Constitution of Myanmar does not list these ethnic groups—the constitution only refers to "ethnic races, including Bamar."

According to Chapter 1, clause 22 of the 2008 Constitution of Myanmar, the Union Government of Myanmar is committed to assisting in developing and improving the education, health, language, literature, arts, and culture of Myanmar's "National races."

"The Union shall assist:

- (a) To develop language, literature, fine arts and culture of the National races;
- (b) To promote solidarity, mutual amity and respect and mutual assistance among the National races;
- (c) To promote socio-economic development including education, health, economy, transport and communication, [and] so forth, of less-developed National races."

In addition to the supportive words mentioned in the current Constitution, the Law on the University for the Development of the National Races of the Union was promulgated in 1991 by the military government—the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC). Under this law, the SLORC established the University with the following aims:<sup>[7]</sup>

- (a) "To strengthen the Union spirit in the national races of the Union while residing in a friendly atmosphere and pursuing education at the University,
- (b) To preserve and understand the culture and good customs and traditions of the national races of the Union;
- (c) To promote the spirit of desiring to serve in order to raise the standard of living of the national races of the Union;
- (d) To raise the quality of leadership and efficiency in carrying out the development of the national races of the Union;
- (e) To infuse the spirit of desiring to carry out works of research with a view to the success of the measures for the development of the national races of the Union;
- (f) To produce good educational personnel who are free from party politics and who are of good moral character;
- (g) To keep alive and promote the spirit of desiring to preserve the cohesion of the Union, non-disintegration of national solidarity and ensuring the perpetuity of the sovereignty of the state."

While the Union government has a constitutional commitment to ensure education for all nationalities, additional support for responding to the specific educational needs of ethnic minority groups has been recommended.<sup>[8]</sup> Challenges which respondents suggested need Union policy-level change and support, are ensuring good educational opportunities for children in areas of former and recent armed conflict; remote, hilly regions; and areas where ethnic children do not speak the Myanmar language.

## **2. Education sector review<sup>[PT1]</sup>**

Currently the Myanmar education sector is one of the largest government services. Basic education alone, served 8,364,081 students in the 2012–2013 school year.<sup>[9]</sup> In line with Myanmar's transition towards a democratic society, the education sector in Myanmar is undergoing significant reform. The reform process was officially launched with the announcement of the "10-point education policy" by President U Thein Sein in the Union Parliament in March 2011 (See Annex A). The 10-point education policy is linked with other reforms such as the poverty reduction policy, the "Comprehensive National Development Plan" and the "Framework for Economic and Social Reforms (FESR)". As part of the President's education policy priorities, the 20-year Basic Education Development Plan was drafted. Another significant step has been the reading and discussion in Parliament, of the Bill on Free and Compulsory Primary Education.

The evidence-based Comprehensive Education Sector Review (CESR) is a first step in the reform effort and in cooperating with international development partners (DPs) who provide support for sector reform. Aimed at

raising the overall level of social and economic development in the country through a focus on human development, the Ministry of Education (MOE) initiated the CESR in February 2012.<sup>[10]</sup> Starting with the preparation stage of the CESR in early 2012, the MOE has invited all interested DPs to assist in the CESR process and help achieve its successful implementation. Many DPs have taken this opportunity to formally engage with the Ministry by offering technical and/or financial assistance for the CESR which completed its Phase-1 review in early 2013. The CESR Phase-1 working committee then prepared the Comprehensive New Legal Framework for the Education Sector (2014).<sup>[11]</sup>

Briefly, the current steps of the government's legal and policy reform agenda comprise both immediate and longer-term efforts in three areas which are closely linked: improving access, improving quality and improving management. However in this study, the special focus has been on improving access to education.

### Issues concerning access to education

Disadvantaged groups such as children and youth from poor families or communities in remote areas have limited or no access to educational opportunities and this greatly reduces their chances of completing their education. The following education-related indicators and information were obtained through a literature review.

**NER-Net Enrollment Rate:**<sup>[12]</sup> The NER for primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education is much lower in Myanmar than in other ASEAN countries, though data for 2011–2012 show that it has improved compared to 1998–1999. In 2011–2012, the NER for the three levels of education was 84.6%, 47%, 30% respectively but in 1998–1999 it was much lower (74.7%, 23.6% and 10.1%, respectively). In other ASEAN countries, the NER is much higher: in Vietnam, 98%, 76% and 41%, respectively; and in the Philippines, the NER for primary school is 90%, and for secondary school, 61%.

**Drop-out rate:** The drop-out rate is high in the fifth grade, the final year of primary school, the drop-out rate is 23.2%. In the eighth grade, the final year of lower secondary school, the drop-out rate is 18.4%, and in the ninth grade, the first year of upper secondary school, the drop-out rate 11.8%. Even in the tenth grade, the last year of upper secondary school, the drop-out rate is high at 18.8%.<sup>[13]</sup> The following findings from the in-depth interviews describe the economic difficulties of poor and vulnerable households that lead to these high drop-out rates.

According to the most recent data received from the Department of Basic Education-3 (DBE-3), for nearly 65% of students in the townships selected for this study who did not re-enroll in academic year 2013–2014, the reasons were lack of finance and the need to work to earn money to help support their household (DBE-3 regularly collects the list of students who did not re-enroll in a specific academic year).

Income difficulties of parents who earn barely enough to feed the family, is the main challenge for the Compulsory Primary Education (CPE) program according to MOE staff—the Director General, Director and Assistant Directors of the Department of Basic Education (DBE), Department of the Myanmar Education Research Bureau (DMERB), and the Department of Education Planning and Training (DEPT). Even though the Government of Myanmar currently provides free primary education and 1,000 kyat and six note books for every enrolled student, poor families often cannot afford to educate their children.

One of the assistant directors in the DEPT suggested that in addition to not charging fees and providing texts and note books, financial aid for poor families should equal as much as possible what primary-level children could earn if they were working rather than going to school, as well as the costs that parents must pay for school uniforms, school lunches and snacks, and transportation.

**Gap between rich and poor in school access:**<sup>[14]</sup> At the primary level, the gap between poor and non-poor households in school access is around 10%. However, this widens to around 24% at the secondary level. This may be due to greater financial constraints because while primary school education is provided for free, secondary school education is not.

**Access to school in urban and rural areas:**<sup>[15]</sup> The net enrolment rate for urban and rural areas at the primary level is 87.6% and 84%, respectively, and at the secondary level, 75.2% and 46.5%, respectively. Although there is only a slight difference in primary-level enrolment rates (only 3%), the differences become more pronounced at the secondary level (around 30% between urban and rural areas).

**Rising household costs for education:** Rising costs for school fees, texts and school supplies is apparent<sup>[16]</sup> if one compares household spending data for 1989, 1997, 2001, and 2006 (in 2006 school costs per household were 1,837 kyat). In these years, the spending for education as a share of non-food expenses gradually increased by 3.6%, 4.9%, 6.3%, 6.4%, respectively. In addition, household spending on education for 2006 exceeded that for medical care (1,286 kyat) and house rent and maintenance (1,416 kyat), demonstrating that education costs are an increasing household burden.

