

Draft Preliminary Social Assessment: Myanmar Decentralizing Funding to Schools Program

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For
the Ministry of Education

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List of Abbreviations

ADs	-	Assistant Director
ATEOs	-	Assistant Township Education Officers
BEHS	-	Basic Education High Schools
CPE	-	Compulsory Primary Education
CESR	-	Comprehensive Education Sector Review
DEPT	-	Department of Education Planning and Training
DPs	-	Development partners
DBEs	-	Department of Basic Educations
DEOs	-	District Education Offices
DMERB	-	Department of Myanmar Education Research Bureau
FESR	-	Framework for Economic and Social Reforms
GOM	-	Government of Myanmar
MOE	-	Ministry of Education
MDGs	-	Millennium Development Goals
EFA-NAP	-	Myanmar Education for All-National Action Plan
NFPE	-	Non Formal Primary Education
NER	-	Net Enrollment Rate
PTA	-	Parents and teachers association
SBSS/RBSS	-	State/Region Board for Selection of Students
SEDO/REDOs	-	State or Region Education Office
SLORC	-	State Law and Order Restoration Council
TEOs	-	Township Education Offices
TMO	-	Township Medical Officer
TBSS	-	The Township Board for Selection of Students for Scholarships and Stipends

Executive Summary

Reform of basic education is one of several 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 the plan is to enhance access to education through such measures as free and compulsory primary education and stipends for students in needy families. At the same time, in order to support free and compulsory primary education and improve teaching quality and the learning environment, the Ministry of Education is providing grants to every school offering primary education.

At the request of the Ministry of Education, the World Bank will provide on-budget results-based financing to support the implementation of the government's school grants and stipends programs, as well as the implementation of professional development programs for township and school officials and periodic early grade reading assessments. A small secondary component will provide capacity building technical assistance to support implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the government's programs.

This preliminary Social Assessment (SA) was undertaken to identify vulnerable social groups including but not limited to ethnic groups who may face risks of exclusion from the programs, potential negative impacts and risks as well as measures to address them, as inputs to the Community Participation Planning Framework (CPPF). More detailed Social Assessment will be carried out during implementation in each project township, which will include free, prior and informed consultations with project beneficiaries including vulnerable people and ethnic minorities, to provide inputs to the Community Participation Plan (CPP) that will be developed annually. Such a more detailed SA that will be carried out during implementation in each project township will meet all aspects of SA required under the World Bank OP 4.10, although the scope will be wider and include risks and impacts facing vulnerable groups who may not meet the eligibility criteria under OP 4.10.

Preliminary social assessment was conducted in six townships which were selected based on poverty levels and the number of student drop-outs. Key informant interviews and free, prior and informed consultations with potential beneficiaries of both programs were carried out. Specifically, field based data collections were conducted in the following townships: Yaetarshay in Pegu Region, Kalaw in Shan State, Mudon in Mon State, Mahar Aung Myae in Mandalay Region, Zabu Thri in NayPyiTaw, and Seik Gui Khanaungto in Yangon Division. These areas across the six townships have diverse levels of income as well as a number of different ethnic groups.

This preliminary social assessment focused on three main issues: 1) the current situation on access to education; 2) the current implementation of the stipend program; and iii) the current implementation of the school grants program. In assessing all three focuses, the SA gathered information at both the policy level and the community level. The policy level was examined through a literature review as well as in-depth interviews with key policy makers, while at the community level, data were collected on six townships through interviews with policy implementers such as township education officers and school heads and teachers, as well as beneficiaries and other members of the community. In collecting field data, the SA researchers paid particular attention to the poor and vulnerable and those among ethnic

minorities in order to understand their views and concerns on access to education and the stipend and school grants programs, especially with regard to community participation in these programs.

Since only limited data are available on poverty, vulnerability as well as on ethnic minorities especially at the local level, the preliminary social assessment sought to gather baseline information on the demographic and socio-economic settings of people including those among ethnic groups within the six selected townships for the assessment (Section 4).

Improving access to education

Overall, the SA found that more children were attending primary education than was the case two years ago and that this was primarily because primary education had become more effective because of the support provided to encourage school enrolment: the provision of 1,000 kyat, and school texts and note books. Still, the SA found that some children were not attending primary education. These were the children of migrant workers from other parts of Myanmar who moved to Zabuthiri Township to find work. These children often fall behind in school when their parents move, and they become discouraged and stop going to school.

The SA showed that participation in education declined considerably at the secondary and upper secondary levels and this finding was evident both in the literature reviewed as well as the data collected in the field. In the field study, school heads and community members reported that few poor and ethnic minority students continue on to higher grades after they finish primary school. The literature review supports this with data that show that dropout rates are especially high in the 5th year of school (the year before lower secondary school) and in the 9th grade (the year before upper secondary school). The SA found that lack of finance is the main and most important barrier to accessing education beyond the primary level. With regard to non-financial constraints, the SA found three main barriers: remoteness (a long distance from school), language (lack of proficiency in the language of instruction, Myanmar) and the student evaluation system (promoting primary students to the next grade even though they are not performing well).

In order to cope with financial constraints, students and parents adopted several coping mechanisms including small-scale gambling, students working to earn their fees; mothers joining a savings group so they can save on a weekly and monthly basis; and parents borrowing, primarily from private money lenders. The community also helped families with financial constraints—members of school committees organized events to request donations in cash and kind (school uniforms and books) and donated these to needy students in their community. Teachers and monks also engaged in raising cash and donations in kind. In order to cope with the distance to school, boys from remote villages tended stay in monastery dormitories so they could attend schools nearby, while girls stayed with close relatives. Remoteness was thus a greater challenge for girls even if their parents could afford to send them to school. The SA found problems with the student evaluation system for Grades 1 to 7 (the “No failure system”) which allowed students to pass from class to class even though they were actually failing. When students reached Grade 8, they were unable to catch up and became disheartened with their poor performance and eventually quit.

Current implementation of the stipend program

Regarding the stipend program, the SA reviewed three main subjects: people's perspectives on the program, implementation of the program and community participation in the program. The SA found that the communities, including ethnic and other minorities¹ in the areas surveyed for the SA welcomed the stipend program and had no criticism of it.

As to implementation of the stipend, the SA looked at the practicalities of implementation including institutional structure, funds flow, targeting and beneficiary selection, awareness raising and information provision, feedback and complaints, and monitoring, reporting and evaluation. Overall, the SA findings on the stipend program showed that the institutional foundation for the program is weak and that the implementers such as township education officers, school heads and teachers have yet to clearly understand objectives of the program or its operating procedures.

Most of the implementers have vague ideas about the institutional structure of the program which varied across the surveyed townships. The methods and timing for dispersing funds also appeared to be varied across the surveyed townships and resulted in delivering the funds irregularly. The SA also found, in some cases, inconsistent and unsystematic financial management of the stipend fund. As for the targeting and beneficiary selection criteria, except for a few township education officers, implementers at the township level did not understand the criteria well.

The Information-giving mechanism was not yet in place and the SA found that due to the very limited number of stipend awards available, the implementers were unwilling to publicize the program. The SA also found that the feedback and complaints handling mechanism had yet to be developed. On the contrary, program implementers did not seem to be aware of this gap as no complaint about lack of knowledge of the program has ever been made by the community. Given that the monitoring, reporting and evaluation mechanisms are not fully developed, the program was considered to need improvement in this area. In many cases, stipend delivery is recorded only by taking signatures from the beneficiaries, and no follow-up monitoring is occurring.

The SA found that community participation in all phases of the program is very low. In a few cases, school committees which are community-based school-related organizations were participating. As a result of the lack of community participation, the SA found some perceptions of abuse and misuse of the stipend money. In conclusion, being lack of systematic operational manual which emphasizes community participation that is including the poorest, vulnerable and ethnic minorities groups, the stipend program currently is being implemented differently among townships with many gaps in every phases of implementation.

Current implementation of the school grants program

¹ "Other minorities" in this study were people considered different racially, religiously or in some other way different from the majority of the population in their community. For example, small ethnic groups such as the Taung Yoe in Southern Shan State tend to be identified as Shan, not as Taung Yoe.

The SA found that an operational manual that emphasizes community participation is needed for the school grant program. Similar to the stipend program, there is a lot of variation in methods of implementing the school grants program. Most importantly, the SA found inconsistencies in planning and implementation. For example, the amount allocated for the 2013-2014 academic year is different at the policy level from the amount given by the Township Education Offices during field data collection (see tables 5 and 29).

Similar to the stipend program, little community participation occurs in implementing the school grant program. It is mainly the school heads who decide how to use the school grants. Only in a few communities did the school heads consult with the school committee which is usually comprised of community members.

In their interviews for SA, school heads and township education officers reported that the strict budget lines of the school grant program were a concern. SA found several cases of the school grant budget being under-spent or not spent at all because of the grant's too strict budget lines. Some township education officers also reported that some school heads lacked basic financial management capacity and that this was a challenge in implementing the program.

As with the school grants program, the feedback and grievance channel is not yet in place, despite informal complaints having been made by schools heads to the Township Education Officers. One monitoring, reporting and evaluation mechanism that is in place is the national audit and the monitoring by the Department of Basic Education which audits regularly—once a year in some townships and twice a year in others. In addition, the grants are provided to schools only when the school head submits receipts for expenses that match the specific budget lines.

Conclusions

As the program is in its initial stage, it is understandable that there are many gaps. Despite some problems, the SA researchers observed that implementation of the two programs was occurring with good intension by those under the Department of Basic Education. However, it is important that good intentions lead to good results. In order for the stipend and school grant programs to be perceived as transparent, fair, and participatory, the operations manual must emphasize community participation including those among ethnic groups and for this, the community participation framework is essential. In addition, it is also necessary that the community participants in the two programs are supported with effective training to build their capacity.

Section 1: Introduction

1. Both of the school grants and school stipend initiatives were established through ministerial decrees during the 2011-12 and 2012-13 academic year. The decrees established the basic framework of the amounts and the flow of funds, but neither initiative has been established as a formal program with statements of objectives, detailed descriptions of responsibilities, performance indicators, or provisions for monitoring their impact on the education system. Moreover, lacking manuals and training to explain how these programs are to be implemented,

township officers and school heads are currently left with little guidance and support to implement the programs.

2. The school grants program is national in coverage and grant levels have grown rapidly, albeit from a very low base. In FY 2012/13, Myanmar transferred approximately US\$ 50 on average to small schools, US\$ 80 to medium size schools and US\$ 100 to larger schools in direct subsidies to support spending on school's operational costs. In FY 2013/14, school grants was increased to approximately US\$250 on average to small schools, US\$300 to medium size schools and US\$400 to larger schools. In 2012/13, a small school was defined as a school (of any type) having less than 100 primary school students. A medium size school was defined as having between 101 and 200 primary school students. And a large school was a school with more than 200 primary school students. The estimates above are based on observed spending on goods and services at the school level (totaling 13.9 billion kyat). The program supported more than 40,000 schools, and accounted for overall spending of about US\$15 million equivalent in 2012/13. These amounts have been more than doubled in the 2013/14 budget. School grants programs in neighboring countries (Cambodia, Lao, Vietnam) provide individual primary schools in the range of US\$2,000 to US\$3,000 per school annually.

3. The first years of implementing the school grants program suggest several areas that can be improved. Township officers and school heads would benefit from more detailed guidelines and training to explain the basic design elements: how much each school is entitled to receive; when they can expect to receive the funding; what they can spend the funding on; and what requirements need to be fulfilled (e.g. in terms of community involvements in overseeing spending, reporting, etc). Visits to schools and townships suggest that, at present, these basic design features are unclear, especially when it comes to the amount of money they can expect. In addition, the amounts disbursed are currently tied to specific budget codes which adds complexity and limits schools' ability to use the resources where their needs are the greatest (e.g. in FY 2013-14, US\$100 is ear-marked for "office supplies" and another US\$100 is ear-marked for "consumables"). This project will support Myanmar in strengthening this school grants program in accordance with regional norms, and of gradually giving school headmasters and communities a greater say in how resources (both the budget for goods and services) get spent.

4. The stipends program is also national in coverage, but is small both in terms of financing and the number of beneficiaries. Eligibility is currently limited to approximately 33 students in each of Myanmar's 330 townships, covering 2-6 students per township, depending on the student population in townships. The beneficiary population is about 11,000 students nationally. In the 2013/14 school year, the government plans to double the number of students receiving stipends in grades 1-5, raising the number of beneficiaries to 16,000 students, and a similar further expansion is planned for secondary students in the 2014/15 school year. The stipend amounts are US\$5 per month over 10 months for primary students, US\$6 per month for lower secondary students and US\$8 per month for upper secondary students. In total, approximately US\$700,000 equivalent is currently allocated annually for stipends. Although the levels of stipends are comparable to the levels of stipends in other countries with stipends programs at a comparable level of development, the coverage of the program is substantially lower and the dispersal across townships is much thinner.

5. The implementation of the stipends program is uneven across and within townships. The uneven implementation reflects the absence of clear and detailed operational guidelines for townships and schools, and the omission of key implementation steps that can help to standardize processes. The stipends program uses a combination of categorical targeting, focusing on orphans, and a broader based poverty criteria for which there is no criteria. All schools are encouraged to nominate students for the stipends program, and selection among the nominated students is made at the township level. Practices for selecting students are not uniform across Myanmar. In some state/regions, school officials consult with Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA) and/or Boards of Trustees in making the stipend awards, but this consultation is not mandated. Townships are encouraged in the existing guidelines to form committees to allocate stipends across schools. In practice, the use of committees is not uniform across townships. There is no structure in place for program monitoring and evaluation, resulting in limited knowledge of actual program implementation at the DBE and DEPT levels.

Objective of the Myanmar Decentralization Fund to Schools

The objective of this project is to help improve and expand Myanmar's existing school grants and student stipends programs in three primary ways: (a) by expanding the coverage of the stipend program, (b) by improving the reliability and transparency of the school grants scheme; and (c) by 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 four specific programs:

6. **Expansion and Improvement of the School Grants Program (US\$52 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 three year period. MoE is considering re-organizing the three categories (small, medium and large) used during the first years of the program into more categories to allow for higher per school allowances for larger schools; the Bank supports this change. Improving the program means introducing innovations from global experience, as well as improving the fiduciary management of the program, in particular its financial management. Innovations will be introduced to the program by revising its guidelines and by providing training. Specific innovations include: (i) introduction of well-defined program objectives and performance indicators; (ii) tying of the grant funding to school improvement planning; (iii) introducing increased autonomy on school-level spending; (iv) promoting community participation and oversight through parent teacher organizations; (v) standardizing financial reporting; (iv) provisions for audits; and (vii) linking program progress reporting to MoE's own information systems.

