INACCESSIBLE AND UNDER-RESOURCED

Concerns Over Education in Rural Mon Communities

A Report by
Women and Child Rights Project (WCRP)

Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM)

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THE HUMAN RIGHTS FOUNDATION OF MONLAND (HURFOM)

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CESR	–	Comprehensive Education Sector Review
IOM	–	International Organization for Migration
MACDO	–	Mon Agriculture Community Development Organization
MDEF	–	Multi-Donor Education Fund
MDRI-CESD	–	Myanmar Development Resource Institute's Centre for Economic and Social Development
MNEC	–	Mon National Education Committee
MNS	–	Mon National School
NMSP	–	The New Mon State Party
NNER	–	National Network for Education Reform
PLE	–	Project for Local Empowerment
UNDP	–	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	–	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	–	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	–	United States Agency for International Development
WCRP	–	The Women and Child Rights Project

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In *Inaccessible and Under-Resourced* the Women and Child Rights Project (WCRP), a project of the Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM), draws on interviews with 146 individuals, largely in 17 predominantly Mon villages in Ye Township (Mon State), Kyainnseikyi Township (Karen State) and Yebyu Township (Tenasserim Division) to present an exploration of education challenges in rural Mon regions. In this report WCRP focuses on two key areas of concern – education dropout and resource constraints – to highlight the significant challenges faced by both students and teachers in rural Mon villages.

WCRP expresses concern that, despite some progress on national-level education reform, the benefits of reform have yet to be seen in rural ethnic areas of the country. Across government-led Basic Education and 'Mixed' Schools, and non-state Mon National Education Committee (MNEC) Mon National Schools, WCRP's main findings were that education in rural Mon regions remains inaccessible for children from poor families and that village schools remain chronically under-resourced. More specifically, WCRP found that:

- Despite the Burmese/Myanmar government's commitment to Millennium Development Goal No. 2 (Universal Completion of Primary Education), over a third of children who stated when they had left education dropped out before completing Primary School. Another third dropped out immediately following Primary School completion, failing to make the transition to Secondary Education.

- Three quarters of students who gave reasons why they had dropped out from education cited problems connected to livelihood difficulties. Factors linking poverty to dropout included: children needing to work to supplement their family's income, unaffordable costs of education (particularly at Secondary level), family labour migration and the effects of poverty on community attitudes to education.

- 14 of 23 rural village schools surveyed indicated problems with insufficient material or human resources. While MNEC Mon National schools suffered the greatest deficiencies, significant problems were also noted in government-led schools.

Given these findings, WCRP calls for all parties concerned with education in Mon regions, including the Burmese/Myanmar government, MNEC and international aid organisations, to undertake all necessary measures to address the concerns highlighted in this report. In particular, all parties must take comprehensive action to limit the effects of poverty on school attendance and to strengthen resources available to rural village schools. WCRP hopes that the data contained within this report may be used as a starting point for follow-up research and stepped-up engagement, facilitating measures that may slowly begin to improve education prospects for some of Burma's most marginalised children.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

To consolidate education reform in the light of this report's findings:

1. For the Burmese/Myanmar government to increase education spending, targeting measures outlined below.
2. For the New Mon State Party (NMSP)/Mon National Education Committee (MNEC) to develop an education reform policy fitting the needs identified in this report.
3. For the Burmese/Myanmar government and ethnic armed groups to incorporate discussions regarding education reform into the peace process, in particular concerning access to education for poor rural families and resource deficiencies in rural village schools.

To minimise the effects of poverty on education prospects:

1. For the Burmese/Myanmar government and MNEC to implement a system to collaboratively track school attendance rates among school-age children in rural Mon communities, to allow comparisons with national trends and for the design of targeted interventions.
2. For the Burmese/Myanmar government and international aid agencies to collaborate on poverty reduction initiatives targeted towards rural Mon villages.
3. For the Burmese/Myanmar government, MNEC and international aid agencies to work to reduce costs attached to education attendance in rural villages: ensuring that pre-existing policies of free Primary Education are fully implemented, widening legislation to extend free education to the end of Middle School and opening up scholarship opportunities for children attending Secondary School far from home.
4. For the Burmese/Myanmar government, MNEC and international aid agencies to provide possibilities for children to undertake further education and training while also in employment e.g. through non-formal and distance education programmes.
5. For the Burmese/Myanmar government and MNEC to facilitate easy transfer between schools, to enhance access to education for children from migrant families.
6. For the Burmese/Myanmar government, MNEC, international aid agencies and Mon CBOs to work to limit the effects of poverty on community attitudes to education, through capacity building, advocacy, and new employment opportunities for graduates.

To tackle other access concerns:

1. For the Burmese/Myanmar government and MNEC to initiate a collaborative mapping and strategic planning initiative, to map all schools in Mon regions and in doing so expand access to education by determining if and where new schools should be built.

2. For the Burmese/Myanmar government and NMSP to commit to strengthening security and infrastructure on all routes to school.