**Language:** Based on the literature review, language has been identified as one of the main barriers to school access for almost all ethnic minority groups in pursuing formal education. Across the country, Myanmar is the main teaching language. The initial years in primary school are considered the most challenging for children who do not speak Myanmar as their language barrier reduces their chances of doing well enough to continue on to middle and upper secondary education. However, the translation of text books into ethnic languages, as MOE has been doing, is not seen as the right solution.<sup>[17]</sup> Instead survey respondents believe it is better to hire primary school teachers who can teach in both Myanmar and the relevant ethnic language in order to help young students to become proficient in the Myanmar language.

### **Government policy and programs to improve access to education**

In order to improve access to education, MOE has developed the 30-year Basic Education Development Program for 2001-2031. This long-term basic education development plan aligns with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the Myanmar Education for All-National Action Plan (EFA-NAP) in ensuring that access to good quality, free education is the highest priority.

To support education reform, the 20-Year long-term plan called the “Basic Education Sector National Education Promotion 20-Year Long-term Plan 2011-2031” has been drafted and reflects the President’s 10-point education policy as well listing the key points of the 30-Year long-term education plan. The 20-year plan also includes key policy measures currently being implemented for enhancing access to education: (a) implementation of the free, compulsory primary education program, and (b) awarding of stipends for students in needy families.<sup>[18]</sup> Furthermore, the school grant program can be seen as another significant step in the reform process for enhancing access to education and speeding up decentralizing the administrative structure for basic education.

[1] Information received in a face-to-face interview with U Ko Lay Win, Deputy Director, Department of Planning and Training.

[2] Final Report, Data Collection Survey on [the] Education Sector in Myanmar (Feb 2013), funded by JICA.

[3] The Comprehensive Education Sector Review-Phase-1 Report (Draft)—only the Myanmar version of this report was available at the time of this study.

[4] Final Report, Data Collection Survey on [the] Education Sector in Myanmar (Feb 2013), funded by JICA.

[5] *Ibid.*

[6] These data are from the 1983 population census. There is no more recent estimate for the composition and size of ethnic groups.

[7] [http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/1991-SLORC\\_Law1991-09-University\\_for\\_the\\_Development\\_of\\_the\\_National\\_Races\\_Law-en.pdf](http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/1991-SLORC_Law1991-09-University_for_the_Development_of_the_National_Races_Law-en.pdf)



[8] Information obtained from interviews with national NGOs engaged in supportive research and advocacy for the educational development of ethnic people.

[9] Program Document (TOR) of the Scholarships and Stipend Program, Department of Planning and Education, Ministry of Education, August 2011.

[10] Terms of Reference for Myanmar Education Sector Review (CESR), 4 July 2012.

[11] The Comprehensive Education Sector Review Phase-1 Report (Draft) - (only the Myanmar version was available at the time of this study).

[12] NER data for Myanmar is from "Education for All: Access to Quality of Education in Myanmar," February, 2012, MOE, and data for other countries are from ADB, 2012, "Key Indicators in Asia and Pacific" and the UNESCO UIS 2011.

[13] Final Report, Data Collection Survey on the Education Sector in Myanmar (Feb 2013), funded by JICA.

[14] UNDP, Integrated Household Living Condition Survey, 2010.

[15] *Ibid.*

[16] Final Report, Data Collection Survey on the Education Sector in Myanmar (Feb 2013), funded by JICA (based on data from the Statistical Year Book, 2011).

[17] Information obtained from interviews with national NGOs doing supportive research and advocacy for the educational development of ethnic minority people.

[18] Final Report, Data Collection Survey on the Education Sector in Myanmar (Feb 2013), funded by JICA (based on data from the Statistical Year Book, 2011).

DRAFT

## Annex 2. Consultation Results by Township

### Taunggyi Township

Taunggyi Township is situated in the southern part of Shan State. In Taunggyi, the research team conducted nine focus group discussions. A township-level discussion was conducted in the township education office, and eight village-level discussions were conducted in schools. Out of the 73 persons the team interviewed, more than half (38 persons) were from Myanmar's ethnic minority groups. According to the township administration office and the township education office, local people earn their livelihoods as daily laborers (65%), growing crops and raising livestock (18%), working in cottage industries (11%), as merchants (4%) and as government employees (2%). Out of the four villages visited, two have a Burman majority population, one has a Pa-O majority population, and one had a majority Pa-O population and Barma population is minority. Language was reported to be a constraint for students in grade 1 and 2 among the Pa-O population.

**Table 1: Key stakeholders interviewed in Taunggyi Township (gender and ethnicity)**

	FGDs	KIs	Males	Females	Ethnicity						
					Barma	Pa-O	Shan	Inn thar	Danu	Rakine	Ka yin
Township-level	1	4	7	4	5	-	3	1	1	1	-
School-level	8	16	21	41	29	25	1	4	1	-	1
Total	9	20	28	45	35	25	4	5	2	1	1

Source: Social assessment teams

### Key issues and recommendations on access to education

All stakeholders provide broad community support for the stipends and school grants programs. According to TEO, as primary school is now free and the government provides all enrolling students with 1000 Kyats towards school costs, enrollment has significantly increased, and parents' interest in education has also increased. Most children have good access to primary education because every village has primary school and many affiliated primary schools are being upgraded to primary schools in the 2014-15 school year.

Key issues	Recommendations
------------	-----------------

- **Migration.** Children in these migrant families accompany their parents when parents move, children fail to finish primary school and sometimes do not even enroll in school.(in migrants)

- **Transportation.** Transportation to middle school and high school in other villages. Motorbikes and bicycles are their main transportation.

- **School Cost.** Poor parents cannot afford school costs, only send children to school until they can read and write (grade 5) and then withdraw them from school so that they can earn money to help support the family. Most students in remote areas stop attending school after lower secondary education as parents cannot pay the additional costs (school, travel, room and board) or cope with challenges of sending their children to a distant high school. They have to live in another community, and parents' anxiety about their safety.

- **Children's labour.** After lower secondary education, most boys stop going to school because their labor is needed by the family, and some boys quit school because they fall behind. In remote areas, due to safety, many girls only attend school to the highest grade available in their own village. Poor families often send their sons to a Buddhist monastery after completing primary schools.

- **Language.** In Pa-O villages, there are two problems with language barrier: 1) for younger students grade 1 and 2, there are no bilingual teachers and students are struggling to learn. Middle schools also face the problem of students who cannot understand Myanmar well but been passing through to upper level and cannot catch up with the learning. They are not interested and do not want to carry on their study. Students also are teased by their friends for not being able to speak Myanmar well. This discourages the students from going to school.

- **Teacher Shortage.** School committees reported to have shortage of teachers for post-primary schools. Some parents provide contribution to hire additional teachers, but poor parents cannot afford this cost.

- Upgrade existing middle schools to upper secondary levels so that the students can access secondary education in their own villages;

- Providing transportation for students who want to continue their education, especially in remote areas, where travelling too distant schools is too expensive and dangerous.

- Hiring teachers who can speak the ethnic minority language in schools where significant numbers of students are struggling with Myanmar.

- School heads and school committees should help create positive learning environment for all children.

- Better awareness programs should be conducted among parents to encourage parents to send their children to school.