7. **Expansion and Improvement of the Student Stipends Program (US\$21 million):** While all government-supported schools in Myanmar are nominally eligible to participate in the existing student stipends program, the small size of the program (11,000 stipends to be awarded nationwide) effectively means that, while most schools apply for stipends funding, few schools are actually selected to participate in the program and those that do participate would have, in most cases, no more than 2 stipend students. Because the new student stipends guidelines will include an increase in coverage for each school and more rigorous targeting and administration, the program will only be expanded to more schools and students in a limited number of townships over time. In school year 2014-15, the stipends

program will be expanded to 8 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 an additional 20 townships will be added in school year 2016-17, for a total of 40 townships (out of 330 total) to be supported over 3 years. The number of total stipends provided by MoE is expected to increase from about 11,000 currently to about [200,000] over 3 years (Myanmar's education system includes about 8.2 million students). Townships will be selected based on drop-out rates and poverty indicators to be agreed with the Bank as part of the DLI process.

8. Capacity improvement support to strengthen monitoring and implementation of programs (US\$7 million): This project will focus on training, and on conducting a baseline assessment of early grade reading. On training, MoE will design and begin implementing a national training program during school year 2014-15 aimed at introducing the new school grants and stipends program to township officials and school headmasters. Program content will be prepared as part of the process for the preparation of program guidelines. In the case of the school grants, it will also benefit from the example of similar training programs already introduced by UNICEF in Myanmar. The training program is expected to follow a cascade model used by UNICEF in which training providers are trained at the central level and are then responsible for delivering training sessions at the regional or township levels. Over 3 years, MoE is expected to deliver training to approximately 1,000 township education officers, assistant education officers and accounting clerks and approximately 43,000 school head masters.

9. Assessment data, capturing student learning achievement and progress, is a critical building block for school planning and effective resource targeting. During project preparation, the Bank has assisted MoE with technical assistance and trust fund financing to undertake an initial baseline for early grade reading assessment (EGRA) in the Department of Basic Education 3 (Yangon area). The survey will be completed in January and a full report and public presentation will be completed by June 2014. Save the Children Myanmar also contributed technical assistance to this initiative and helped to manage the survey. During the 3 year project period, MoE will carry out baseline surveys in DBEs 1 and 2 (lower and upper Myanmar) as part of the project, providing 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 below). The Bank will administer a parallel 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 preliminary social assessment with the following three objectives:

- Objective 1: assess social issues related to access to education for poor and disadvantaged groups, including (but not limited to) ethnic minorities, especially in relation to the government's school grants and stipends programs. The assessment will be carried out through a literature review, focus group discussions and in-depth interviews with key stakeholders.

- Objective 2: providing information and carry out discussions through free, prior and informed consultation with key stakeholders, including, but not limited to, ethnic communities in selected areas where the project will be implemented, and ascertain their broad support for the project.
- Objective 3: develop a Community Participation Planning Framework (the Framework) based on the social assessment carried out under Objective 1 and discussions/consultations carried out under Objective 2.

Section 2: Methodology for the Social Assessment

The Social Assessment mainly used qualitative research methods and comprised two main parts: a literature review and field data collection. The information in the SA on the policy and legal framework especially with regard to ethnic minorities is based on a literature review² and in-depth interviews with policy makers and central-level implementers of the stipend program such as the Deputy Director General of the Department of Education Planning and Training (DEPT), Department of Basic Education (DBE) and Myanmar Education Research Bureau (MERB).

The field data collection for the SA used primarily qualitative tools—focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KFI). During field data collection, the SA researchers conducted 63 FGDs and 86 KFIs. In addition, case studies were undertaken to gather more information on specific findings from the field research. Free, prior and informed consultations were conducted with Parents Teachers Associations (PTAs), the poor and vulnerable families and students from different ethnic background. In total, 166 non-Burman people including 35 extremely poor non-Burman participated in the consultations during the social assessment.

Township selection criteria

The Ministry of Education selected six townships for SA field data collection: Kalaw in Shan State, Seik Gyi Kha Naungto in Yangon Region, Zabu Thiri in Nay Pyi Taw, Mudon in Mon State, Yetarshay in Pago Division, and Mahar Aung Myae in Mandalay. The criteria for selecting which townships and schools to visit included: poverty, remoteness, high drop-out rates, diverse ethnic groups, and schools receiving stipends.

²The following materials were examined in the literature review:

- The Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar
- San Lwin, the General Index of Myanmar Laws, 2nd edition, 2010
- Final Report, Data collection Survey on the Education Sector in Myanmar (Feb 2013), funded by JICA
- The Comprehensive Education Sector Review-Phase-1 Report (Draft)- (only the Myanmar language version was available for this study)
- UNDP, Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey, 2010
- UNICEF, Myanmar Quality Basic Education Programme (QBEP), Jan 2012–Dec 2015
- The Government of Myanmar, the Ministry of Education for All: Access to, and Quality of, Education in Myanmar, Feb 2012

Limitations of the study

- Limited secondary data were available and the TEOs had very limited capacity to collect and record data.
- It was difficult to analyze some data due to inconsistencies. For example, the number of students enrolled in school appeared larger in the data provided by the schools than was the case with the data provided by the township education office.
- Community members, although express no adverse impacts of the programs, were not ready to give recommendations for improving the stipend program as they only learned of the program when the SA researchers visited their area.
- Time was a limitation, especially for visiting remote areas in Kalaw and Yaetarshay.

Section 3: Findings from the Literature Review

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.³

Other education-related laws include:⁴

- 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).⁵ 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,⁶ 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

³ Information received in a face-to-face interview with U Ko Lay Win, Deputy Director, Department of Planning and Training.

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

⁵ The Comprehensive Education Sector Review-Phase-1 Report (Draft)—only the Myanmar version of this report was available at the time of this study.

⁶ Final Report, Data Collection Survey on [the] Education Sector in Myanmar (Feb 2013), funded by JICA.

increased public expenditure on education significantly and will increase public expenditure further in the coming years.”⁷

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 %).⁸ 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.”

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ These data are from the 1983 population census. There is no more recent estimate for the composition and size of ethnic groups.

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:⁹

- 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.¹⁰ Challenges which SA respondents suggest 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

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.¹¹ 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.

⁹ http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/1991-SLORC_Law1991-09-University_for_the_Development_of_the_National_Races_Law-en.pdf

¹⁰ Information obtained from interviews with national NGOs engaged in supportive research and advocacy for the educational development of ethnic people.

¹¹ Program Document (TOR) of the Scholarships and Stipend Program, Department of Planning and Education, Ministry of Education, August 2011.

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 2012.¹² 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).¹³

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:¹⁴ 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%.¹⁵ 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

¹² Terms of Reference for Myanmar Education Sector Review (CESR), 4 July 2012.

¹³ The Comprehensive Education Sector Review Phase-1 Report (Draft) - (only the Myanmar version was available at the time of this study).

¹⁴ 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.

¹⁵ Final Report, Data Collection Survey on the Education Sector in Myanmar (Feb 2013), funded by JICA.

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:¹⁶ 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:¹⁷ 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 apparent¹⁸ 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

¹⁶ UNDP, Integrated Household Living Condition Survey, 2010.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

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).

text books into ethnic languages, as MOE has been doing, is not seen as the right solution.¹⁹ 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.²⁰ 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.

Free and compulsory primary education program and supportive activities

Although the Law on Free and Compulsory Education is still under review by Parliament, the program began implementation in 2011–2012, with the provision of free school text books worth over 1,835.51 million kyat for over 5 million primary school students.²¹ In addition to providing school text books, to encourage parents to send their children school, the government has been providing parents with 1,000 kyat for every child enrolled in primary school.²²

Stipend program

To improve access to education, stipend and scholarship programs were officially started in 2011–2013, targeting all basic education schools. In the 2012–2013 academic year, the government spent 650 million kyat on the program, and will spend 651 million kyat for the 2013–2014 academic year.²³

Main objective of the stipend program

The Ministry of Education identifies the main objective for the Stipend Program *as helping students with good academic performance but financial difficulties to continue attending school.*

¹⁹ Information obtained from interviews with national NGOs doing supportive research and advocacy for the educational development of ethnic minority people.

²⁰ 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).

²¹ UNICEF, Myanmar Quality Basic Education Programme (QBEP), Jan 2012–Dec 2015.

²² Information obtained from the Interview with the Director, DBE-3.

²³ Information obtained from the Deputy Director, DEPT.

Targeting

All townships (including sub-townships) in all Regions and States are being targeted, but the quota per grade is based on the student population in each township. The table below shows the quota for beneficiary students per township.

Table 1: Quota per township for beneficiary students

Student population per township	Beneficiary quota per grade per township
Townships with a student population below 25,000	2 students per grade
Townships with a student population between 25,000–80,000	3–6 students per grade

Source: Presentation by U Ko Lay Win, Deputy Director, Department of Planning and Training, Ministry of Education, September 2013.

Beneficiary selection criteria

There are four main selection criteria:

- The first priority is poor students who are orphans;
- The second priority is poor students whose father has died, and of these students, the priority is students with a number of siblings;
- With the exception grade 1, students must be those who are trying hard and have a good intellect;
- The student must obey school rules and be of good moral character.

Beneficiary selection procedures

The beneficiary selection procedures are set by the Ministry of Education and instructions on the procedures are conveyed through the Ministry's Department of Planning and Training to the Region or State, and their Township Education Offices. The following key steps should be followed in nominating and selecting beneficiary students at the school, region or state level.

- Schools can nominate no more than 1 student/grade to their TEO.
- The Township Board for Selection of Students (TBSS) reviews and screens the students nominated at the school level and, if necessary, the board checks on the students in their community.
- The TBSS must select the students in accord with the quota and then send the list to the State/Region Board for Selection of Students (SBSS/RBSS).
- The SBSS/RBSS sends the list of selected students to their DBE.
- The DBEs announce the list of students who are eligible to receive a stipend and sends this list to the Department of Education Planning and Training.

Table 2: Structure of the Township and the State and Region Boards for the Selection of Scholarship Students

TBSS Structure	SBSS/RBSS Structure
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Member	Role	Member	Role
TEO	Chairperson	State/Region Edu Officer	Chairperson
2 upper secondary school heads	Members	S/R Edu Officers (Monitoring officers)	Members
2 lower secondary school heads	Members	Asst: S/R Edu Officers (Monitoring)	Members
ATEOs	Members	District Edu Officers	Members
1 ATEO	Secretary	Asst: S/R Edu Officer (planning)	Secretary

Source: Presentation by U Ko Lay Win, Deputy Director, Department of Planning and Training, Ministry of Education, September 2013.

Table 3: Value of the stipend for different levels of schooling (kyat)

Schooling Level	Grades	Amount of Stipend
Primary level	Grades 1-5	5,000 kyat
Lower secondary level	Grades 6-9	6,000 kyat
Upper secondary level	Grades 10-11	8,000 kyat

Source: Presentation by U Ko Lay Win, Deputy Director, Department of Planning and Training, Ministry of Education, September 2013.

General principles for beneficiary students

These are the six general principles for selecting the students who are eligible for a stipend.

1. The student must be a Myanmar citizen.
2. Except for grade 1, the student must be promoted from grade to grade.
3. Over the academic year, the student must pass all tests.
4. If the student who receives a stipend is promoted to the next grade, he/she is eligible to receive the stipend again. However, if student is not promoted to the next grade due to health problems, the student must have a health certificate signed by the Township Medical Officer in order to be considered for the stipend while repeating the grade.
5. The stipend must cease if the student dies, misses too much school or leaves school.
6. If a student is no longer eligible for the stipend, the Township Board of Selection can select another student for the stipend if the student meets the criteria.

Coverage of the stipend program

While the stipend program covers all townships (including all sub-townships), the coverage is still very low in terms of the number of students benefiting. Currently, 11,022 out of 8.29 million students receive a stipend, which is only 0.13% of the student population. Significantly, despite years of promoting compulsory primary education, the lowest coverage is at the primary level. The table below summarizes the coverage level.

Table 4: Summary of data on the current coverage of student stipends

Schooling level	Total number of	Total number of stipend	Coverage by percent
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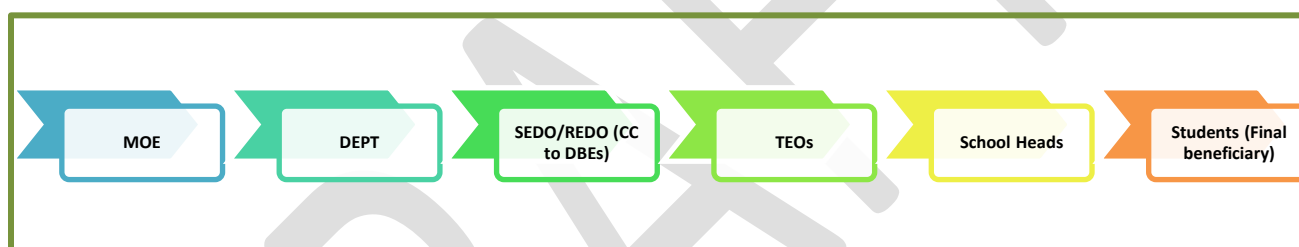
	students ²⁴ (2011-12)	students ²⁵ (2011-12)	
Primary	5,195,952	5,010	0.09%
Lower secondary	2,332,249	4,008	0.17%
Upper secondary	672,394	2,004	0.29%
Total	8,200,595	11,022	0.13%

Source: Presentation by U Ko Lay Win, Deputy Director, Department of Planning and Training, Ministry of Education, September 2013.

The flow of funds chain for the stipend program

The flow of funds chain for the stipend program reflects decentralization reforms in the administrative structure. The funds are transferred from the Department of Education Planning and Training (DEPT) to the Township Education Offices (TEOs) through the State or Region Education Department Office (SEDO/REDOs), and now the Departments of Basic Education (DBEs) only need to be copied on the decisions that have been made. The figure below shows the chain of the fund flow.

Figure 1: The chain for the flow of funds for stipends



Source: Presentation by U Ko Lay Win, Deputy Director, Department of Planning and Training, Ministry of Education, September 2013.

School grants program

The school grants program is intended to improve access to education, and supports reforms to decentralize the administrative system in the basic education sector. The program began in the 2009–2010 academic year when the government abolished fees for primary grades 1-5 in order to ensure free, compulsory primary education. Subsequently, the new government started the school grants program in 2012–2013, and now devolves cash from the central level directly to the TEOs through the DBEs. These grants are intended to replace the informal fees that schools sometimes previously collected from students at the time of their enrolment.²⁶

Main objectives of the school grants program

The three main objectives identified by the Ministry of Education are to:

- Improve the quality of schools by systematically providing school grants
- Create a quality teaching and learning environment for children

²⁴ The Government of Myanmar, the Ministry of Education for All: Access to and Quality of Education in Myanmar, Feb 2012

²⁵ Final Report, Data collection survey on education sector in Myanmar (Feb 2013), funded by JICA

²⁶ Information obtained from interview with the Deputy Director, DEPT

- Support the Free and Compulsory Primary Education Program

Targets

All basic education schools, monastic schools, and private schools that have primary school students.