### Key issues and Recommendations on Stipends and School Grants Programs

Parents regard the stipend as a significant help for them because it made it possible for their children to continue their education. The stipend substantially contributes to students' education costs, but township stipend committee members wondered if the stipend is enough incentive in the long term for stopping poor students from dropping out. Teachers reported that about-to-dropout told them that they were very grateful for receiving the stipend as it enabled them to continue their education. Parents of poor students said that they had a strong desire to see as many poor students as possible being awarded a stipend. Some parents

said that when they understood the purpose of the stipend and the criteria for selection, they were not embarrassed about revealing their poverty.

Key issues	Recommendations
<p><b>Committee and participation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Township level committee has limited participation from civil society organizations and community. CSO representatives informed that they were informed by phone and not have sufficient information or time to participate.</li> <li>• For school level committee, the participation of civil society and community varies depending on the leadership with the school heads. In Taunggyi, parents from ethnic groups such as Pa-o and Shan reported to have been participated in the committees. Pa-O and Shan committee members are reported to be very active in the programs' activities.</li> <li>• Due to difficulties of transportation and communication with schools in remote villages, TEO should expand the members of the township level committee to include resource persons who could help with the outreach and monitoring for the program such as school cluster heads at the sub-township level, ethnic leaders, religious leaders, and retired school heads.</li> <li>• School stipend committee members and school heads said that it is important that school stipend committees in mixed ethnic areas should include representatives (teachers, community members) from major ethnic minority groups such as Shan and Pa O, for example, can fluently communicate in both Myanmar and the local ethnic language/s.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TEO should properly contact each committee members and provide clear information with regard to the programs, their roles and responsibilities.</li> <li>• School stipend committee members in mixed ethnic areas should include members who are bi-lingual.</li> <li>• School stipend committee should include village administration leaders and/or community representatives from all villages covered by the school, and school cluster heads, and mass media representative.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Information dissemination</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education staff admitted that they do not have sufficient time to properly produce the program materials, and the information on the program. On the other hand, parents, CSOs and local communities including ethnic groups also reported not to receive sufficient or clear information about the program.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use more mass media such as radio and newspapers.</li> <li>• Announce the stipend program using billboards in local/ethnic languages:</li> <li>• Distribute pamphlets on the stipend program in public areas.</li> <li>• Organize a forum on the stipend program for village administration and community leaders so that they can inform others about the program:</li> <li>• Invite local communities through influential monasteries:</li> <li>• Use ethnic minority language-speakers in promoting stipend-related activities:</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold the meetings at a feasible time for the parents.</li> <li>• Take time for inclusion of active representatives from local communities</li> </ul>
<p><b>Not clear information about the programs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TEO and school heads informed that the training is too short (only 3 days per program). The trainings for township staff related to the stipend and grant programs should take place in mid-April, well before start of the school year on June 1, said the TEO and ATEOs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trainings on the stipend and school grant programs should be conducted before the schools reopen.</li> <li>• More members of the school level committee should be included in the training.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Criteria</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At the village level, school heads and committees use orphans or single parents as first criteria. Because of these criteria, poor parents feel that their children are excluded from the program.</li> <li>• Parents and teachers disagreed on some of the program's criteria such as student's family owning a stone or cement house, condition of a student's clothes, or family's ownership of a cell phone or TV should not be used for screening students from the program.</li> <li>• Some better-off families said that they misunderstood the criteria for stipend and applied as they thought that receiving stipend would enhance their children's reputation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MoE should review and revise criteria. TEO and school heads would need to make sure that all stakeholders understand criteria clearly.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Feedback mechanism</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a board to display the program information. All schools in Taunggyi are selected for the stipends program. There is no complaint from the areas.</li> <li>• At the village level, parents and local communities did not know about the feedback mechanism. The school did not provide this information during the meetings.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TEO and School heads would need to make sure that information on the feedback mechanisms is provided to all stakeholders and display in public places. All materials on the feedback mechanism will be produced in Myanmar and local ethnic languages.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Limited human resource.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Township and school staff had to work long hours to complete the assigned activities related to the stipend. Because the work for the pilot stipend program was difficult and time-consuming, and there were not enough staff for these extra tasks, staff could not complete the additional work and keep up with their regular jobs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MoE assigns special staff to help TEO and school heads implement the stipend and school grants programs.</li> <li>• Assign special staff for the stipend program to work with TEO and ATEO on the programs; if possible former teachers or school heads could be hired for this task.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Limited Timing.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There was a very tight deadline for nominating students did not allow adequate field checks and some deserving</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program should start early (April) and allow sufficient time for all concerned to</li> </ul>

students were not awarded a stipend. There is also no time to properly produce documents or disseminate information to all concerns in the areas.	implement the program prior to the beginning of the academic year.
---	--

**School Grants:** Education staff and school committees are pleased with the new stipend program which has expanded the expenditure items from two to twelve. The new guideline has reduced the costs that usually born by school committees and parents. Key issues school committees raised were the participation of school committee in reviewing and deciding on the school plans and items to be supported by school grants; and transparency of what have been decided and how much budget was spent. Recommendations are for the school heads and school committee to make decision together and for all the decision to be displayed at school for transparency purposes.

### SintKaing Township

SintKaing Township is in Madalay Region. In SintKaing, the research team conducted seventeen focus group discussions. Two township-level discussions were conducted in the township education office, and fifteen village-level discussions were conducted in schools. Out of the 83 persons the team interviewed, 13 Barma muslim persons. Community leaders and parents in this township speak Myanmar well. Out of the four villages visited, two have a Barma majority population, one has a Barma Musilm majority population, and one have a both Barma and Barma Musilm majority population. Both Barma and Barma Musilm work in farming, small scale livestock and casual labor. Parents from Musilm population were identified by school heads, teachers and village leaders of having children who have potentially being dropout from the school.

**Table 2: Key stakeholders interviewed in SintKaingTownship (gender and ethnicity)**

	FGDs	KIIs	Gender		Ethnic		
			Male	Female	Barma	Barma Muslim	Shan
Township Level	1	2	5	3	5	2	1
School Level	10	17	36	39	64	11	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>1</b>

### Key issues and Recommendations on Access to Education

**All stakeholders provide broad community support for these programs.** The TEO and ATEO indicated that most of the children in this township have good access to primary education as every village has a primary or affiliated primary school. The ATEO also said that the numbers attending lower secondary school increased in school year 2014-15. However, most students stop after lower secondary school (grade 8) because the high school is far away. In Barma muslim community, parents take their children out after primary school to attend the Islamic schools as they provide free rooms and food for students.

Key issues	Recommendations from the discussions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Migration:</b> Children in these migrant families accompany their parents when parents move, children fail to finish primary school and sometimes do not even enroll in school.( in migrants)</li> <li><b>Transportation.</b> Most students stop attending school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Upgrade existing middle schools to upper secondary levels so that the students can access secondary education in their own villages;</li> <li>Providing transportation for students who want to continue their education, especially in</li> </ul>

<p>after lower secondary school as their parents cannot afford the additional cost of school fee and transportation to high school in another village or pay their share for hiring additional high school teachers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>No secondary and upper secondary school in the village.</b> There is no middle and high schools in most villages. Students tend to drop out.</li> <li>• <b>Children's labour.</b> Most boys are removed from school after, or even during, lower secondary school, because their labor is needed to earn money for the family. In some cases, the boys drop out of school because they fall behind their peers.</li> <li>• <b>Job opportunity.</b> Parents feel that their children cannot find jobs after graduation from high school. So they would send their children to vocational training instead of sending to high school.</li> <li>• The TEO reported that most Muslim parents remove their children from school after primary education in order to send them to religious schools.</li> </ul>	<p>remote areas, where travelling too distant schools is too expensive and dangerous.</p>
--	---

### Key issues and Recommendations on Stipends and School Grants Programs

Parents regard the stipend as a significant help for them because it made it possible for their children to continue their education. There were concerns whether the stipend provides enough incentive in the long term for stopping poor students from dropping out. Teachers reported that about-to-dropout told them that they were very grateful for receiving the stipend as it enabled them to continue their education. Parents of poor students said that they had a strong desire to see as many poor students as possible being awarded a stipend. Some parents said that when they understood the purpose of the stipend and the criteria for selection, they were not embarrassed about revealing their poverty.

Key issues	Recommendations
<p><b>Committee and Participation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TEO and ATEOs said that more time should be allowed to identify and recruit effective township stipend committee members from among CSOs and community leaders, including the leaders of ethnic minority group. The team was informed that there are three representatives from civil society organizations in the committee. But they did not participate in meetings. TEO would like to recruit more active members from civil society.</li> <li>• In the case of middle and high schools that draw students from more than one village, stipend committee members are selected only from the village with the school, and they have difficulty explaining the stipend program to parents in other villages and monitoring</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TEO takes adequate time to select township stipend committee members. TEO and designated staff need to make sure that township and school level committees recruit members according to the criteria and that they have sufficient information to implement the program.</li> <li>• TEO and school heads provide sufficient and clear information, and training for members especially new ones who do not have education background.</li> <li>• Include on the school stipend committee, village administration leaders and/or community representatives from all villages</li> </ul>

<p>awardees.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school level committees, in the Muslim community, Barma Muslim parents involved but not active in the committees' activities. Parents feel that the programs should be implemented by the government, so they are not actively involved, even though they feel that the program is good.</li> </ul>	<p>covered by the school:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hold the meetings at a feasible time for the parents.</li> <li>Take time for inclusion of active representatives from local communities</li> </ul>
<p><b>Information dissemination</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information with regard to the program did not get distributed widely in the community.</li> <li>Meetings organized for the stipend program were held during the agriculture season when parents were very busy, many could not attend. Thus, holding the meeting at a convenient time of year for parents increases the chances of their participating in the stipend program.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organize an orientation on the programs for village administration, community leaders so they could then help inform others about the programs.</li> <li>Announce the stipend program using billboards.</li> <li>Distribute pamphlets on the stipend program in public areas such as markets, and distributing pamphlets and flyers in tea shops would be effective in raising awareness about the stipend program.</li> <li>Hold an information meeting about the stipend program at a time when parents can attend.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Not clear information about the programs.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is a new program. Most stakeholders informed that they do not have sufficient information about the program and guideline especially on the student selection criteria. They need more information and training.</li> <li>TEO and school heads complained that the training time was too short and too close to the opening of the school year.</li> <li>School heads and committees misunderstood that students need to pass a monthly exam in order to receive stipends, in reality the guideline requires the student to pass annual exam not monthly exams.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide more training for all committee members. The school heads and teachers suggested that the trainees should be two persons from each school (the school head and a teacher or representative from community).</li> <li>The training period should be extended from 3 to 5 days so that participants have enough time to understand all the complex details about the stipend program.</li> <li>Trainings on the stipend and school grant programs should be conducted before the schools reopen.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Criteria</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At the village level, school heads and committees use orphans or single parents as first criteria. Because of these criteria, poor parents feel that their children are excluded from the program.</li> <li>Screening questions for parents/students should not include family possessions such as a cell phone, stone house or a motor bike that could result in the family appearing better off than they really were. In order to work as casual</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MoE reviews criteria for the program.</li> </ul>



labors, they have to use second hand motorbikes.	
<p><b>Filling in the form</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents need help in filling in the forms.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers and SGSC members should provide assistance to parents and students who need help filling in the forms.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Dropout data</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SintKaingtowship has very low dropout. They have to reselected the schools. So, drop out was not used as the key priority for school selection.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Feedback mechanism:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a board to display the program information. There is no complaint from the areas. At the village level, parents and local communities did not know about the feedback mechanism. The school did not provide this information during the meetings.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TEO and School heads would need to make sure that information on the feedback mechanisms is provided to all stakeholders and display in public places. All materials on the feedback mechanism will be produced in Myanmar and local ethnic languages.</li> </ul>
<p><b>General comment:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TEO and ATEO suggested that awarded students should be able to continue receiving stipends when they move to the new township.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MoE should review the criteria and guideline.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Limited human resources.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Township and school staff reported to had to work long hours to complete the assigned activities related to the stipend. The work for the pilot stipend program was difficult and time-consuming, and there were not enough staff for these extra tasks, staff could not complete the additional work and keep up with their regular jobs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assign special staff for the stipend program to work with TEO and ATEO on the programs; if possible former teachers or school heads could be hired for this task.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Limited time</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The TEO and ATEOs said that the timeframe for conducting stipend-related activities at the school level, including dissemination of printed information and presentations on the stipend program to parents and others in the community is not sufficient. There is very tight deadline for nominating students did not allow adequate field checks and some deserving students were not awarded a stipend.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The program should allow more time for staff to complete all the implementation process according to the guideline.</li> </ul>
<p><b>School Grants:</b> Education staff and school committees are pleased with the new stipend program which has expanded the expenditure items from two to twelve. The new guideline has reduced the costs that usually born by school committees and parents. Key issues school committees raised were the participation of school committee in reviewing and deciding on the school plans and items to be supported by school grants; and transparency of what have been decided and how much budget was spent. Recommendations are for the school heads and school committee to make decision together and for all the decision to be</p>	

displayed at school for transparency purposes.

### Bogalay Township.

Bogalay Township is located in Ayayawady Region where majority of the population are Burman. In Bogalay, the research team conducted seventeen focus group discussions. Two township-level discussions were conducted in the township education office, and fifteen village-level discussions were conducted in schools. Out of the 176 persons the team interviewed 43 persons who were from Myanmar's ethnic minority groups, Kayin and Rakhine. Out of the four villages visited, two have a Burman majority population, one has a Kayin majority population, and one is a majority Rakhine population. The majority populations of both Kayin and Rakhine work in farming, fishing, small scale livestock and casual labor. Parents from Kayin and Rakhine ethnic population were identified by village heads, teachers and school heads of having children who have potentially being dropout from the school. Language was reported to be a constraint for students in grade 1 and 2 among the solely Kayin population, but not among the Rakhine population who speak fluent Myanmar.