Criteria for allocation of funds for the School Grants Program

The amount of funds for target schools is determined by their number of students. The table below shows the amounts for the school grants provided to basic education high schools (BEHs) based on their numbers of students.

Table 5: School Grants Program funds provided to basic education high schools based on student numbers

2012-2013	Amount	2013-2014	Amount
Schools with up to 100 students	50,000 Kyat	Schools with up to 100 students	200,000 Kyat
101 to 200 students	80,000 Kyat	101 to 300 students	250,000 Kyat
Over 200 students	100,000 Kyat	Over 300 students	300,000 Kyat
		Branch primary schools	100,000 Kyat

Source: Presentation by U Ko Lay Win, Deputy Director, Department of Planning and Training, Ministry of Education September 2013.

Note: Branch primary schools are extensions of primary schools in remote communities. These schools provide the first three grades of primary education.

According to the grant management procedures, the BEHs have to use the funds for expenses under two budget lines: budget line 0305, which is for office use, including stationery, registry books and other office supplies; and budget line 0313 which is for school operational costs such as sanitation, facility repair, drinking water pots, cups, chalk, dusters, painting the blackboard, and teaching and learning materials.

The flow of funds chain for the Stipend Program

One layer of administration has been reduced in the flow of funds chain and the fund management process for the school grants program.²⁷ This reform aligns with the administrative decentralization agenda of the new government.

Figure 2: The school grants program flow of funds chain



Source: Presentation by U Ko Lay Win, Deputy Director, Department of Planning and Training, Ministry of Education, September 2013.

²⁷ Information obtained from the DEPT

Section 4: Context of the Townships Studied in the Social Assessment

Field data collection for the SA was undertaken in six townships: Kalaw in Southern Shan State, Seikgyi Khanaungto in Yangon region, Zabuthiri in Nay Pyi Taw, Mahar Aung Myae in Mandalay, Mudon in Mon State, and Yaetarshay in Pago region. For these townships, four types of contextual information were gathered: demographic and geographic conditions; socioeconomic conditions; ethnicity; and the basic education available in the townships. The data given below on each of these six townships were gathered from the Township Education Offices which collected the data from the township administrative departments.²⁸ Data and information at the township level in Myanmar in general is very difficult to obtain and would need to be verified for its accuracy. This section provides general information about the background of the township and people interviewed. The baseline information gathered in this section has helped the SA research team in identifying key project stakeholders and reaching out to the poor and vulnerable groups including those among ethnic groups.

1. Kalaw

Geographic and demographic information

Kalaw Township, which is located in Southern Shan State, has an area over 528 square miles. The total population of the township is 152,409 (49% male and 51% female). Most of the township is hilly and remote, and travel is especially difficult during the rainy season.

Socioeconomic information

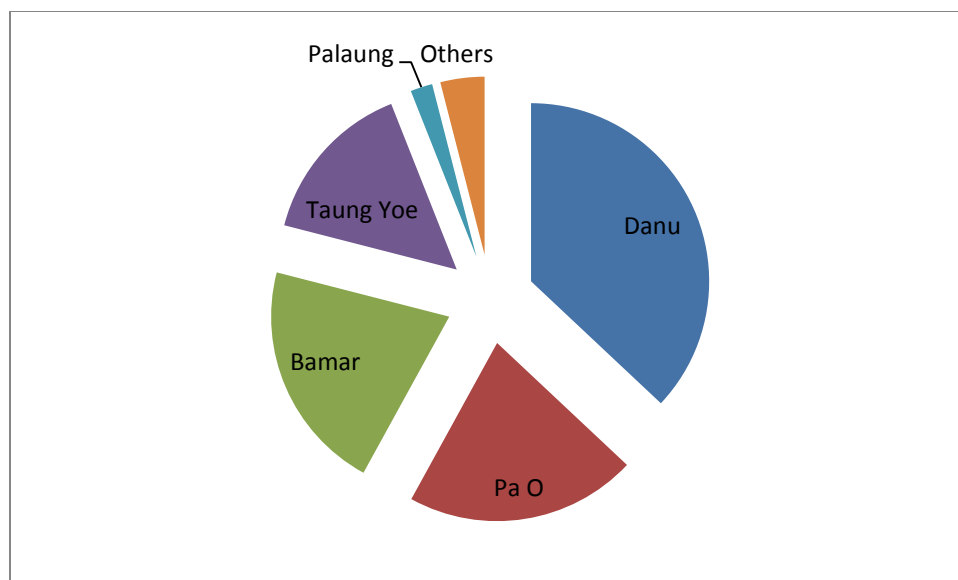
The main livelihoods in Kalaw are farming and day labor. Crops differ between the north and the south: in the north, people grow vegetables and corn; in the south they grow tea and hill paddy. Generally, the people in the northern part of the township have greater access to market. Most land holdings vary from a minimum of 1 acre to a maximum 10 acres.

Ethnicity

The main ethnic groups in Kalaw Township, which can be seen in Figure 3, are the Danu, Bamar and Taung Yoe. In addition, Pa Laung, Shan, Karen, and people of Indian ancestry also live there. The northern part of the township is mostly Danu, while in the southern part, people are Pa O and Taung Yoe. These different ethnic groups have their own languages which they use on a daily basis.

Figure 3: Ethnic composition in Kalaw Township

²⁸ The most recent data from these sources were not available at the time of this study.



Source: Township Education Office of Kalaw

Basic education in the township

The people in the area cannot easily access education, especially lower secondary and upper secondary education because of lack of finance and the long distance to school. In fact, in some remote areas children cannot even access primary school.

In the 2013-2014 academic year, there were 192 basic education schools in Kalaw Township, with 29,833 students in total. In the 2013-2014 academic year, 25 schools added classes and some of the community-initiated schools have also been allowed to add classes after being officially recognized by the government. Details on basic education in Kalaw Township can be seen in table 6.

Table 6: Data on basic education in Kalaw Township for the 2013–2014 academic year

Total number of schools	192
Basic Education High Schools	6
Sub-basic Education High Schools ²⁹	6
Basic Education Middle Schools	2
Sub-basic Education Middle Schools	8
Added primary schools ³⁰	22
Primary schools	129
Sub-basic Education Primary School	19
Added schools	25
Number of students (primary)	18,076
Number of students (lower secondary)	8,801

²⁹ The “sub” schools are associated with full-fledged schools (Basic Education Primary, Middle, and High Schools). These “sub” schools do not have a mandate to give final exams. Students take these exams at the full-fledged schools.

³⁰ Added schools are those which have added more classes to the existing schools.

Number of students (upper secondary)	2,956
Number of teachers	1,061

Source: Township Education Office of Kalaw.

2. Seikgyi Khanaungto

Geographic and demographic information

The township is located in the Yangon Region and only an hour's drive from the city of Yangon. In fact, the peri-urban township is only separated from the city by a river. Most of the population is living over the water and is under the jurisdiction of the Department of Irrigation. As a result, people have no official title to their homes. The total population of the township is 32,480, with an equal number of males and females.

Socioeconomic information

Seikgyi Khanaungto's economy is labor-based, with 80% of the working population earning wages. Most people commute to Yangon city for work, but some work in the local dockyards. A small number of residents are farmers and fishers, however farming has almost disappeared as most farmers sold their land five years ago because the price of land greatly increased. The remaining farm families have become laborers, boatmen and motorcycle taxi drivers.

About 80% of the population are poor, and those laborers who work in Seikgyi town are comparatively poorer than the laborers commuting to Yangon. In Yangon, laborers earn 3,000–5,000 kyat per day while laborers in the local labor market earn only about 500 kyat per day.

Ethnicity

The majority of people in Seikgyi Khanaungto are Bamar and that is the main language. However, people from other ethnic groups (public servants who work in Yangon and migrant workers) have moved in.

Basic education

Most of the people in the township find access to education difficult, usually because of financial constraints. Some 80% of the population are poor laborers and their children are subsistence workers.

Seikgyi Khanaungto has 17 basic education schools and 6,837 students.

Table 7: Data on basic education in Seikgyi Khanaungto Township for the 2013–2014 academic year

Total number of schools	17
Basic Education High School	1
Sub-basic Education High School	1
Basic Education Middle School	1
Basic Education Primary schools	14
Number of students (primary)	3,858
Number of students (lower secondary)	2,259

Number of students (upper secondary)	720
Number of teachers	199

Source: Township Education Office of Seikgyi Khanaungto.

3. Zabuthiri

Geographic and demographic information

Zabuthiri is one of eight townships in the Nay Pyi Taw Council area. The township has 11 wards and 3 village tracts. Given that transportation and infrastructure are good, the most remote area (17 miles away) can be reached in 30 minutes. The total population of the township is 87,860 and most of the residents are government workers. The indigenous population is 10%, and the rest are migrant workers who moved to the area after the new national capital was built 15 years ago. In addition, there are small ethnic minority groups from other regions, some of whom are migrant workers.

Socioeconomic information

There are three main livelihood groups in Zabuthiri Township: public servants, migrant workers and local people engaged in farming. The first group, public servants, who come from various ethnic backgrounds, but are primarily Bamar, comprise 80% of the population. The other two groups are about 10% each.

The indigenous farmers comprise two groups: those who maintain their former livelihood and those whose livelihood has changed. Large areas of farmland were expropriated by the government to build Nay Pyi Taw and the affected farmers were given financial compensation and replacement land. Those farmers who lost only part of their land, are generally doing well as the government provided them with fertilizer, seeds, and equipment. However, many of the farmers who no longer have productive land, are struggling as they spent their compensation payments quickly and now are laborers. A few fortunate farmers have earned a substantial amount of money by selling some of their compensation land when the price rose because of the urbanization of Nay Pyi Taw. However, only those who invested this income in a shop or contracting with government are now doing well.

The third group, migrants, work as day laborers, and they are considered the most vulnerable people in the area. They live in miserable slums, and since they are not officially residents of the area, they are often deprived of public services such as electricity. Very importantly, migrants' children cannot enroll in school or get school transfer documents. These documents require recommendations from the ward or village administration if the students do not have household registration cards. However, the ward administrators are reluctant to issue the recommendations if children are not official residents in their wards or villages (for an example, please see box 1, below). These migrants have fewer jobs than three or four years ago when there was more farming and construction work. They also face abuse from contractors who fail to pay promised wages.

Ethnicity

Some 80% of people in Zabuthiri Township are Bamar and the ethnicity of the rest of the population is unknown. The natives of the township are Bamar and so are most of the recent arrivals: public servants who work in nearby Nay Pyi Taw and the migrant laborers who moved to the township to work on

construction of the new capital. Most of the latter come from the predominantly-Bamar Dry Zone and the Bago and Ayeyarwaddy Regions.

Data on basic education

Students in Zabuthiri Township have generally more access to basic education compared to people in townships such as Kalaw, Seikgyikhanaungto, Mudon, and Yaetarshay. This is mainly because schools are nearby. However, the children of migrant workers find it challenging to sustain going to school because their family life is unstable.

In the 2013–2014 academic year, there were 20 schools in Zabuthiri, 14,910 students in all grades of basic education, and 528 teachers.

Table 8: Data on basic education in Zubuthiri Township for the 2013–2014 academic year

Total number of schools	20
Basic Education High Schools	9
Sub-basic Education High School	1
Basic Education Middle School	0
Sub-basic Education Middle School	1
Added primary schools	6
Basic Education Primary Schools	3
Sub-basic Education Primary Schools	0
Added schools	3
Number of students (primary)	7,846
Number of students (lower secondary)	4,985
Number of students (upper secondary)	2,079
Number of teachers	528

Source: Township Education Office of Zabuthiri.

4. Mahar Aung Myae

Geographic and demographic information

Mahar Aung Myae is one of five townships in the city of Mandalay. It is an urban township comprised of 18 wards, with a population of 163,094.

Socioeconomic information

As the city of Mandalay is an urban township, people have diverse livelihoods. Among others, they are traders, laborers, butchers, carpenters, handicraft producers, jewelers, sculptors, domestic workers, and even drug traffickers. Like many cities in the world, the better off people live in the center of the township, and the poor, who are mainly laborers, live on the outskirts.

Ethnicity

The Bamar constitute the majority of the population in Mahar Aung Myae but there are also Shan, Kachin, Kayah, Rakhine, Mon, Chinese, descents of Indians, and Burmese Muslims.

The minorities of Indian ancestry, Islamic groups, Kayah, Mon, and Rakhine are usually poorer than the majority Bamar who have better social capital, land holdings, and business and marketing networks. The Shan, Chinese and Kachin are usually the richest in the city as they have land and businesses in commercial areas. They trade in gems, and some believe, in illegal drugs.

Data on basic education

Access to education beyond the primary level is difficult for the children of laborers. In many cases, children must work to help support their families. Since private schools were allowed in 2012, affluent urban people prefer to educate their children in private schools. Teachers in public schools say they feel discouraged by private education as many outstanding students are leaving the public system for private schools. In fact, not only are the better off families leaving public schools, but some poor families are as well. Respondents say the poor want their children enrolled in vocational training as they think that university degrees will not help their children earn a good living.

In Mahar Aung Myae Township, in the 2013–2014 academic year, there were 38 basic education schools, 20,691 students and 924 teachers.

Table 9: Data on basic education in Mahar Aung Myae Township for the 2013–2014 academic year

Total number of schools	38
Basic Education High School	3
Sub-basic Education High School	2
Basic Education Middle School	2
Sub-basic Education Middle School	3
Added primary schools	4
Basic Education Primary Schools	24
Added schools	2
Number of students (primary)	10,942
Number of students (secondary)	7,672
Number of students (upper secondary schools)	2,077
Number of teachers	924

Source: Township Education Office of Mahar Aung Myae.

5. Mudon

Geographic and demographic information

Mudon is one of the 10 townships of Mon State and has 42 villages and 4 wards. Only a few villages are in remote areas where schools are inaccessible.

Socioeconomic information

The main livelihoods of Mudon are paddy farming and growing rubber. Farmers also grow mangoes and durian. One of the most important sources of income, however, is remittances from family who migrate to work in Thailand. Many people in the township have income from diverse sources. For example,

those who own rubber plantations also engage in trading goods from Thailand and all over the country. People on the coast along the Adaman Sea earn a living with fishing. There are also many migrant laborers in township from Ayeyarwaddy and Pe Gu who have migrated to work in the rubber plantations.

Although Mu Don is a poor township, it is considered relatively better-off compared to the other five poor townships because of its cash crops such as rubber and fruit, as well as remittances from migrants in Thailand. Because of the opportunities to earn good wages (5,000 kyat per day which is more than double the wages in other parts of the country), laborers migrate to work in this township. However, the fishers and paddy farmers are not doing well as their production has declined due to climatic variation.

Ethnicity

A total of 87% of the population in Mu Don are Mon. The other main ethnic group is Bamar (9.6%) and the rest are Karen and of Indian ancestry (3.41%). Most of the people in Mudon Township speak Mon and only the urban people use Myanmar.

Data on basic education

Mons tend to invest in their children's education. Many social assessment respondents said that they would rather invest in their children's education even if they need their children's labor. If Mon plantation owners and farmers can afford it, they hire migrant laborers.

In Mon State, financial and language barriers pose constraints on access to education beyond the primary level. Remoteness is also seen as a considerable barrier to education. In Mudon, there are 10 Mon language schools operated by local civil society organizations. However, the majority people in the township rely on public schools.

Table 10: Data on basic education in Mudon Township for the 2013–2014 academic year

Total number of schools	120
Basic Education High Schools	7
Sub-basic Education High Schools	5
Basic Education Middle Schools	4
Sub-basic Education Middle Schools (Sub-lower secondary)	2
Added primary schools	19
Basic Education Primary Schools	65
Added schools	15
Number of students (primary)	19,442
Number of students (lower secondary)	9,779
Number of students (upper secondary)	1,391
Number of teachers	509

Source: Township Education Office of Mudon

6. Yaetarshay

Geographic and demographic information

Yaetarshay Township, located in the eastern part of Pe Gu Region, is both mountainous and flat, and much of the township is accessible. The township has 334 villages and a population of 378,442 (49% male and 51% female).

Socioeconomic information

Most people in Yaetarshay Township are farmers and laborers. The main crops are paddy, beans, sesame, and sugar cane. In recent years, farmers have been growing sugarcane as this is now their main cash crop because the price has risen. Those living in the hilly regions, who are generally the poorest in the township, earn income primarily from forest products, brick making and working in government conservation forests.

Ethnicity

Almost the whole population of the township is Bamar (99%) and 1% are Pa O and Karen. The Pa O and Karen live in the remote, hilly parts of the township and mainly speak their own languages.

Data on basic education

The main constraint children face in the township is lack of finance to continue learning beyond primary school. In only a few areas of the township is remoteness a barrier to education. Still the two very small ethnic minorities, the Pa O and the Karen, are challenged by the language barrier, especially at the primary level.

Table 11: Data on basic education in Yaetarshay Township for the 2013–2014 academic year

Total number of schools	232
Basic Education High Schools	6
Sub-basic Education High Schools	3
Basic Education Middle School	1
Sub-basic Education Middle School (Sub-lower secondary)	16
Added Primary Schools	46
Basic Education Primary Schools	131
Sub-primary Schools	29
Added schools	12
Number of students (primary)	25,314
Number of students (lower secondary)	11,642
Number of students (upper secondary)	2,995
Number of teachers	1,527

Source: Township Education Office of Yaetar Shay

Section 5: Summary of the Results of Consultation with Stakeholders

The researchers for this social assessment (SA) met with three different types of stakeholders: policy makers from MOE, implementers under MOE, and community members. The MOE service providers

were the Township Education Officers (TEOs); the Assistant Township Education Officers (ATEOs); and the school heads and teachers in 12 primary schools, 3 added primary schools, 5 middle schools, 4 sub-high schools, and 4 high schools. In the communities, the SA researchers met with members of the institutions that are concerned with schools affairs: the school boards and the PTAs,³¹ and ethnic and other minorities.³² Out of 361 people interviewed, 166 were non-burman who are not government officials. Table 12 lists the non-burman people that were interviewed during the SA.

The researchers met with more ethnic minority people than are listed here but, as is the case with many ethnic minorities in Myanmar, they are not officially registered as ethnic minorities. In the SA, official data on the numbers of students from different ethnic groups were often found to be missing or incorrect, although enrollment forms ask for a student’s ethnicity and religion. In general, the SA team found that although since the 2011–2012 academic year, schools have been asked to provide data to the township education office on numbers of students from different ethnic groups enrolled that year, most do not. In some schools, although ethnicity and religion were recorded on the registration forms of the students, only the religious background of students was reported to the TEO. The SA researchers found as well that data on ethnicity were recorded incorrectly because ethnicity was recorded incorrectly on the father or mother’s national identity (ID) card. Gender data are seen as important as schools usually segregate students by gender, but data on ethnicity are only on the registration sheets. A student's ethnicity is also often not recorded when a student is being nominated for a stipend or scholarship. Lack of correct information on ethnicity could result in not recognizing small ethnic minorities in communities and providing relevant assistance.

Table 12: Number of Non-Burman people interviewed during the SA

Non Burman_ Non Official Respondents	number
Non-Burman School Committee Members	71
Non-Burman Village Heads	12
Non Burman Extremely Poor Parents	35
Non Burman Students awarded Stipend	7
Non Burman Village Elders	2
Non Burman normal Community members	39
Total of Non Burman Minorities interviewed	166

³¹ In many cases, the SA researchers found that teachers and members of the PTA and school board were the same people. In two schools in Shan State, the researchers found that there were no designated school committees or PTAs. In these schools, SA respondents stated that although they support whatever their school needs, they do not have an officially-constituted school board or PTA.

³² “Other minorities” in this study were people considered different racially, religiously or in some other way different from the majority of the population in their community. For example, small ethnic groups such as the Taung Yoe in Southern Shan State tend to be identified as Shan, not as Taung Yoe.

Both the poor and the ethnic minorities expressed their appreciation for the stipend program. There were no objections to the stipend program in any of the communities visited. However, there was concern over the need to register and take account of ethnic background as it will not only provide information about the diversity of the programs provided to poor and vulnerable students, but also aid in recognizing the ethnicity of the population. In addition, a few stakeholders involved in beneficiary selection, and a few student beneficiaries expressed concern that being awarded a stipend has a negative impact on the self-esteem of some students. The following are quotes from some of these respondents:

I have bitter-sweet feeling when receiving the stipend. I am happy to receive the stipend. On the other hand, I am sad as my friends told me that the reason I receive the stipend is because I am an orphan.

(A Lower secondary school student from Yae Tar Shay)

I am happy to have the stipend. But I feel sad when my classmates ask me why they were not provided with a stipend when they are similarly poor.

(A Lower secondary school student from Zabu Thiri)

I did not make any announcement in the class [about the stipend] as I didn't want him to feel sad as he would know that he has been selected because he is a poor orphan. It wouldn't matter if several other students were awarded a stipend, but he is the only beneficiary in the class, and everyone will automatically know that he is the poorest of the poor.

(A primary school head)

Despite reports such as these about beneficiaries' embarrassment for being awarded the stipend, people in the communities surveyed are happy with the program other than their wishing that the government would provide more of this assistance. Some poor parents even spoke quite strongly that they have no discomfort about receiving the assistance because they are poor, and they need the help.

It is true that we are poor and we are not unhappy that this assistance is being given to the poor.

(A poor parent in Mandalay)

Section 6: Findings of the Social Assessment on Access to Education

1. Overview of access to education

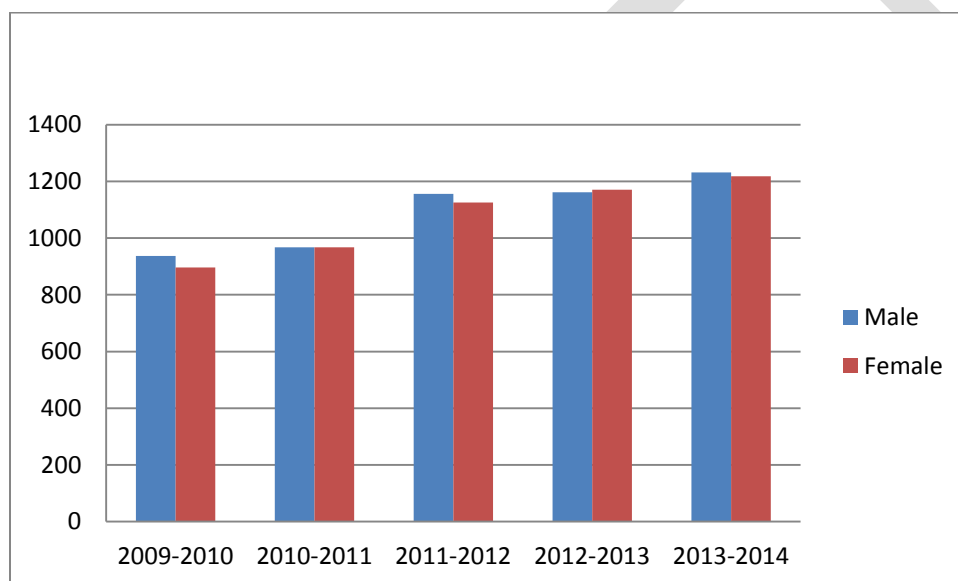
Primary education is accessible and more so than two years ago...

According to many SA respondents in the field, primary education is largely accessible, and more so since the government made primary education free and compulsory in the 2011–2012 academic year. In

order that the free and compulsory primary education is fully enforced and the effective, the government’s provision of 1,000 kyat per enrolled student, plus text books and note books, has helped to improve access to primary education. This support is especially important for poor families. As the government supports free and compulsory primary education, SA respondents said that community members also support the system by urging parents to send their children to school, and helping families if they have problems. Respondents also said that it is quite common for community leaders and teachers to meet with families that fail to send their children to school and they urge them to do so.

The following data on the number of enrollees in nine primary schools visited by SA researchers show some increase in the average number of school enrollments in the 2013–2014 academic year, in comparison with previous years.³³ However, this finding is inconsistent with comparative data from the townships as a whole.³⁴

Figure 4: Average number of school enrollments for 9 primary schools (by gender)



Source: Nine schools visited during SA field data collection in six townships

³³The 2013–2014 academic year was the first when the government began providing families with a 1,000 kyat allowance per enrolled student. According to poor parents, school heads and school committee members, the 1,000 kyat allowance means that there has been a significant increase in enrollment, compared to earlier academic years (2009–2010 and 2010–2011). However this increase could be due to a population increase.

³⁴ The school enrolment rate cannot be calculated as baseline data for the number of primary school-aged children, as both community and township data are not available. The total number of primary students in each school is the average of all five years of primary school. Despite the SA researchers visiting 12 primary schools, data from only nine schools could be gathered. When the SA team looked at the township data, they found inconsistencies with data from the individual schools. The data gathered from the schools show some increase in enrollment numbers in the following years, while the township data even show a decline in enrollment in 2011–2012 and 2012–2013. In figure 4, the number of enrollees had not increased compared with academic year data from 3-4 years ago, despite the provision of assistance under the Free Compulsory Primary Education Program. The SA teams surmise that population increase is one of the independent variables accounting for the difference in enrolment numbers. The most likely independent variable could be a decline in the birth rate.

Despite the fact that respondents in all six townships visited for the SA insisted that access to education has improved, three schools in Zabu Thiri Township in Nay Pyi Taw are considered exceptions. This was because the children of migrant workers cannot participate as easily as other children. Their education tends to be interrupted frequently as their parents are construction workers, and the families move often to find work. The SA found that migrant families in the three schools comprise 10% to 70% of school households. The following case study shows how children of migrant workers lack access even to primary-level education.

Box 1: How migrant workers' children lack access to primary education

Nandar is one of three daughters in a family of poor migrant workers, without a regular income. Her parents work on construction sites and the family lives in one of the miserable slums beside a stream in Zabuthiri Township in Nay Pyi Taw. Nandar was in grade 4 when her parents moved to Yangon to work on construction, and her education was interrupted. In 2011, her parents had to move back to Nay Pyi Taw as they could not find work in Yangon. Her parents tried to enroll Nandar in a primary school in Zabuthiri Township but they could not, as they had lost her school transfer documents. With no school transfer documents, the school head asked for a recommendation from the ward administrator but the administrator refused as Nandar's parents are migrants.

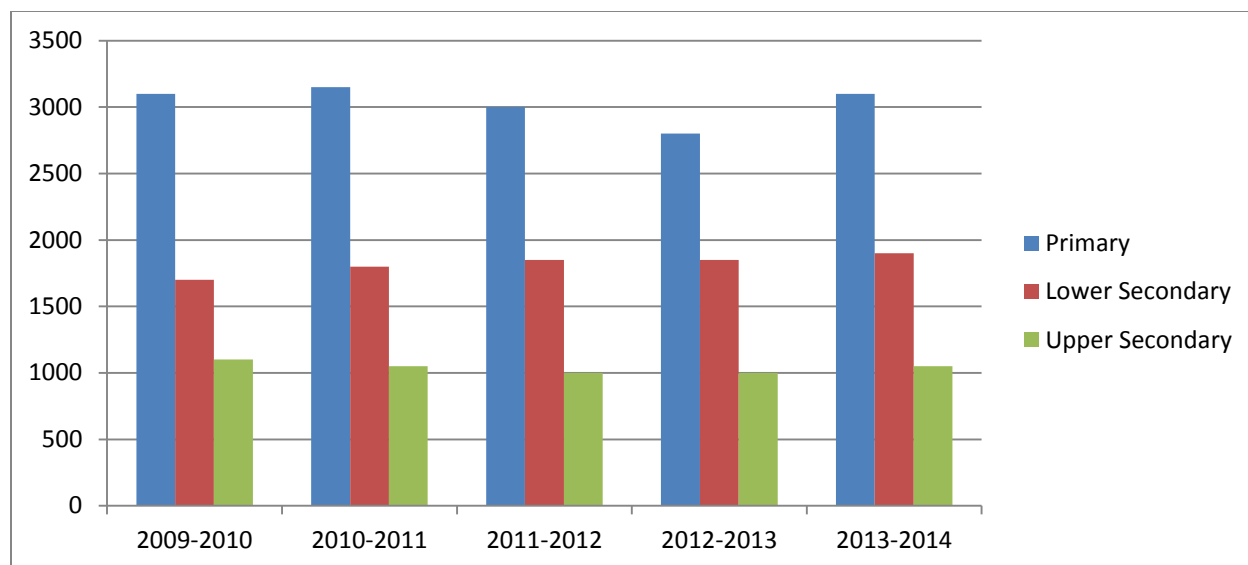
One day Nandar unexpectedly met a school teacher who was collecting data on children who wanted to study in a non-formal primary education (NFPE) school, and she was able to enroll. She enrolled in level 2 of the NFPE and passed one year later. At the start of the 2012-2013 academic year, Nandar was invited to join the 6th grade in a lower secondary school. She was also selected as a stipend beneficiary, and now receives 6,000 kyat per month.

Education is largely inaccessible beyond the primary level...

Many of the TEOs, schools heads, school committee members, and poor parents interviewed for the SA reported that education beyond the 7th or 8th grade is difficult for poorer students to access. As figure 5 shows, the numbers of students enrolled in lower secondary education is half of elementary school, and the numbers fall by another third in upper secondary school.