**Table 3: Key stakeholders interviewed in Bogalay Township (gender and ethnicity)**

Sr.	Particular	KIIs	FGDs	Male	Female	Ethnic		
						Barma	Kayin	Rakhine
1	Township Level	0	2	12	0	11	0	1
2	School Level	23	15	62	102	122	32	10
	<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>11</b>

### Key issues and Recommendations on Access to Education

**All stakeholders provide broad community support for these programs.**

Key issues	Recommendations from the discussions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Migration.</b> TEO informed that 15% of population in the township are migrant workers. Children in these migrant families accompany their parents when parents move, children fail to finish primary school and sometimes do not even enroll in school.</li> <li>• <b>High cost for education.</b> The free-of-charge system has been initiated for primary school, children have good access to primary education, however, poor parents said that because they cannot bear the additional cost of middle and high school (tuition, lunch, transportation (mostly ferries) and often fees for hiring extra teachers, etc.). In some villages where there are not enough teachers, and the school committee has to hire outside teachers, poor parents cannot afford this extra cost and they remove their children from school.</li> <li>• <b>No middle and high schools located in the areas.</b> While most children have good access to primary education in their own village, there are not nearly as many middle schools, and poor families cannot afford</li> </ul>	<p>Upgrade existing middle schools to upper secondary levels so that the students can access secondary education in their own villages;</p> <p>Providing transportation for students who want to continue their education, especially in remote areas, where travelling too distant schools is too expensive.</p> <p>MoE hires more teachers especially the ones who can speak the ethnic minority language in schools where significant numbers of students are struggling with Myanmar.</p>

middle school if it is in another village.

- **Language** for younger children in Kayin population. Teachers and students do not speak the same languages. Teachers only speak Burman, students in primary school especially in grade 1 and 2 are too young to comprehend the language. Teachers reported to use students in grade 5 to help communicate with younger students.

*\* Government agencies and parents of Rakhine population reported not having problems with language.*

- **Teacher shortage.** School committees reported to have shortage of teachers for post-primary schools. Some parents provide contribution to hire additional teachers, but poor parents cannot afford this cost.

**Key issues and Recommendations on Stipends and School Grants Programs**

Parents regard the stipend as a significant help for them because it made it possible for their children to continue their education. There were concerns whether the stipend provides enough incentive in the long term for stopping poor students from dropping out. Teachers reported that about-to-dropout told them that they were very grateful for receiving the stipend as it enabled them to continue their education. Parents of poor students said that they had a strong desire to see as many poor students as possible being awarded a stipend. Some parents said that when they understood the purpose of the stipend and the criteria for selection, they were not embarrassed about revealing their poverty.

Key issues	Recommendations
<p><b>Committee and Participation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Committee members at the township level (TGSC) do include other government agencies and civil society organizations on paper, but in reality they did not participate. Members only learned that they are members when the assessment team interviewed them.</li> <li>• In the case of middle and high schools that draw students from more than one village, stipend committee members are selected only from the village with the school, and they have difficulty explaining the stipend program to parents in other villages and monitoring awardees.</li> <li>• The school level committees do have civil society representatives and members of ethnic community participation. Level of participation seems to depend on the relationship of the school heads with parents and the community. For mixed ethnic communities,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TEO takes adequate time to select township stipend committee members. TEO and designated staff need to make sure that township and school level committees recruit members according to the criteria and that they have sufficient information to implement the program.</li> <li>• TEO and school heads recruit more representatives from other agencies, civil society and ethnic leaders into the committees. Members should be able to speak Burma and local ethnic languages.</li> <li>• TEO and school heads provide sufficient and clear information, and training for members especially new ones who do not</li> </ul>

<p>stakeholders suggested that committee should have bi-lingual members to ensure participation and information could read ethnic groups.</p>	<p>have education background.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include on the school stipend committee, village administration leaders and/or community representatives from all villages covered by the school.</li> <li>• Hold the meetings at a feasible time for the parents.</li> <li>• Take time for inclusion of active representatives from local communities</li> </ul>
<p><b>Information dissemination</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information with regard to the program did not get distributed widely in the community.</li> <li>• Materials and information were not produced and distributed in ethnic languages as planned.</li> <li>• Meetings organized for the stipend program were held during the agriculture season when parents were very busy, many could not attend. Thus, holding the meeting at a convenient time of year for parents increases the chances of their participating in the stipend program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Produce program materials in both Myanmar, Kayin and Rakhine.</li> <li>• Organize an orientation on the programs for village administration, community leaders so they could then help inform others about the programs.</li> <li>• Invite bilingual teachers and leaders of ethnic groups who can speak both Myanmar and local ethnic language attend the meetings with parents to help with the language.</li> <li>• Announce the stipend program using billboards in local/ethnic languages.</li> <li>• Distribute pamphlets on the stipend program in public areas such as markets, and distributing pamphlets and flyers in tea shops would be effective in raising awareness about the stipend program.</li> <li>• Hold an information meeting about the stipend program at a time when parents can attend.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Not clear information about the programs.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is a new program. Most stakeholders informed that they do not have sufficient information about the program. They need more information and training.</li> <li>• TEO and school heads complained that the training time was too short and too close to the opening of the school year.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide more training for all committee members. The school heads and teachers suggested that the trainees should be two persons from each school (the school head and a teacher or interesting and active participant from the committee).</li> <li>• The training period should be extended from 3 to 5 days so that participants have enough time to understand all the complex details about the stipend program.</li> <li>• Trainings on the stipend and school grant programs should be conducted before the schools reopen.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Criteria</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Screening questions for parents/students should have more questions to explain why a family had possessions such a cell phone or a motor bike that could result in the family appearing better off than they really were.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MoE reviews criteria for the program.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Inappropriate practice:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents and school committee members said that due to embarrassment as a result of being questioned in front of their peers, many poor students said that their families had possessions which they really did not have. As a consequence, these students were not nominated for a stipend, although they should have qualified. Such preliminary questioning about family possessions should be done privately, never in front of other students.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School should make sure that all questions and practice are conducted in a safe and appropriate manner.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Filling in the form</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents need help in filling in the forms.</li> <li>• Some parents said that it mistake to have students fill out the stipend application form themselves as they could make mistakes regarding key facts and figures that would disqualify them when they should be provided with a stipend.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bilingual teachers, ethnic leaders should provide assistance to parents and students who need help filling in the forms.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Calculation of dropout data</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ATEOs suggested that the dropout data required by the township education office for the stipend program could be calculated by taking the difference between the number of students who enroll in July at the beginning of the school year and the number of students who participate in final examinations in February. This would provide consistent, accurate data on dropouts for each school.</li> <li>• Dropout data from the whole school should be used in the selection process: Currently, dropout data collected from only three grades (grades 5, 9 and 11) is used for selecting the eligible schools. Dropout data should instead be collected from all grades in order to accurately determine whether a school should be selected for the stipend program.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MoE reviews the recommendations on the dropout data to ensure that the calculation is fair and understand by all schools.</li> </ul>
<p><b>General concerns:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TEO and ATEOs said that they do not have budget for stationary and transportation costs to implement this program. They would like to have a separate budget for stipends program for printing application</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TEO and school heads provide clear information about the school.</li> </ul>