Figure 5: The number of students enrolled in primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary education in five townships³⁵

³⁵ The total numbers for primary, middle and the high school students is the average for all levels in the primary, middle and high schools. This means that the totals for all levels of primary, middle and high school are divided by the number of classes for each level of education. These data are only for five townships as Zabu Thiri Township was not included, as there was no Township Education Office until 2011 and thus no way to gather the type of data used in this study.



Source: Township Education Offices for the six townships studied

2. Constraints in access to education

For many in the six townships, education is inaccessible beyond the primary level. The barriers are financial as well as non-financial, and these are frequently intertwined. With regard to non-financial constraints, the SA found three main barriers: remoteness (a long distance from school), language (lack of proficiency in the language of instruction, Myanmar) and the student evaluation system (promoting primary students to the next grade even though they are not performing well).

The financial constraints in accessing education are the most important. Many of the Township Education Officers, school heads, members of school committees, and poor parents interviewed for this social assessment indicated that barriers to education rise after the 7th grade because school expenses increase considerably due to the cost of school supplies, as well as costs incurred because schools are much further from home. At the upper secondary level, students also need to pay for private tutoring in order to do well enough to pass their secondary exam. The estimate for average monthly costs for lower secondary and upper secondary education is about 30,000 kyat and 100,000 kyat, respectively.³⁶ The cost for upper secondary students rises significantly because most upper secondary schools are in the towns, and students from remote villages the village level are to stay at boarding schools or homes of relatives in towns. Given the significant increase in education expenses most of the people living in villages become inaccessible to the education beyond primary level.

One important finding on financial constraints was reported by a school head in Seikgyi Khanaungto Township. According to this respondent, in recent years, several families have gone so deeply into debt

³⁶ These data were calculated based on the estimated costs reported by poor parents, school heads, teachers, and school committee members. These estimates are the average of the values given by different respondents in each township, and the average across the five townships.

to pay for their children's upper secondary education that they cannot repay their loans, and have had to escape to another part of the country, and thus disrupt their children's education.

Non-financial Constraints

Remoteness as a key constraint in access to education...

Remoteness was one of the key barriers to education in three out of the six surveyed townships: Kalaw, Mu Don and Yaetar Shay. Kalaw and Yaetar Shay are comparatively worse than Mu Don. In the areas where remoteness was a major constraint, both communications and transportation are weaker. The villages do not have either reliable roads or transportation connecting them to the nearest schools. In some of the villages, students have to use both boats and roads to reach school, and travel is particularly difficult and dangerous during the rainy season. In fact, in some areas, parents will only allow children to attend school when they reach age 8 or 9, and can take care of themselves. In some areas, students spend up to four or five hours daily going to and from school. They have to get up at 4 a.m. to prepare for school, and leave home by 6 a.m. One of the school heads interviewed in a remote area, said half of the students from her school dropped out by the middle of the academic year, primarily because of the challenges in getting to school.

Remoteness is a more significant constraint for girls than for boys...

Girls are more impacted by the constraints of remoteness than boys. Parents do not want to send their daughters to school if there is no reliable road or transportation as they are really concerned about girls' safety. Parents also do not want their daughters to board near distant schools unless they have relatives or close friends nearby. In this way girls are more constrained by remoteness than boys even when parents can easily afford the extra costs of distant schooling.

Language constraints

Language posed a barrier to education in four schools covered by this social assessment: two in Kalaw, one in Mudon, and one in Yaetar Shay. These are schools located 15 to 55 miles away from the main towns. According to school heads, teachers and TEOs, language constraints particularly affect students at the primary level. In addition, it is the ethnic students from areas with a small Bamar population that face the greatest constraint. This is because ethnic students near a large Bamar population tend to be good at the Myanmar language because they have more exposure.

The ethnic minority students who have a language constraint tend to drop out when they reach lower secondary school, particularly in grade seven. When faced with language constraints, the ethnic students do poorly in school and then quit because they are discouraged. The SA also found that ethnic students rarely qualify for scholarships because by the "yardstick of language",³⁷ their performance is comparatively worse than the Bamar students.

³⁷ This remark was made by one of the TEOs during the follow up interviews.

Student evaluation system problems

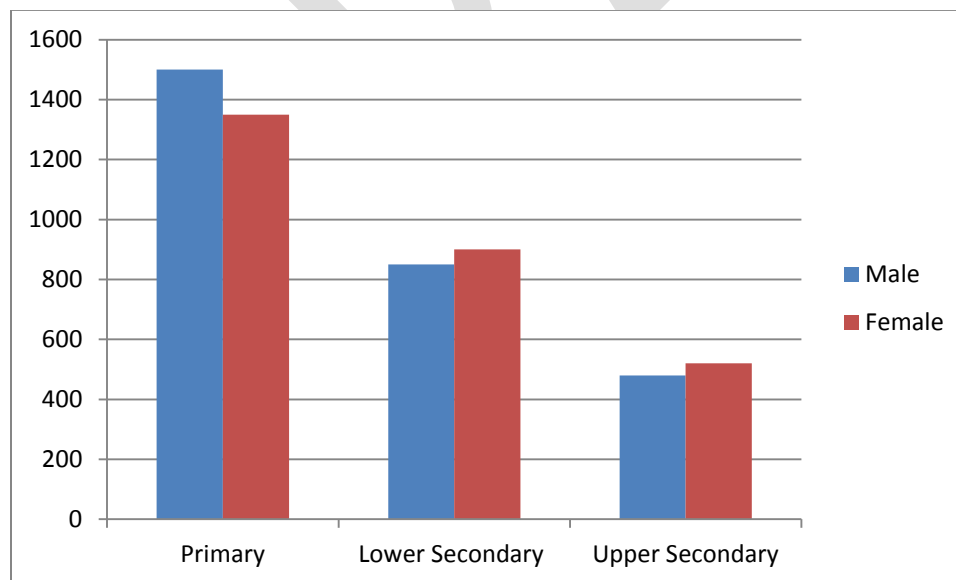
The current student evaluation system poses constraints on many students...

One of the most common views of respondents during the SA field research, concerned the problems caused by the current evaluation system, informally called the “no failures system”. Under this system, from grades 1 to 7, even though students perform poorly on their monthly exams, they are promoted to the next grade at the end of the academic year. In other words, students pass from grade to grade even though, in reality, they are failing. In upper secondary school, such poorly performing students find it impossible to keep up with their classmates, and they become dejected and drop out.

Constraints regarding gender

The SA researchers also investigated whether gender adversely impacts access to education. Generally speaking, the SA found that parents do not have a significant bias towards educating boys or girls. However, there were two main gender-related findings regarding access to education. First, according to school heads and teachers, in upper secondary school, more boys drop out than girls as parents need boys’ labor. Second, boys seemed to be comparatively less willing to withstand the financial challenges of poverty than girls, and thus boys leave school more readily to earn money. Figure 6 shows that the number of girls enrolled in lower secondary and upper secondary education is greater than the number of boys. However, as mentioned above, in primary school, more boys are enrolled than girls. Based on their experience in the field, the SA researchers believe that this is likely due to the constraints of remoteness and security.

Figure 6: Average number of enrolled students by gender at the primary, lower secondary and upper secondary levels in five townships³⁸



Source: Township Education Offices for the six townships studied.

³⁸ This is the five year, five township average, excluding Zabu Thiri (NPT).

3. Coping mechanisms for constraints in access to education

The SA also recorded the different coping methods applied individually or by community or by teachers.

Coping with financial constraints

In order to cope with financial constraints, individuals, schools and communities have different methods. According to interviews with poor parents and students, some poor students raise money for their school fees by working or by gambling to make money. Some parents join monthly saving schemes, they borrow from informal money lenders or they take their older children out of school so the younger children can attend. This study also found a few cases where poor people send their children to a non-formal primary school.

With regard to the work children do to earn money for their school fees, the most common source of money is scavenging—collecting and selling recyclable refuse such as glass bottles and paper. Students engaged in scavenging have to get up very early in morning to collect recyclable refuse, sell it and then come to school. Students also earn money by working in tea shops or machinery repair shops during the summer when school is out. One surprising finding of the SA was that students from grade two to upper secondary school engage in small-scale gambling in order to earn money for their lunch and even for their dinner.

Now days, parents are less willing to have their children pursue higher education. The TEOs, school heads and school boards in urbanized townships reported that nowadays parents are less interested in providing their children with formal education as they realize that a university degree is not much help in securing a job that earns a good income. As a result, many parents, and especially the poor, tend to send their children to apprentice in machine shops or handicraft factories. On the other hand, more affluent people prefer to send their children to private schools. This is discouraging for teachers as the better performing students are leaving the public education system.

Box 2: How individuals cope with the financial costs of schooling...

Case 1: Students engage in small-scale gambling to get pocket money

Respondents report that small food shops near the school are selling lottery ticket worth 50 kyat. Then after selling 10 lottery tickets to 10 students, the food shop holds a draw. The student who wins the lottery gets 500 kyat to buy food sold from the shop. This money allows the lottery winner to buy snacks and even eggs for dinner. This lottery has developed because parents cannot provide enough food or give their children enough money to buy food. Through this kind of small-scale gambling, students have a 1 in 10 chance to winning enough money to buy food for dinner. According to the shopkeeper interviewed for the SA, this type of gambling is not only undertaken by poor children but also by poor parents who need food for lunch or dinner.

Case 2: How mothers cope by saving monthly

Poor students' mothers use monthly savings groups to save and borrow when needed. These poor women are involved in monthly no-interest savings groups that they form informally with other women that they trust in their community. Group members usually save 5,000 kyat per month, and in the first month they vote to decide which member should get the group's savings for that month. Every month, one member has a turn in getting the savings of all members. If there are ten members, the mother whose turn it is to get the money, will receive 45,000 kyat. Through this saving scheme, a mother gets a large sum of money at one time and she can pay for many household needs, including children's costs for school uniforms and private tuition fees.

Non-formal primary education (NFPE) schools are part of the access-to-education coping strategy of the poor. These schools allow children who work part-time or have been out of school for some time, to continue their studies. However, the NFPEs are available to poor families only in cities and towns. Children who work in tea shops in the mornings, and children whose formal education has been interrupted because their parents have moved the family for work, rely on NFPE schools so that they can continue their education.

Communities also provide assistance...

The SA also found evidence of communities helping families to cope with the financial challenges of accessing education. In some communities, influential people such as formal leaders, village elders and other respected people make efforts to support poor students by persuading better off people in their social networks to donate money as well as books and school uniforms. These donations are then provided to the poor students, and especially to those who are academically outstanding. Teachers also seek donations in cash and kind in order to assist their poor students. The SA found too that in a number of schools, teachers share their lunch with very poor students.

Table 12: Incidence of community strategies for helping poor students to cope with financial constraints

Township	Types of contribution	School Committee /PTA	Parents	Teachers	Monks	Mother & Child Assoc.	Civil Society Organization	Total
Kalaw	Stationary supplies	2	-	-	-	-	-	2
	Student tables and chairs	2	-	-	-	-	-	2
	Stationary supplies	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Mudon	Providing food in NFPEs and schools	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
	Grants		-	-	-	-	1	1
	Student tables and chairs	4	-	-	-	-	-	4
Seikgyi	Providing food in NFPEs and schools	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
	Free private tuition for 9th and 10th graders	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
YaeTarShay	Stationary supplies		-	1	-	-	-	1
	Grants	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Mahar	Stationary supplies	1	-	-	-	-	-	1

Aung Myae	School fees for enrollment	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Zabuthiri	Stationary supplies	3	-	-	1	-	-	4
	Providing food in NFPEs and schools	2	-	-	-	-	-	2
	School fees for enrollment	-	-	-	-	2	-	2
	Student tables and chairs	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Total		18	1	1	1	2	3	26

Source: interviews with various stakeholders in six townships during field data collection.

Coping with remoteness

Regarding the constraints imposed by remoteness, only those who have financial and social capital are able to overcome the constraint of living far from schools. In most cases, in order to attend school in a distant town, students from remote areas either stay in a private dormitory or with parents' relatives or close friends. Girls are at a particular disadvantage as the dormitories are in Buddhist monasteries and only boys can stay there. Unless a girl's parents have relatives or close friends near the lower or upper secondary school, even better off parents from remote communities will not send their daughters to distant schools.

The SA found that Kalaw Township has an interesting example of how of remote communities cope with the long distance to school. In villages some 55 miles from Kalaw town, and with no regular transportation and roads which are muddy and dangerous in the rainy season, three villages collaborated to set up a primary school in their area.

Box 3: An example of three villages collaborating to cope with remoteness

In three small villages that are 30 minutes' walk away from Thet Shay village, which has a primary school, parents were faced with the problem of getting their children to school. Despite being relatively close to the primary school, parents were reluctant to send their children alone because the road is very bad, especially during the rainy season. In the rainy season, the road is muddy and dangerous and the time to reach school is much more than 30 minutes. Although parents feel they must accompany their children to and from school, they often do not have time for this. To solve this problem, the three villages collaborated to establish an unofficial primary school in a location which all three villages could easily reach. Then the parents hired a private teacher for 50,000 kyat per month. Each household that has students attending the school is responsible for paying 25,000 kyat annually towards school expenses, including the salary of the teacher. Parents can contribute this amount at any time during the year when they can afford it.

In order to establish their unofficial sub-primary school, the villages had to get help from the official primary school in Thet Shay village. The official primary school enrolls the students from the unofficial primary school, which means that students in the unofficial school receive the government grant that is

provided at enrolment time. In addition, the students in the unofficial primary school are allowed to take the examinations at the official primary school.

Coping with the language barrier

According to the TEOs, ATOs, and school heads at all levels, in order to cope with the language barrier, ethnic minority parents tend to prefer teachers who are bilingual. Most of the teachers from the schools in ethnic minority villages tend to be natives of the village, or from the nearby area. However, study respondents indicated that ethnic minority children often lag behind the Bamar students. This shows up, respondents said, when selecting candidates for scholarships. Due to their language barrier, the ethnic students are rarely successful in winning scholarships when competing with Bamar students.

- **Recommendations to improve access to education**

These recommendations on enhancing access to education in Myanmar are based on the advice of different stakeholders interviewed or participating in discussion groups in the six townships studied during this assessment. These stakeholders were Ministry of Education (MOE) Director Generals from the Department of Basic Education (DBE), the Department of the Myanmar Education Research Bureau (DMERB), and the Department of Education Planning and Training (DEBT); researchers from the DMERB; Township Education Officers; school heads and teachers; members of school committees and parent teacher associations; poor parents, including ethnic and other minorities; students who have been awarded stipends; and village heads.

The recommendations below concerning constitutional support were made by the Director Generals from the Ministry of Education. They called on the ministry to take the initiative in developing a legal and policy framework to support improving access to education. The rest of the recommendations in this section are for the Department of Education Planning and Training.