<p>forms and travel expenses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Since there are two stipends (one awarded by Myanmar government and one by the World Bank), There were some concerns over the possibility that some students could be awarded both stipends while other deserving students missed out.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Limited human resources.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Township and school staff reported to had to work long hours to complete the assigned activities related to the stipend. The work for the pilot stipend program was difficult and time-consuming, and there were not enough staff for these extra tasks, staff could not complete the additional work and keep up with their regular jobs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assign special staff for the stipend program to work with TEO and ATEO on the programs; if possible former teachers or school heads could be hired for this task.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Limited time</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The TEO and ATEOs said that the timeframe for conducting stipend-related activities at the school level, including dissemination of printed information and presentations on the stipend program to parents and others in the community is not sufficient. There is very tight deadline for nominating students did not allow adequate field checks and some deserving students were not awarded a stipend.</li> <li>• The TEO and ATEOs said that more time should be allowed to identify and recruit effective township stipend committee members from among CSOs and community leaders, including the leaders of ethnic minority groups.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The program should allow more time for staff to complete all the implementation process according to the guideline.</li> </ul>
<p><b>School Grants:</b> Education staff and school committees are pleased with the new stipend program which has expanded the expenditure items from two to twelve. The new guideline has reduced the costs that usually born by school committees and parents. Key issues school committees raised were the participation of school committee in reviewing and deciding on the school plans and items to be supported by school grants; and transparency of what have been decided and how much budget was spent. Recommendations are for the school heads and school committee to make decision together and for all the decision to be displayed at school for transparency purposes.</p> <p>Though the school heads received a training on budgeting of the school grants, more time seemed to be needed to clearly understand all the budget lines in detail. For example, there were no electricity fees for the remote areas of off-grid lines, but the schools had to purchase the generators and consequently bear the costs of fuels. The difficulty faced by the school heads was they did not clearly know whether the expenditures were in line with the prescribed budget lines or not. There was also a restriction that (in-country) travel allowances were eligible only for over 5 miles distance. It should be considered that, in reality there would be traveling costs even travelling within 5 miles distance.</p>	

### KyaungKone Township

KyaungKone Township is situated in the Arwady Region. In KyaungKone township, the research team conducted ten focus group discussions. Two township-level discussions were conducted in the township

education office, and eight village-level discussions were conducted in schools. 24 key informant interviews were conducted at the school level. Out of the 107 persons the team interviewed, 32 persons were from Myanmar's ethnic minority groups, Kayin, Chinese and Indian. Majority population is Barma. TEO has four Chinese committee members, one of these four representing civil society organization. Township level staff and some school heads are Kayin. Out of the four villages visited, one has a Barma majority population, one has a Kayin majority population and two Kayin-Burma mixed population. The majority populations of both Barma and Kayin work in farming ,small scale livestock and casual labor. Most parents interviewed are casual labor and work in farms. Language was reported to be a constraint for students in grade 1 and 2 among the Kayin solely population. Most parents interviewed are casual labor and work in farms.

**Table 4: Key stakeholders interviewed in KyaungKone Township (gender and ethnicity)**

	FGDs	KIIs	Males	Female s	Ethnicity			
					Barma	Ka Yin	Chines e	Indian
Township Level	2	1	9	5	5	5	4	Nil
School Level	8	24	43	50	70	22	Nil	1
Total	10	25	52	55	75	27	4	1

Source: Social assessment team

### Key issues and Recommendations on Access to Education

**All stakeholders provide broad community support for these programs.** Township stipend committee members said that most children have good access to primary education(primary or affiliated primary school) and with many affiliated primary schools being upgraded to free-of-charge primary schools in the 2014-15 school year, more parents will send their children to school.

Key issues	Recommendations from the discussions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Migration.</b> Children in these migrant families accompany their parents when parents move, children fail to finish primary school and sometimes do not even enroll in school.</li> <li>• <b>Transportation.</b> Poor families cannot afford school fees and their contribution to hiring outside teachers. Parents send their children to the highest grade available in their village. But poor students do not continue if the next level of school is in another village as parents cannot afford the fee and transportation costs.</li> <li>• <b>Language.</b> In Kayin villages parents informed that Myanmar language is a challenge for students in grades 1 and 2.</li> <li>• <b>Children's labour.</b> Although parents send both boys and girls to school, parents often remove the oldest child from school to work, so that the family can afford to send younger children to school. Children are often removed from school once they</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upgrade existing middle schools to upper secondary levels so that the students can access secondary education in their own villages;</li> <li>• Hiring teachers who can speak the ethnic minority language in schools where significant numbers of students are struggling with Myanmar</li> <li>• Providing transportation for students who want to continue their education, especially in remote areas, where travelling too distant schools is too expensive and dangerous.</li> <li>• MoE considers providing additional amount of funds to very poor students.</li> </ul>

complete lower secondary education and then go to Yangon city to work in construction, industrial zones, or garment factories.

- The amount of the stipend is not sufficient for the very poor parents who need their children's labors to help earn more money.

**Key issues and Recommendations on Stipends and School Grants Programs**

Parents regard the stipend as a significant help for them because it made it possible for their children to continue their education. There were concerns whether the stipend provides enough incentive in the long term for stopping poor students from dropping out. Teachers reported that about-to-dropout told them that they were very grateful for receiving the stipend as it enabled them to continue their education. Parents of poor students said that they had a strong desire to see as many poor students as possible being awarded a stipend; and that awarding a stipend to a needy student not only reduces family costs for education but also encourages awardees to become outstanding students.

<b>Key Issues</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
<p><b>Committee and Participation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Committee members at the township level (TGSC) do include other government agencies and civil society organizations on paper, but in reality they did not participate. Members only learned that they are members when the assessment team interviewed them.</li> </ul> <p>CSOs and local leaders informed that they are interested in participating in the committee.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the case of middle and high schools that draw students from more than one village, stipend committee members are selected only from the village with the school, and they have difficulty explaining the stipend program to parents in other villages and monitoring awardees.</li> <li>• Members of school stipend committee said that in many cases there are not enough members on the school-level stipend committee which makes it challenging to conduct the field visits required to monitor students who have been awarded a stipend. Thus, a larger number of teachers, as well others (parents and local community representatives, including ethnic representatives) should be selected.</li> <li>• The school level committees do have civil society representatives and members of ethnic community participation. Level of participation seems to depend on the relationship of the school heads with parents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MoE reviews the criteria, number of and types of members for the TGSC and SGSC.</li> <li>• TEO takes adequate time to select township stipend committee members. TEO and designated staff need to make sure that township and school level committees recruit members according to the criteria and that they have sufficient information to implement the program.</li> <li>• TEO and school heads recruit more representatives from other agencies, civil society and ethnic leaders into the committees. Members should be able to speak Burma and local ethnic languages.</li> <li>• TEO and school heads provide sufficient and clear information, and training for members especially new ones who do not have education background.</li> <li>• Include on the school stipend committee, village administration leaders and/or community representatives from all villages covered by the school:</li> <li>• Hold the meetings at a feasible time for the parents.</li> <li>• Take time for inclusion of active representatives from local communities</li> </ul>



<p>and the community. For mixed ethnic communities, stakeholders suggested that committee should have bi-lingual members to ensure participation and information could read ethnic groups.</p>	
<p><b>Information dissemination</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information with regard to the program did not get distributed widely in the community.</li> <li>Materials and information were not produced and distributed in ethnic languages as planned.</li> <li>Meetings organized for the stipend program were held during the agriculture season when parents were very busy, many could not attend. Thus, holding the meeting at a convenient time of year for parents increases the chances of their participating in the stipend program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produce program materials in both Myanmar and Kayin.</li> <li>Organize an orientation on the programs for village administration, community leaders so they could then help inform others about the programs.</li> <li>Invite bilingual teachers and leaders of ethnic groups who can speak both Myanmar and local ethnic language attend the meetings with parents to help with the language.</li> <li>Announce the stipend program using billboards and loud speakers in local/ethnic languages.</li> <li>Distribute pamphlets on the stipend program in public areas such as markets, and distributing pamphlets and flyers in tea shops would be effective in raising awareness about the stipend program.</li> <li>Hold an information meeting about the stipend program at a time when parents can attend.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Not clear information about the programs.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is a new program Most stakeholders informed that they do not have sufficient information about the program. They need more information and training.</li> <li>TEO and school heads complained that the training time was too short and too close to the opening of the school year.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide more training for all committee members. The school heads and teachers suggested that the trainees should be two persons from each school (the school head and a teacher).</li> <li>The training period should be extended from 3 to 5 days so that participants have enough time to understand all the complex details about the stipend program.</li> <li>Trainings on the stipend and school grant programs should be conducted before the schools reopen.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Criteria</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Screening questions for parents/students should have more questions to explain why a family had possessions such a cell phone, house with thin roof, a motor bike that could result in the family appearing better off than they really were.</li> <li>Parents thought that because the stipend criteria favored orphans, and many poor and needy students with parents believed that they had little chance of qualifying, this could discourage them from applying.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MoE reviews criteria for the program.</li> <li>TEO and School heads provide clear criteria about the programs to the community.</li> <li>School heads and school committees should help provide positive environment for parents and students of the whole school about the program, so that students would not feel embarrass about the program.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some poor and needy parents said that they decided not to apply for the stipend because they thought that being identified as poor would embarrass their children.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Inappropriate practice:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents and school committee members said that due to embarrassment as a result of being questioned in front of their peers, many poor students said that their families had possessions which they really did not have. As a consequence, these students were not nominated for a stipend, although they should have qualified. Such preliminary questioning about family possessions should be done privately, never in front of other students.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School should make sure that all questions and practice are conducted in a safe and appropriate manner.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Calculation of dropout data</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The head of a primary school which did not qualify for the stipend complained that poor students in his school were deprived of the opportunity to apply because, as specified by the rules, dropout numbers were collected only for grades 5 and 6. If dropouts in grades 1-4 were considered, his school would qualify.</li> <li>ATEOs suggested that the dropout data required by the township education office for the stipend program could be calculated by taking the difference between the number of students who enroll in July at the beginning of the school year and the number of students who participate in final examinations in February. This would provide consistent, accurate data on dropouts for each school.</li> <li>Dropout data from the whole school should be used in the selection process: Currently, dropout data collected from only three grades (grades 5, 9 and 11) is used for selecting the eligible schools. Dropout data should instead be collected from all grades in order to accurately determine whether a school should be selected for the stipend program,.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MoE reviews the recommendations on the dropout data to ensure that the calculation is fair and understand by all schools.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Limited human resources</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Township and school staff reported to had to work long hours to complete the assigned activities related to the stipend. The work for the pilot stipend program was difficult and time-consuming, and there were not enough staff for these extra tasks, staff could not complete the additional work and keep up with their regular jobs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assign special staff for the stipend program to work with TEO and ATEO on the programs; if possible former teachers or school heads could be hired for this task.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Limited budget</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Education staff complained about the extra budget needed for actual implementation of the program. Many of the staff said that they use their own budget and computers for this program.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MoE to provide additional implementation budget for the township office.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Limited time</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The TEO and ATEOs said that the timeframe for conducting stipend-related activities at the school level, including dissemination of printed information and presentations on the stipend program to parents and others in the community is not sufficient. There is very tight deadline for nominating students did not allow adequate field checks and some deserving students were not awarded a stipend.</li> <li>The TEO and ATEOs said that more time should be allowed to identify and recruit effective township stipend committee members from among CSOs and community leaders, including the leaders of ethnic minority groups and school cluster heads.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The program should allow more time for staff to complete all the implementation process according to the guideline.</li> </ul>
<p><b>School Grants:</b> Education staff and school committees are pleased with the new stipend program which has expanded the expenditure items from two to twelve. The new guideline has reduced the costs that usually born by school committees and parents. Key issues school committees raised were the participation of school committee in reviewing and deciding on the school plans and items to be supported by school grants; and transparency of what have been decided and how much budget was spent. Recommendations are for the school heads and school committee to make decision together and for all the decision to be displayed at school for transparency purposes.</p>	

### Laputta Township

Laputta Township is located in the Ayarwady Region. In Laputta, the research team conducted sixteen focus group discussions. Two township-level discussions were conducted in the township education office, and fourteen village-level discussions were conducted in schools. Key informant interviews were conducted at the school level. Out of the 149 persons the team interviewed, 12 persons were from Myanmar's ethnic minority groups, Kayin. Majority population is Barma. Out of the four villages visited, three have a Barma majority population and one have a Barma-Kayin mixed population. The majority populations of both Barma and Kayin work in farming, fishing, small scale livestock and casual labor. Parents from casual labours were identified by TEOs and school heads of having children who have potentially being dropout from the school. Kayin population has been located in this township for a long time and can speak Myanmar well.

**Table 5: Key stakeholders interviewed in Laputta Township (gender and ethnicity)**

	KIIs	FGDs	Males	Females	Ethnicity of participants		
					Barma	Kayin	Mon
Township Level	0	2	19	1	20	0	0
School Level	29	14	60	69	116	12	1

Total	29	16	79	70	136	12	1
-------	----	----	----	----	-----	----	---

Source: Social assessment data

### Key issues and Recommendations on Access to Education

**All stakeholders provide broad community support for these programs.**

Key issues	Recommendations from the discussions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Migration.</b> Children in these migrant families accompany their parents when parents move, children fail to finish primary school and sometimes do not even enroll in school.</li> <li>• CSO members of TGSC said that children of migrant families move frequently, they often do not finish primary education. There are many migrant workers working in small scale fishing business.</li> <li>• Although many students from migrant families cannot attend government primary schools, a CSO representative on a township stipend committee said that some poor students (boys only) enroll as novice monks in a monastery school where students are provided with lunch and do not need to wear a uniform.</li> <li>• <b>Transportation.</b> Most villages in this township are located in remote areas. The main transportation is motor boat. So, it is very difficult for students to travel to schools.</li> <li>• If students must travel to high school in another village, poor families cannot afford the additional cost of transportation, outside teachers' fees, and tuition which must paid at the start of the school year.</li> <li>• <b>Teacher Shortage.</b> School committees reported to have shortage of teachers for post-primary schools. Some parents provide contribution to hire additional teachers, but poor parents cannot afford this cost.</li> <li>• <b>No secondary and upper secondary school in the village.</b> In a village where some 80 percent of students cannot continue on to upper secondary school, the school committee is upgrading the village's middle school to an affiliated high school so that more than half of the students who finish lower secondary school can go on to upper secondary school in their home village. Some students in grade 9 are doing farm work while they wait for this opportunity.</li> <li>• A school committee has been motivating parents to send all their children to school by making lower</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upgrade existing middle schools to upper secondary levels so that the students can access secondary education in their own villages;</li> <li>• Providing transportation for students who want to continue their education, especially in remote areas, where travelling too distant schools is too expensive and dangerous.</li> </ul>

secondary education available in the village.