Policy-level recommendations for consideration

Recommendations for short-term action to improve constitutional support

- Promulgating the *Free and Compulsory Primary Education Law* as soon as possible because the stipend and grants programs are currently being implemented without an adequate legal framework and procedures.
- Providing government support to ensure educational opportunities, including non-formal education, for children in areas with conflict and remote hilly regions, and for ethnic children who speak a language other than Myanmar.
- Reviewing the *New Comprehensive Law for the Whole Education Sector* through the Comprehensive Education Sector Review. (The draft *Comprehensive Law* was developed by the CESR Phase-1 Working Group, based on the findings of the Phase-1 CESR).

Recommendations to improve strategic planning in the education sector

- Implementing an education management information system (MIS) as soon as possible.
- Engaging key stakeholders in the Ministry of Education's departments so that they not only provide data but also engage in participatory planning processes that promote good consultation and cooperation among themselves.
- Enabling the stipend and grants program implementing departments to focus on implementing their programs well and avoid any conflict of interest
- Providing sufficient resources to the Department of the Myanmar Education Research Bureau so that it can focus on quality control and help in designing and planning the best possible educational programs.

Recommendations for short-term action to counter students' financial constraints

- Adding more classes to the existing primary and lower secondary schools.
- Building more classrooms in existing schools.
- Increasing the number of teachers.

Recommendations for medium-term action to counter students' financial constraints

- Extending free education to cover lower and upper secondary education.
- Targeting more support to assist poor and vulnerable groups as well as ethnic and other minorities.

Recommendations for short-term action to improve access to education in remote communities

- Adding more classes to existing primary and lower secondary schools.
- Increasing the number of classrooms at existing schools and increasing the number of teachers.

Recommendations for medium-term action to improve access to education in remote communities

- Increasing the incentives provided to teachers so that they will work in schools in remote areas.
- Classifying many more areas as remote so that public servants providing government services in these areas will be entitled to higher salaries.
- Providing teachers in remote areas with accommodation and food rations, as well as higher salaries.
- Providing public dormitories for lower secondary and upper secondary students who come from remote areas.

Recommendations for short-term action to address language barriers

- Assigning teachers who are the same ethnic group as the population in a remote area.
- Recruiting and training teachers from ethnic minority groups.
- Accepting a lower grade on the Myanmar language exam from ethnic minority students so that they have a fair chance when competing for scholarships with students who speak Myanmar as their native language.

Recommendations for medium-term action to address language barriers

- Training teachers who work in ethnic minority areas in both the local language as well language teaching skills so that they are capable bi-lingual teachers.

Recommendations for short-term action to improve the performance evaluation system

- Improving the current student performance evaluation system for grades 1 to 7.

Recommendations for medium-term action to improve the performance evaluation system

- Reforming performance evaluation in the whole school system so that students are graded on their ability to apply what they have learned, as well as their knowledge.
- Conducting studies on an ongoing basis to measure students’ performance as well as how and what they are being taught.

Section 7: Social Assessment Findings on Provision of the Stipend

The SA looked at how provision of the stipends is being implemented on the ground and how local communities including those among ethnic groups participate in providing input, implementing and monitoring of the program. The intention here is for the SA to inform the design of the community participation framework that will ensure participation and culturally appropriate benefits for the poor/vulnerable especially from ethnic minorities, and to avoid any adverse effects in the program. For this, the SA team examined in detail how the institutional structure operates and the steps for how funds flow down from the Ministry of Education to the beneficiaries, including: delivery, monitoring, evaluation, reporting, feedback and grievance mechanisms, and community participation in the program. The study found that implementation needs to be improved in all of these areas. In other words, the institutional foundations of the program have yet to be properly put in place. Most importantly, the program is not being implemented in a participatory manner.

1. Institutional structure

The institutional structure varies across the six regions visited by the SA team...

The stipend program involves a number of Ministry of Education departments and offices at different stages, and table 14 below, which summarizes information from interviews with the TEOs, shows how these agencies coordinate with each other. According to the TEOs in the regions studied by the SA, the institutional structure of the stipend program varies from one part of the country to another. In fact, some senior Ministry of Education interviewees stated that the TEOs do not clearly understand the steps involved in implementing the stipend program or which institutions are responsible for what. In other words, the TEOs know only about their role in the program.

Table 13: Different institutional structures responsible for dispersing stipends in six regions and states

	Institutional Structures
1.	DBE 2 to Regional Education Office to TEOs to School Heads
2.	DBE 2 to District Education Office to TEOs to School Heads
3.	District Education Office to TEOs to Cluster Heads to School Heads
4.	DEPT to State Education Office to TEOs to School Heads

5.	DEPT to Regional Education Office to TEOs to Cluster Heads to School Heads
6.	DEPT to Regional Education Office to TEOs to School Heads

Source: Township Education Offices of the six townships studied.

2. Flow of funds for the stipend

The flow of funds for the stipend program varies across the townships....

Based on interviews conducted with TEO staff, the flow of funds varied across the townships. The TEOs reported that they do not know clearly which departments are responsible for disbursing the money.

Methods of transferring the stipend money

SA respondents indicated that the methods for transferring the stipend money varied quite a lot. The Regional or State Education Office makes direct transfers of all 10 months of stipend funds to the Township Education Office's account or the TEOs pick up the cash at the District or State Education Office. In four townships, the TEOs deposited the money in current accounts opened specifically for the stipend program. Regarding who set up the current account, the SA found that this varied from the TEO, Assistant TEO, and upper secondary school heads setting up a joint account, to one township in which the TEO alone set up the account. In one township, there was no bank account specifically for the stipend and the account used was the same as the one for transfers of all money from the State Education Offices (SEOs), including salaries, school grants and stipends. In one township, no bank account was used—the TEOs collected the stipend money in cash from the District Education Offices (DEOs) every two months. Table 15 illustrates how the stipend money is transferred, deposited and how frequently it is delivered across the townships.

Table 14: Differing methods of transferring stipend funds and banking them

Methods of transferring the stipend money	No. of Townships
Regional/State Education Office makes a direct bank transfer to the TEO	3
Regional Education Office provides the cash to the TEO	1
Department of Basic Education (1, 2 or 3) provides the cash to the TEO	1
DBE (2) transfers money to the District Education Office bank account and the TEO takes the stipend money out of the bank account and provides the cash to the District EO every two months	1
Differing banking arrangements for stipend funds	
The TEO, ATEO, and the lower or upper secondary school head open a joint account for banking the stipend funds	3
The TEO opens a bank account for the stipend only which is in the TEO's name	1

Source: Township education offices for the six townships studied

Frequency for providing the stipend to beneficiaries

Regarding the frequency of delivering the stipend, the SA researchers found that the stipend money is delivered monthly in three townships where 10-months of stipend money is disbursed by the higher-level offices, as described above. However, in one township, due to remoteness, the stipend money is delivered every two months, rather than monthly as the TEO can only take the money from the District Education Office every two months. In two townships, the amount for 10-months of stipend money is disbursed with other money from the budget on a monthly basis, over the whole year. In two townships, the stipend money was delivered irregularly (every 2–3 months) due to remoteness or because the cluster heads and school heads were busy with other work. The following table shows how frequently stipend money is disbursed to beneficiaries.

Table 15: Frequency of distributing stipend cash to beneficiaries

Sr.	Frequency of delivering stipend cash to beneficiaries	Number of Townships
1.	After 10-months of stipend money is disbursed to the Township Education Office, it is provided to beneficiary students on a monthly basis	3
2.	The stipend money is disbursed by the District EO to the Township EO, every two months	1
3.	Although the TEO receives all the stipend budget for 10 months, it is dispersed to beneficiaries irregularly (every 2–3 months), either because beneficiaries live in a remote community or the cluster and school heads are busy with other work	2

Source: Township education offices for the six townships studied and interviews with school heads in the communities visited.

Methods for delivering the stipend

The methods for delivering the stipend are the same in all the townships studied, except one. In five townships, the stipend money is delivered by the school head to the classroom teacher of the beneficiary student, who then delivers the stipend to the student or to the student’s guardian (if the student is in primary school). However, in one township only, the beneficiary student and his or her classroom teacher go to the TEO to pick up the stipend.

3. Targeting and beneficiary selection

No targeting of the stipend at schools—targeting only at students...

There is no targeting in terms of schools, but there are targets for the total number of students in each township. The stipend committee in one township mentioned that they prioritized the schools in remote areas. However, the SA researchers found that this was not actually the case—in five of the six townships, between 6% and 65% of the schools had stipend beneficiaries. The exception was Seik Gyi Khanaungto Township, where all the schools are covered by the stipend program.

Table 16: The total number of schools covered in 2013–2014 academic year, the number of schools with stipend beneficiaries, and the % of schools covered by the program

Sr.	Township	Total number of schools	Number of schools with beneficiary students	% of schools receiving the stipend
1.	Seik Gyi	17	17	100%
2.	Mahar Aung Myae (MDY)	38	11	29%
3.	Mudone (Mon)	102	17	17%
4.	Zabu Thri (NPT)	20	13	65%
5.	Yae Tar Shay (Pegu)	232	23	10%
6.	Kalaw (Shan)	192	12	6%

Source: Township education offices for the six townships studied

The Ministry of Education intends that the total number of students provided with the stipend is based on the total number of students in each township. However, it appears that the TEOs do not clearly understand how the stipend is targeted as they have only been instructed on how many students are to be selected in their township.

Table 17: Number of stipend recipients by township

Sr.	Township	Number of Recipient Students	Total Number of Students
1.	Mudone (Mon)	33	30,612
2.	Yae Tar Shay (Pegu)	44	38,302
3.	Mahar Aung Myae (MDY)	22	20,691
4.	Seikgyi Khanaungto (YGN)	22	6,927
5.	Kalaw (Shan)	33	29,833
6.	Zabu Thiri (NPT)	22	15,000

Source: Township education offices for the six townships studied

Beneficiary selection criteria varied across the townships...

Despite having a variety of stipend selection criteria, in five townships orphans (children with no father and mother) are given first priority. Specification of the number of students to be selected also varies in some townships, and in three townships, gender is a criterion. Details on the criteria can be seen in the following table.

Table 18: Selection criteria for stipend students

Priorities	Selection Criteria	No. of Townships Concerned
1	Students with no father or mother	1
2	Guardian has no regular income	
3	Living conditions are poor	
4	Students live with their grand parents	
1	Those whose marks in English and Math are above 65%	1
2	The poor	
3	Students with no father or mother	
1	Students with no father or mother	1
2	The very poor	
1	Students with no father or mother	1
2	Students with no father	
3	Students with no mother □	
4	Students in a poor family with many dependents	
5	Poor students with outstanding performance and regular attendance	
1	Students with no father or mother	1
2	Poor students	
3	Poor students with only one parent	
4	Students in a poor family with many dependents	
5	Students with no father or mother and no guardian supporting them	
6	Students who pass every class annually ³⁹	
1	Poor students with no father or mother	1
2	Students with only one parent	
3	Students who work hard in school	

Source: Township Education Offices and schools in six townships studied.

Table 19: Number and gender of stipend students selected, by class

Sr.	Number of students selected for the stipend	Number of townships concerned
1.	Two male and two female students in each class	1
2.	One male and one female student in each class	3
3.	Three students in each class (no gender specified)	1
4.	No number or gender specified	1

Source: Township Education Offices for the six townships studied

Selection criteria pose constraints in selecting the most deserving students...

³⁹ According to teachers and the school heads, they select outstanding students and students who always pass, as it is challenging to replace stipend recipients that fail.

Many schools heads and TEOs reported that using the criteria above interferes with selecting truly deserving students. According to those selecting beneficiaries, the criteria give orphans priority but these are not necessarily the most deserving students. The following quotes reflect how the criteria constrain selecting the most deserving and needy poor.

Cases How selection criteria pose constraints in selecting truly needy poor students

Case (1)

There are many more needy poor but as they are not orphans, they are not eligible.

(School head)

A school headmistress reported that no student from her school received a stipend when she selected the truly deserving poor students in 2012–2013 academic year. As a result, for the 2013–2014 academic year, when applying the stipend, she gave priority to orphans and these students were awarded the stipend. However, she stated that although these students are orphans, they are not necessarily as poor as some other students with parents.

Case (2)

The two brothers in my class are poorer than I am. Their father is a private in the army. They frequently have no lunch. They are the poorest students in this school. I want them to get stipend like I do.

(Stipend recipient)

(This stipend recipient, who is an orphan, said that her grandmother gives her lunch every day. She said that the two poor brothers whose father is in the army do not get the stipend as people selecting beneficiaries assume that the army supports the family.)

Selection process

School-level selection of stipend recipients

In most of the schools visited, potential stipend beneficiary students are selected first by the classroom teacher and then the school heads screens these candidates. The school head’s final list is submitted to the township-level screening and selection body. A few other forms of selection also take place in some schools. Table 21 shows the types of selection at the school level.

Table 20: Methods for nominating beneficiaries at the school level

Sr.	Beneficiary selection methods at the school level	Number of schools concerned
1.	The teachers and the school head nominate beneficiaries in consultation with each other	4
2.	The teachers propose beneficiaries to the school head, who then makes the final selection and endorses them	16
3.	The school head submits the names of the nominees to the TEO	1
4.	Teachers throughout the school give their recommendations for beneficiaries and then classroom in-charge teacher and the school head select which students will be nominated for a stipend	1

Source: Township Education Offices and schools in the six townships studied.

Township-level selection

In five out of six townships visited during the SA, the township screening bodies for selecting stipend beneficiaries are called Stipend Committees or Education Support Committees. In one township, the SA team was told that the TEO alone screens and endorses the lists of nominees provided by the school heads.⁴⁰ The SA study team found that the Education Support Committees in two townships were set up long before the stipend program began.

Table 21: The bodies that screen stipend nominees at the township level

Types of screening bodies	Number of Townships Concerned
Township stipend committee screens and selects the beneficiaries	3
Township education support committee screens and selects the beneficiaries	2
The TEO alone screens and select the beneficiaries	1

Source: Township education offices, township stipend committee members and schools heads

Organizational structure of township-level screening bodies

The organizational structures of township screening bodies also varied (See table 23). Only people working for MOE are on the committee.

Table 22: Organizational structure for township stipend screening and selection bodies

Organizational structures	Number of townships with this structure
<p>"Township Stipend Board"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TEO (Chairman) • Assistant TEO (Secretary) • One upper secondary school head (vice secretary) • All upper secondary school heads (members) • All lower secondary school heads (members) • One primary school head represents every 10 primary schools in the township (members) 	1

⁴⁰ There was no stipend committee at the township level and the Township Education Support Committee members knew nothing about the stipend program.

<p>“Township Stipend Committee”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TEO (Chairman) • Vice TEO (Secretary) • One assistant TEO (member) • Two upper secondary school heads (members) • One lower secondary school head (member) • One primary school head (member) 	1
<p>“Townships Stipend Board”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TEO (Chairman) • 9 upper secondary school heads (no specific position mentioned) • One lower secondary school head (no specific position mentioned) • One primary school cluster head (no specific position mentioned) 	1
<p>“The Township Education Working Committee”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TEO (Chairman) • Vice TEO (Secretary 1) • Assistant TEO (Secretary 2) • One upper secondary school head (member) • One primary school representative (member) 	1
<p>“Township Education Committee”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TEO (Chairman) • Vice TEO (secretary 1) • Assistant TEO (Secretary 2) • One upper secondary school head (member) ▪ One lower secondary school head (member) 	1

Source: Township education offices, township education stipend boards and township education committees.

How the township level conducts screening

Township-level screening committee members reported that they found it very difficult to select stipend beneficiaries as the number of candidates proposed by the schools are always many more than the township quota for beneficiaries. Committee members stated that they first screen the candidates to separate those who are orphans from candidates who have parents. Then they select the students with only one parent. Then the committee selects the outstanding students over those who only pass their exams. Most of the time, after applying these criteria, the maximum number beneficiaries has been selected. If some students score equally, to choose between them, the committee then compares the income in each family as well as the total number of dependents, and prioritizes the poorer student. In one township, the ward administrator certifies the guardian’s income level and number of dependents in the household. In another township, it was reported that the committee gives priority to students who come from remote areas. A member of a township-level screening committee remarked that those

applications that have a detailed and convincing description of the student’s profile help prioritize these applicants over others.⁴¹

4. Number of recipients, amount of the stipend and whether it is enough

Upper secondary students need more money than the stipend allocated to them...

The number of students who need a stipend in a township is currently many times more at the upper secondary level than the quota per township. In fact, in the townships surveyed, the percentage of students who are awarded benefits, compared with those who need benefits, is only 22%⁴² on average, and in some schools, the percentage is as low as 10%⁴³ of the deserving students. The following table shows the comparison between the current number of stipend recipients and those students who need benefits.

Table 23: The current number of stipend students versus the number of needy students

Township	2013–2014 Academic Year			
	Township Data		Village Data	
	Number of Stipend Recipients	Number of Needy students	Number of Current Stipend Recipients	Number of Needy students
Yaetar Shay	44	DNA	3	50
Seikgyi Khanaungto	22	1324	10	32
Mahar Aung Myae	12	200	12	691
Zabuthiri	22	100	6	140
Mudon	38	300	2	22
Kalaw	33	900	5	32

Source: Township education offices in the six townships studied and the schools visited.

The current amount of the stipend for lower secondary and upper secondary education is not enough...

Many respondents stated that the amount of the stipend for primary students (5,000 kyat per month) is fair while the amount for lower secondary students (6,000 kyat) and upper secondary students (8,000

⁴¹ Findings from the follow-up trip support this. Since there is no required application format, a candidate whose case is made effectively by the school head is more likely to be awarded a stipend by the township committee.

⁴² These data are based on the average for the total number of needy students in all the schools that the SA researchers visited. The data come primarily from the school heads who, in some cases, made rough estimates or used the list of all applicants which had provided to the township for selection.

⁴³ These data are the average for total need in all of the townships visited by the SA researchers. These data were provided by the TEOs, who either made estimates, or gave the numbers of stipend applicants based on the lists of candidates submitted by the schools.

kyat) is not nearly enough. They pointed out that while primary-level education is free, this is not the case for lower and upper secondary education. Plus, the travel costs for lower secondary and upper secondary education is more than for primary schools which are usually much closer to student's homes. Many survey respondents suggested 10,000 kyat per month for lower secondary education and 15,000 kyat per month for upper secondary education. However, many of the TEOs and some schools heads in the six townships recommended increasing the number stipend beneficiaries rather than the amount of the stipend. The following quotes reflect different points of view on the amount of the stipend.

The (stipend) amount for the primary level is fair. But it is not enough for secondary. I think that 8,000 kyat for lower secondary and 10,000 kyat for upper secondary would be fair. We currently have to spend 10,000 kyat for our lower secondary students and if the stipend provided were 8,000 Kyat monthly for the lower secondary level—that would be very helpful for us.

(Poor parent)

There are many people who do not apply for the stipend as the money will all be spent on travelling costs to pick up the stipend.

(Assistant TEO)

If the stipend were 10,000 kyat for lower secondary and 15,000 kyat for upper secondary education, the program would be helpful for students, as well as practical and affordable for the State.

(School Board member)

At this time, the number of recipients should increase not the amount of the stipend.

(School Head)

5. Outreach and information-giving mechanism for the stipend

No mechanism has been specified for giving out information about the stipend...

This study found that there is no mechanism or systematic approach for giving out information on the stipend to implementers or to communities. In some cases, the TEOs informed schools heads and school teachers about how to select candidates for the stipend at their monthly meetings, or they learned about the stipend through the school cluster heads, or by phone. No information at all reached schools heads in remote areas of three of the townships surveyed. In some cases, school heads know about the program but only told teachers to nominate possible beneficiaries, provide the stipend to beneficiaries and get beneficiaries' signatures, but the school head did not explain the program to the teachers. The SA researchers found that in many of the schools they visited, several of the teachers had only a vague

idea about the stipend which they had heard of only by word of mouth—not officially. Some school committees had also not heard of the stipend.

The SA researchers heard from some school heads that because of the very limited number of stipends available, that they hesitate to let people know about the stipend. Some school heads indicated that they were concerned that in selecting only one or two candidates per class from among so many needy students, that people would be unhappy with their decision.

Table 24: Numbers of different stakeholders who had heard about the stipend

	Visited Townships						Total schools
	Yay Tar Shay	Seik Gyi	Mudon	Ka law	Zabu Thiri	Ma Har Aung Myay	
Number of visited schools	4	5	4	6	4	5	28
Number of Schools where headmasters know about the stipend	3	5	4	6	4	5	27
Number of schools where the class in-charge teachers know about the stipend	3	5	2	2	2	4	18
Number of School where class teachers know about the stipend	3	5	2	2	2	3	17
Number of Schools where School Committee or PTA know about the stipend	2	0	1	2	1	0	6
Number of Schools where Poor Parents know about the stipend	2	1	0	2	0	0	5
Number of Schools where the ward or village administrator know about the stipend	2	0	2	2	2	1	9

Source: interviews with various stakeholders—school committees, schools heads, teachers and parents.

Table 25: Numbers of different stakeholders who know about the stipend selection criteria⁴⁴

⁴⁴ In this situation, the people might know at least about beneficiary selection criteria.

	Townships Visited					
	Yay Tar Shay	Seik Gyi	Mudon	Ka law	Zabu Thiri	Ma Har Aung Myay
Number of schools visited	4	5	4	6	4	5
Number of schools where heads know about the stipend selection criteria	3	5	4	3	4	5
Number of schools where the class in-charge teacher knows about the stipend selection criteria	3	5	2	2	2	4
Number of schools where class teachers know about the stipend selection criteria	3	0	2	2	2	0
Number of schools where the School Committee or PTA know about the stipend selection criteria	2	0	1	0	1	0
Number of Schools where poor parents know about the stipend selection criteria	2	0	0	0	0	0
Number of schools where the ward or village administrator knows about the stipend selection criteria	0	0	1	2	0	0

The following quotes reflect stakeholders' lack of information about the stipend criteria:

I testified that a family in our ward is truly poor. But I did not know the reason why I had to do this.

(Ward administrator)

I don't know anything about the stipend. I also don't know who received it.

(Poor parent)

I heard about the stipend only when I attended a workshop in Nay Pyi Taw with the TEO. The cluster head also gave us no information on the stipend.

(Head of a primary school in a remote area)

We don't know anything about the stipend. We know only what the teachers tell us and we dare not ask the teachers about anything.

(Poor parent)

Some stakeholders have misperceptions about the concept and objectives of the stipend....

With no mechanism systematically providing information and outreach, stakeholders, including the key implementers such as TEOs, school heads and teachers, have misconceptions about the program.

What really is a stipend? Please explain more.

(School teacher's question to an SA researcher)

The guardian of a stipend recipient told me to give him the stipend money as he needed it for repairing his motorcycle. He mentioned that he had already spent money on the student's education and it was fair that he used the stipend when he needed it.

(School head)

The stipend is for outstanding students with no parents. If we give the stipend to a student with poor performance, and he or she fails, we have to select another student for the stipend.

(School teacher)

The SA research team guess that these implementers have different perceptions about the stipend program as they are only given the directions for selecting beneficiaries and the criteria, but they are not provided with the underlying concept and the objectives of the program. That is why implementers at the school level believe that the stipend is for outstanding orphans. The study team also found that no stipend recipient's parents understand the program's objectives and concepts.

6. School Committee, PTA and community participation in the Stipend Program

Little community participation in the stipend program...

In all six townships, this study found that no one from the community participates in the program. There are no community representatives in the education institutions or on the committees formed for

this program. Although PTA and school board members include parents from the community, they have very little understanding about the program. Many of these members have asked heads and teachers about the program. Some have also expressed concern about perceived abuses and bias of the program. The following quotes reflect some the different points of view of community members regarding participation in the stipend process.

Bias in selection could occur if selection is undertaken without consultation with the school committee.

(A school committee member who did not agree with the stipend candidates being selected only by school heads and teachers)

The stipend is a matter of concern only to educators. The school committee addresses needs when the school head asks them to help.

(School committee member)

The above quotes show that some want to be involved in the process of beneficiary selection, while others think that this is a matter concerning only people working under MOE. However, school committee members in 16 out of 28 schools visited during this study mentioned that they wanted to be involved in implementation of the program, and especially in the process of beneficiary selection. Some school committees and a couple of village administrators insisted that the ward or village administrator should also be part of the stipend program, especially at the screening stage.

Corruption is perceived because people lack knowledge and the opportunity to participate...

The study learned of three cases of perceived possible corruption. In first case, the school head selected the beneficiaries on his own and selected a student who had not been to school for two years. The respondent believed that the school head kept the money. In the second case, the school head took the money from the TEO and did not tell anyone from the school about the stipend. The new school head only learned about this in the second year (2013–2014) of the program when the Township Education Officer told him to come to collect the stipend money so that he could start distributing it to the beneficiaries. In the third case, the school head took 1,000 kyat from the stipend provided to every beneficiary. He reported this himself in his interview, and explained that he had used the money to pay the costs for travelling from his very remote village to the township office so that he could pick up text books and note books for 60 students.

Participation of the poor, ethnic and other minorities, and women in the stipend program

Participation of the poor

The study found that no poor people participated in the stipend program in any way except as beneficiaries. On the contrary, the key informant interviews and focus group discussions with poor people found that in only 5 out of the 28 schools visited did poor people know anything about the program, and what they knew came only from word of mouth.

Participation of ethnic and other minorities

Ethnic and other minorities have children in 19 out of the 28 schools covered by the survey. Table 27 presents details on the distribution of minorities in the wards or villages where the schools are found. Within their limited time for school site visits, the study team found it difficult to assess to what extent ethnic and other minorities were participating in the stipend program. However, the SA researchers did assess the situation to some extent through observation of ethnic and other minority participation in the focus group discussions (FGDs) held with school committees, and in their key informant interviews with minorities.

In the FGDs with school committee or PTA members, ethnic and other minorities participated in 9 out of the 19 schools which were located in wards or villages where minorities coexist with the majority ethnic population. In those 9 schools, unlike the other 10 schools, researchers found that ethnic and other minorities actively participated in the FGDs, and participated as much as the majority ethnic group members. The key informant interviews with ethnic and other minorities found that the minorities, like other community members, did not know about the stipend program.

Table 26: Distribution of ethnic and other minorities in the areas visited for the social assessment

Distribution of minorities in the areas visited				
Township	Ward/Village	Majority ethnic group	Minority ethnic group	Minority ethnic group %
Yay Tar Shay	Village (1)	Bamar	0	0
	Village (2)	Bamar	0	0
	Village (3)	Pa O	0	0
	Village (4)	Bamar	0	0
Seik Gyi	Ward (1)	Bamar	0	0
	Ward (2)	Bamar	0	0
	Ward (3)	Muslim	Burma	40
	Ward (4)	Bamar	Rakhine	0.01
	Ward (5)	Bamar	Rakhine	0.3
Kalaw	Village (1)	Taung Yoe	Pa Oak	20
	Village (2)	Da Nu	Burma	2
	Village (3)	Da Nu	Burma	7
			Inn Thar	3
	Village (4)	Pa O	Taung Yoe	29
			Da Nu	1
	Village (5)	Bamar	Kayin	10
			Da Nu	7
			Pa Oak	7
			Pa Laung	6
Village (6)	Bamar	Ta Nu	20	

			Islam	5
			Pa Oak	5
Mudon	Village (1)	Mon	Burma	20
			Ka Lar	5
			Kayin	3
			Shan	1
			Tayoke Ka Phyar	1
			Rakhine	0.3
			Chin	0.05
			Kachin	0.02
	Village (2)	Mon	0	0
	Village (3)	Mon	Burma	4
Kayin			1	
Village (4)	Bamar	Mon	1	
Zabu Thiri	Ward (1)	Bamar	Various	40
	Village (1)	Bamar	Various	10
	Village (3)	Bamar	0	0
	Village (4)	Bamar	Various	40
Mandalay	Ward (1)	Bamar	Pon Nar	12
			Shan	2.6
			Kachin	0.7
			Kayin	0.24
			Chin	0.29
			Mon	0.05
			Kayar	0.05
			Rakhine	0.16
	Ward (2)	Muslim	Burma	11.2
			Rakhine	0.6
			Shan	1.2
			Kayin	0.03
			Chin	0.01
			Shan	0.71
	Ward (3)	Bamar	Kayin	0.16
			Mon	0.1
			Kayin	0.07
			Rakhine	0.06
			Chin	0.04
	Ward (4)	Bamar	0	0

Source: Township Education Offices and schools in six townships studied

Women's participation

A more than equal number of females participate in the stipend program, but only as beneficiaries. As described above, the stipend program has gender disaggregated targets in the three townships. The study found that the female to male ratio among current beneficiaries is 5:4.

Table 27: Male/female ratio of stipend beneficiaries

Townships	2012–2013		2103–2014	
	Males	Females	Male	Female
Mudon	13	20	15	18
Zabu Thiri	10	12	9	13
Yay Ter Shay	22	22	22	22
Kalaw	13	20	12	21
Ma Har Aung Myay	12	10	13	9
Seik Gyi	8	14	8	14
Total	78	98	79	97
Male/Female Ratio	4:5		4:5	

Source: Township Education Office in six townships studied

Although female participation in the beneficiary selection process for the stipend program is poor, that is understandable, given that there is little community participation in the program. It also seems very likely that women participate little in the stipend program because few women participate in school-related institutions such as school committees and PTAs. In almost all of the FGDs held with school committees or PTAs during the SA visits to schools, almost all the participants were men. However, in the FGDs with poor parents, women were the overwhelming majority.

7. The feedback mechanism

The feedback mechanism has yet to be established...