- **Children's labour.** Poor parents try to send both boys and girls to school until the end of middle school, but then older children stop going to school in order to help support the family by working as laborers and factory workers.

**Key issues and Recommendations on Stipends and School Grants Programs**

Parents regard the stipend as a significant help for them because it made it possible for their children to continue their education. There were concerns whether the stipend provides enough incentive in the long term for stopping poor students from dropping out. Teachers reported that about-to-dropout told them that they were very grateful for receiving the stipend as it enabled them to continue their education. Parents of poor students said that they had a strong desire to see as many poor students as possible being awarded a stipend; and that awarding a stipend to a needy student not only reduces family costs for education but also encourages awardees to become outstanding students.

<b>Key Issues</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
<p><b>Committee and Participation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Laputta township has the most active members for the TGSC from other government agencies and CSOs. Member of the TGSC are very close and meet often.</li> <li>• In the case of middle and high schools that draw students from more than one village, stipend committee members are selected only from the village with the school, and they have difficulty explaining the stipend program to parents in other villages and monitoring awardees.</li> <li>• Members of school stipend committee said that in many cases there are not enough members on the school-level stipend committee which makes it challenging to conduct the field visits required to monitor students who have been awarded a stipend. Thus, a larger number of teachers, as well others (parents and local community representatives, including ethnic representatives) should be selected.</li> <li>• Teacher members should not be new teachers. If teachers were new to the village and did not know students well, their lack of knowledge about students' home conditions could disqualify deserving students</li> <li>• The school level committees do have civil society representatives and members of ethnic community participation. Level of participation seems to depend on the relationship of the school heads with parents and the community.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TEO takes adequate time to select township stipend committee members. TEO and designated staff need to make sure that township and school level committees recruit members according to the criteria and that they have sufficient information to implement the program.</li> <li>• TEO and school heads provide sufficient and clear information, and training for members especially new ones who do not have education background.</li> <li>• Include on the school stipend committee, village administration leaders and/or community representatives from all villages covered by the school.</li> <li>• Hold the meetings at a feasible time for the parents.</li> <li>• Take time for inclusion of active representatives from local communities.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Information dissemination</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information with regard to the program did not get distributed widely in the community.</li> <li>• Materials and information were not produced and distributed in ethnic languages as planned.</li> <li>• Meetings organized for the stipend program were held during the agriculture season when parents were very busy, many could not attend. Thus, holding the meeting at a convenient time of year for parents increases the chances of their participating in the stipend program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Produce program materials in both Myanmar and Kayin.</li> <li>• Organize an orientation on the programs for village administration, community leaders so they could then help inform others about the programs.</li> <li>• Announce the stipend program using boards in local/ethnic languages.</li> <li>• Distribute pamphlets on the stipend program in public areas such as markets, and distributing pamphlets and flyers in tea shops would be effective in raising awareness about the stipend program.</li> <li>• Hold an information meeting about the stipend program at a time when parents can attend.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Not clear information about the programs.</b></p> <p>This is a new program, most stakeholders informed that they do not have sufficient information about the program. They need more information and training.</p> <p>TEO and school heads complained that the training time was too short and too close to the opening of the school year.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide more training for all committee members. The school heads and teachers suggested that the trainees should be two persons from each school (the school head and a teacher).</li> <li>• The training period should be extended from 3 to 5 days so that participants have enough time to understand all the complex details about the stipend program.</li> <li>• Trainings on the stipend and school grant programs should be conducted before the schools reopen:</li> </ul>
<p><b>Criteria</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some township stipend committees suggest that eligible schools be selected based on the poverty level of families rather than a dropout rate because many schools have programs to encourage students to stay in school however their families still struggle to pay education costs.</li> <li>• Screening questions for parents/students should have more questions to explain why a family had possessions such as a cell phone, stone house or a motor bike that could result in the family appearing better off than they really were.</li> <li>• Parents thought that because the stipend criteria favored orphans, and many poor and needy students with parents believed that they had little chance of qualifying, this could discourage them from applying.</li> <li>• Some poor and needy parents said that they decided not to apply for the stipend because they</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MoE reviews criteria for the program.</li> <li>• TEO and School heads provide clear criteria about the programs to the community.</li> </ul>

<p>thought that being identified as poor would embarrass their children.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some poor students missed out on receiving the stipend because they or their parents misunderstood the selection criteria or there were not enough stipends available for their school</li> <li>• Family size and monthly income should be included in the selection criteria.</li> <li>• Student clothes should not be used as a selection criteria.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Inappropriate practice:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents and school committee members said that due to embarrassment as a result of being questioned in front of their peers, many poor students said that their families had possessions which they really did not have. As a consequence, these students were not nominated for a stipend, although they should have qualified. Such preliminary questioning about family possessions should be done privately, never in front of other students.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School should make sure that all questions and practice are conducted in a safe and appropriate manner.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Calculation of dropout data</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ATEOs suggested that the dropout data required by the township education office for the stipend program could be calculated by taking the difference between the number of students who enroll in July at the beginning of the school year and the number of students who participate in final examinations in February. This would provide consistent, accurate data on dropouts for each school.</li> <li>• Dropout data from the whole school should be used in the selection process: Currently, dropout data collected from only three grades (grades 5, 9 and 11) is used for selecting the eligible schools. Dropout data should instead be collected from all grades in order to accurately determine whether a school should be selected for the stipend program.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MoE reviews the recommendations on the dropout data to ensure that the calculation is fair and understand by all schools.</li> </ul>
<p><b>General comments.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents stated that as stipend awardees' families are now saving significantly on education costs, they should now be more willing and able to contribute when the school requests funds for important improvements.</li> <li>• Education officials at the village level said that rather than the township education office, they should have authority and know how to reassign a</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School heads and the committee should make sure that school activities demand more contributions from stipends families as they are poor.</li> </ul>

<p>stipend to another student if a student with a stipend dropped out of school or graduated from upper secondary education (matriculation).</p>	
<p><b>Limited human resources and funding support</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Township and school staff reported to had to work long hours to complete the assigned activities related to the stipend. The work for the pilot stipend program was difficult and time-consuming, and there were not enough staff for these extra tasks, staff could not complete the additional work and keep up with their regular jobs.</li> <li>Staff also said that they have to use their own money to travel for this program.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assign special staff for the stipend program to work with TEO and ATEO on the programs; if possible former teachers or school heads could be hired for this task.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Limited time</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The TEO and ATEOs said that the timeframe for conducting stipend-related activities at the school level, including dissemination of printed information and presentations on the stipend program to parents and others in the community is not sufficient. There is very tight deadline for nominating students did not allow adequate field checks and some deserving students were not awarded a stipend.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The program should allow more time for staff to complete all the implementation process according to the guideline. At least a 45-day period should be allocated to completed stipend-related activities at the school level.</li> </ul>
<p><b>School Grants:</b> Education staff and school committees are pleased with the new stipend program which has expanded the expenditure items from two to twelve. The new guideline has reduced the costs that usually born by school committees and parents. Key issues school committees raised were the participation of school committee in reviewing and deciding on the school plans and items to be supported by school grants; and transparency of what have been decided and how much budget was spent. Recommendations are for the school heads and school committee to make decision together and for all the decision to be displayed at school for transparency purposes.</p>	