According to the TEOs and school heads, there is no mechanism for receiving feedback or complaints about the program. The TEOs and school heads said in their SA interviews that there have been no complaints since the stipend program began in the 2012–2013 academic year. However, the SA researchers learned through interviews with two stipend beneficiaries, that students who were not awarded a stipend questioned why they did not receive a stipend when they were just as poor. Thus, when the program is extended to more students and more information is given to the community, it is very likely that people will want to give feedback or make complaints, and thus a proper channel for feedback and complaints needs to be established.

8. Monitoring and reporting

The monitoring and reporting mechanism is weak...

The only program monitoring efforts in almost all of the schools visited during the study, were collecting the signatures of beneficiary students or their guardians. In one township, for transparency as well as monitoring and reporting, when stipend students collect their money from the TEO, they sign their names and the class in-charge teachers signs too as a witness. In only three townships, were these signing records submitted to higher-level MOE offices. In one of these three townships, the signature records are submitted to three offices—the township, district and regional education offices. In the second of these three townships, where beneficiaries receive stipend money at the TEO, the signature record is submitted to the District Education Office, and in the third of the three townships, the schools only have to submit the records to the TEO. In the other three townships covered by the stipend program, signature records are not submitted to any higher-level office. Apart from some townships submitting their signature records to a higher-level office, no other stipend-related monitoring and reporting activities were mentioned during the SA field visits.

9. Recommendations to consider in improving implementation of the stipend program

Recommendations regarding improving the stipend program are based on the reports of different stakeholders interviewed during this study. These were people from the Ministry of Education; members of school committees and parent-teacher associations; poor parents; students awarded a stipend; and village heads. The people interviewed from the Ministry of Education included Director Generals from the Department of Basic Education, Department of the Myanmar Education Research Bureau, and Department of Education Planning and Training, and researchers from the Department of the Myanmar Education Research Bureau. In all six townships, interviews were conducted with township education officers, school heads and teachers and community members. Ethnic and other minorities were included in the interviews and discussions with community members.

The recommendations which call for constitutional support were made by the Director Generals from MOE and they would like the ministry to take the initiative in developing the legal framework required for policies and procedures. The rest of the recommendations regarding the stipend program are for MOE, and particularly for the Department of Education Planning and Training.

1. Policy-level recommendations for consideration in improving the stipend program

Recommendations for short-term action in developing an operations manual

- Developing an operations manual in a participatory manner which clearly explains every step of implementation. This would include taking into account relevant findings and recommendations from this study.
- Including definitions for the words below in the operations manual, as well as other relevant terms :
 - The poor
 - The intellectual
 - Remote
 - Ethnic minorities and other minorities
- Clearly stipulating financial management rules in the operations manual on how bank accounts are to be opened, how stipend money is to be deposited or withdrawn, and how the stipend is to be provided to beneficiaries. The bank account for stipend funds should be opened jointly by three persons, one of whom is a respected community member such as a member of the township education support committee.

Recommendations for short-term action on dispersing the stipend funds

- Developing systematic, specified procedures for funds flow and disbursement that are compatible with schools in remote areas.
- Providing extra funds to cover the costs of school heads who must travel from remote areas to pick up the stipend funds for local beneficiaries.

Recommendations for short-term action in increasing the number of beneficiaries and the amount of the stipend

- Increasing the number of stipends for lower and upper secondary students would not only address the financial constraints of the neediest students, but also serve to inform people about the stipend program. Some respondents during SA proposed at least 5 times the number of students should receive the stipend and some suggest even 10 times the current number.
- Increasing the amount of the stipend for lower and upper secondary students, as recommended by many different SA respondents (10,000 kyat for lower secondary school and 15,000 kyat for upper secondary school).

Recommendations for changing the selection criteria

- Addressing the widely-held misconception that the stipend selection criteria prioritize orphans over all others, as this results in excluding many poor students who have parents who are too poor to support their children's education.
- Removing the selection criterion that prioritizes "intellectually-capable" students as it is difficult to judge the intellectual capacity of students. Students from very poor families, struggling to survive, tend to perform poorly in school. If students must have high grades to qualify for the stipend, then poor and vulnerable students have no chance of using the state's support to improve, and become outstanding students.

Policy-level recommendations continued

Recommendations for short-term action on awareness raising and providing information

- Developing an effective awareness-raising and information-providing mechanism.
- Using the following means of information dissemination which have been recommended by different stakeholders: schools heads, TEOs, school committee members, staff from the Myanmar Education Research Bureau (MERB), and faculty from the University of Education:
 - Notice Boards at times of school enrolment
 - Explaining the objectives and criteria during meetings with parents twice a year, as well as school commencement and awards-giving ceremonies
 - Announcing the program through the village loudspeaker. Announcing the program on radio and television
 - Distributing brochures at the time of school enrolment—one of the few times when parents come to the school
- Translating information on the stipend program into the main minority languages to ensure that it reaches ethnic and other minorities.

Recommendations for short-term action on development of the feedback mechanism

- The school-level and township-level committee which will handle feedback and grievances should be set up first. This committee should be part of the school or township board for the selection of scholarships and stipends. Second, the committee should decide on contact information such as phone numbers and a postal address, and this information should be included on notices posted in the schools and in the brochures distributed to students, parents and people in the community.

Recommendations for short-term action on monitoring

- Developing a well-designed monitoring and evaluation mechanism in conjunction with the operations manual.
- Beginning baseline data collection as soon as possible.
- Recording a students' ethnic and religious background when nominating and selecting students for the stipend program so that data on each student's ethnicity and religion can be recorded in the Ministry of Education's management information system.

Recommendations for short- and medium-term action on evaluation

- Evaluating the short-term impact of the program after a year, the mid-term impact after 3 years and the long-term impact after 10 years.
- Conducting two levels of evaluation: at the township and the state levels.
- Including community members, members of the Township Board for the Selection of Students (TBSS), and beneficiaries in the township-level of the stipend and scholarship program evaluations. Including policy makers, state- and regional-level implementers, and staff from

the MERB and TBSS in the state-level evaluation.

Recommendations for community-based implementation of the stipend program

- Involving the community in program activities at different phases including: raising awareness, providing information, targeting potential beneficiaries, screening and selecting beneficiaries, monitoring and evaluation, and promoting the feedback and grievance mechanism. Including the community in the program is important in order to give them a sense ownership in the program and because their involvement is the most effective means of raising awareness, and building trust in the program
- Including community members and especially poor, ethnic and other minorities in the Township Board for the Selection of Scholarships and Stipends (TBSS) instead of only Department of Basic Education staff. This would mean that both boards would be representative of the community and help to raise community awareness.
- Including representatives of the poor, ethnic and other minorities in the community-based institutions responsible for undertaking stipend-related tasks. Many school committee members recommended inclusion of school committee plus ten household leaders is one of the good ways to reach out and organize the poorest of the poor and the minorities in the community.

Recommendations for providing support in addition to the stipend

- Providing primary-level students with a nutritious meal (a suggestion of many school heads) and offering activities that motivate children to come to school on a regular basis.
- Providing school uniforms, especially during the rainy season, when students need three sets of uniforms because it takes a long time for clothes to dry, and with three sets of uniforms, one uniform will always be dry.

Section 8: Findings of the Social Assessment on School Grants

The SA study found that all schools have been provided with school grants since the 2012–2103 academic year. School heads and township education officers reported that the amount of the grant for primary schools is determined by the number of students in each school,⁴⁵ while the amount for lower and upper secondary schools is a specific amount per school—over 500,000 kyat for a lower secondary school and over 900,000 kyat for an upper secondary school. According to the TEOs in the three townships, grants for lower secondary and upper secondary schools are received twice per year. For example: one of the upper secondary schools in Mandalay, which has over 2,000 students, received 300,000 kyat in the early months of the academic year, and part way through the year, the school received another 850,000 kyat.

⁴⁵ The SA found that the amount for the grants reported by schools in different townships varied. For example, it was reported in Mandalay that annually the primary schools with less than 100 students receive 150,000 kyat; the schools with 100–200 students receive 250,000 kyat; and the schools with over 300 students receive 300,000 kyat. However, in Mudon, for schools with under 100 students, the grant is 200,000 kyat; for schools with 100–300 students, the grant is 250,000 kyat; and if the school has over 300 students, the grant is 300,000 kyat.

Although grants for primary schools are supposed to be based on the number of students in the school, the SA found that the number of students specified for a certain size of grant varies in different townships. Table 29 shows the varying amounts in three townships for school grants based on different numbers of primary students.

Table 28: The amounts for primary school grants in six townships for the 2013–2014 academic year

Townships	Number of students per school	Amount in kyat
Kalaw	Below 100 students	100,000
	Over 100 students	150,000
	200 students	200,000
	Over 200 students	250,000
Mandalay	100 students	150,000
	100–200 students	250,000
	300 students	300,000
Mudon	below 100 students	200,000
	100–300 students	250,000
	Above 300 students	300,000

Source: Township Education Offices in six townships studied

According to the school heads and TEOs interviewed, the school grants must be used according to strictly specified budget lines which include: costs for transportation, reading materials for the school library, electricity, phone calls, maintenance for machinery and other equipment, stationary, ceremonies such awards giving for sports competitions and academic achievement, and miscellaneous supplies such as cleaning materials, and drinking water.

1. Deciding how to use the grant

In most of the schools visited during the SA, the researchers found that it is primarily the school head who decides how to use the grant. Only in a few schools, did the school head consult with the school committee before deciding on how to spend the grant.

2. How the school grants are disbursed

The TEOs in two townships reported that the school grants are disbursed immediately after receipt of the grant money from the ministry through a transfer from the Myanmar Economic Bank. At the same time, the Township Education Officer receives instruction on specified amounts that can be spent in several budget lines. The Township Education Officers then inform the schools about the arrival of the budget and the specific amounts allowed under each budget line. After that, the school heads come to the TEO with receipts for expenditures, and a ledger summarizing all the expenditures, and then the TEO disburses the grant according to the amounts spent under the approved budget lines.

3. Constraints of the grants program

Strict budget lines pose a constraint on spending the grants for some necessary expenses...

The TEOs and ATEOs in five out of six townships visited during the SA reported that the main challenge regarding the school grant is the requirement to spend the money according to strict budget lines. Being strictly limited to specific budget lines means that some things needed for schools cannot be purchased using the school grants. For example: drinking water pots and water buckets do not need to be purchased every year, while expenses for the maintenance of electrical equipment and for ceremonial activities often exceed the amounts allowed in the budget.

Many school heads, and especially those from poor schools, insisted that the school grant is really useful. However, at the same time, they complained about the challenges of spending according to strict budget lines. The following quote from one school head reflects the frustration of many school heads and TEOs about the budget constraints.

The budget for the grant was under spent because the strict budget lines mean that we cannot use the grant to buy several needed things.

(School head)

The SA heard team heard rumors that in some cases school heads make false claims due to the strict budget lines. Specifically, they submit receipts for spending under unused or underspent budget lines in order to cover over spending under other budget lines. Thus the strict budget lines are forcing public servants to engage in dishonest practices in order follow the financial rules.

The financial knowledge of school heads and teachers needs to be improved...

Another challenge regarding the school grants is school heads' lack of financial skills. This was reported by the TEOs and ATEOs in four townships. In two townships, the schools heads were reported to be unable to show receipts for their spending of grant money, and it could be that these school heads had to bear the costs themselves for failing to properly account for their spending. In two townships, it was reported by the TEOs that some school heads spent money under the wrong budget lines. In one township, the national audit uncovered this mistake and they had to instruct school staff on how to fix the errors. Given such problems, the TEOs and ATEOs in four townships recommended providing training to school heads and teachers to develop their financial capacity to meet the requirements of the school grants program. The TEOs in five townships asked that the strict budget lines be eased.

The best approach is to let the school head spend the grant according to actual needs and submit the receipts for this. Then complications resulting from the strict budget lines would be much reduced.

(Township education officer)

4. Feedback mechanism on school grants

The formal feedback mechanism on the school grants has yet to be set up. The schools heads have informally reported to the TEOs about the inconvenience of the school grants, and especially on the strict budget lines and the insufficient amount of the grant. These informal complaints were made during monthly meetings and at times when the Assistant TEO visited the schools.

5. Monitoring and evaluation

Regarding monitoring and evaluation at the township and state levels, some township staff reported that state and township auditing takes place once a year, and some mentioned that it is twice year. However, it was reported by all townships that the DBE conducted audits twice a year. The township or state audits lower secondary and upper secondary schools, while primary schools are audited only by the township education office. The audits are based on the receipts and ledgers submitted by the school heads⁴⁶ and the schools are required to keep the receipts and ledgers both for reimbursement for the school grants as well for auditing.

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⁴⁶ This was learned from Assistant TEO in one township. Data on this were not available in the other townships.

6. Recommendations on the School Grants Program

Recommendations concerning the school grants were provided mainly by key informants from the Ministry of Education: the TEOs, Assistant TEOs and the school heads in the townships studied for this social assessment. These recommendations are for the Ministry of Education.

1. Policy-level recommendations for consideration

Recommendations for short-term action

- Developing an operations manual which makes sure that program implementation at the school level is based on community participation, including that of poor and vulnerable people and ethnic and other minorities.
- Providing basic financial management training for school heads, TEOs and ATEOs, and more specifically training them in book keeping and record keeping.
- Making the rules for spending under the grant's budget line more flexible by specifying the aggregate amount of the budget and listing the categories under which the budget can be spent within a certain period of time. For example: a school is allowed 200,000 kyat for the first half of the academic year and this is to be spent on certain types of activities and items.
- Developing participatory monitoring and evaluation guidelines and providing these to the grant program implementers.
- Developing participatory feedback and grievance mechanisms of two possible types: community feedback and complaints on the perceived misuse and abuse of the grants, and implementers' feedback and grievances on the inconvenience of the rules covering the grants. Providing awareness and utilization training for school and township-level implementers on the school grants operations manual, the participatory monitoring and evaluation framework, and the participatory feedback and grievance mechanisms.

Recommendations for medium-term action

- Targeting the school grants so that poor and remote areas are prioritized because the schools in more affluent areas can raise funding themselves through their PTAs and school boards.

Recommendations for long term actions

- The amount of school grants are to be increased in order to fulfill the needs of learning aids in all subjects

2. School-level recommendations for consideration

Recommendations for short-term action

- Implementing participatory decision-making on the use of the school grants. This means that decisions on the use of the school grants are made in consultation with the community members who include the poor and vulnerable and ethnic and other minorities. At this point, the school heads could consult with the school committee which should include representatives of the poor and vulnerable and ethnic and other minorities.
- Involving the community in financial reporting through the school heads making financial reports to the school committee every six month during the academic year.
- Achieving full community participation, including that of the poor and vulnerable and ethnic and other minorities, through the school head coordinating with the community's formal and informal leaders well before the start of the academic year.

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