To tackle resource deficiencies in Mon region schools:

1. For the Burmese/Myanmar government and MNEC to undertake resource-focussed needs assessments in all schools within their respective authorities.
2. For the Burmese/Myanmar government and MNEC to take action to resolve human resource problems within their respective school systems, increasing teacher salaries and enhancing teacher training opportunities.
3. For MNEC to conduct a comprehensive review and analysis of current budget expenditures and deficits, to establish a strategic organizational development plan that outlines funding requirements and specific organizational development needs.
4. For all parties to collaborate to diminish funding instability for MNEC schools. In particular, the Burmese/Myanmar government must renegotiate its pre-conditions for support to Mon National Schools, while international donors should maintain funding for MNEC schools until support can be guaranteed through the central government.

I. METHODOLOGY

The Women and Child Rights Project (WCRP) has documented human rights violations against women and children in Burma's Mon communities for the past 15 years, developing substantial research expertise.

1. Data Collection and Analysis

Research for this report was conducted over the course of November 2014 and during a week-long follow-up visit in March 2015.

Data collection was conducted by one WCRP Field Coordinator and three Field Reporters. In total, 135 interviews were conducted, which together included 146 interviewees.[1] Interviews were conducted in 21 rural villages across Kyainnseikyi Township (Karen State), Ye Township (Mon State), Mudon Township (Mon State), Yebyu Township (Tenasserim Division) and on the Thai-Burma border, in addition to 4 interviews conducted in the city of Moulmein (Mon State). Villages were chosen that were known to face education sector difficulties, based on information received from members of local communities.

Figure 1 shows the distribution of interviews by Township. The vast majority of interviews, 127 of a total 135, were conducted in 17 villages across Kyainnseikyi, Ye and Yebyu Townships. WCRP chose to focus on these townships due to reported education sector problems, and also due to their mixture of government and non-state education structures.

[1] Some interviews contained more than one respondent.

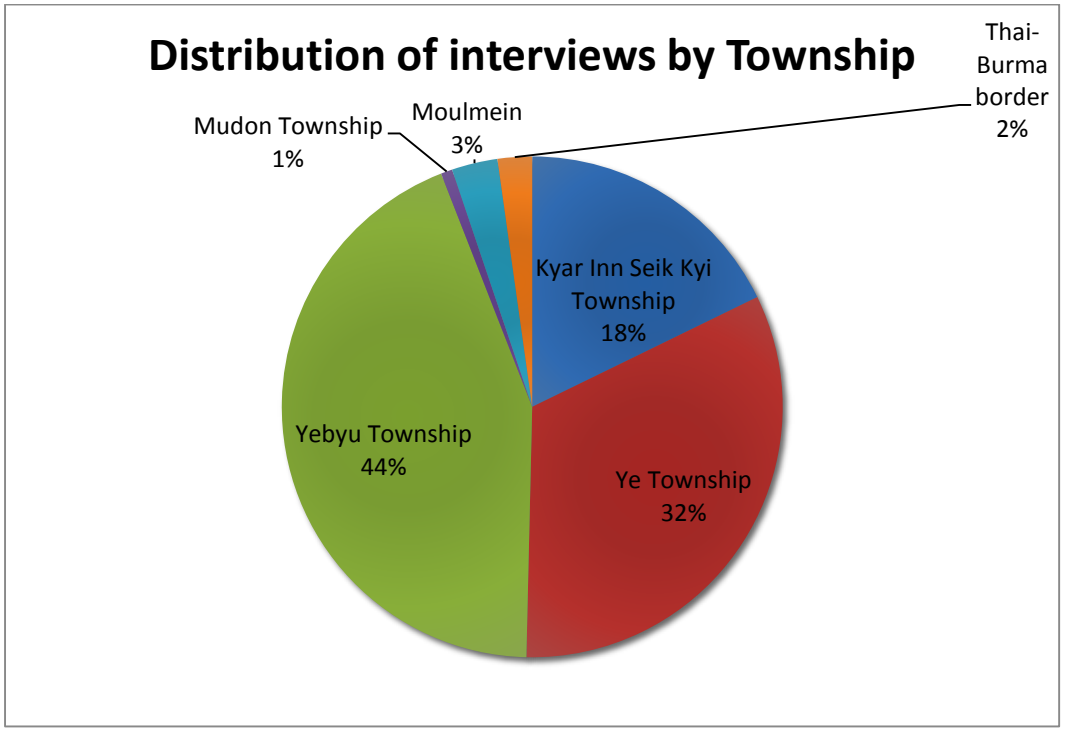

Figure 1: Distribution of interviews by Township (WCRP Interview Data).

In the villages selected for data collection, WCRP began research by, where possible, interviewing a member of the village's leadership, to get an overview of education in that village. Field reporters then interviewed village teachers and other school staff for further detail. From these initial interviews, suggestions were made for children and families to interview, where a child was reported to have experienced difficulties with education and had dropped out from school. Finally, where additional information was required, other members of the village community were interviewed. WCRP also sought opinions from the Mon National Education Committee (MNEC) and a member of a government-run curriculum-drafting body, to gain a wider picture of education across the Mon community.

Overall, WCRP interviewed 88 children who had dropped out from school, 19 parents of children who had dropped out, 17 school staff, 12 village leaders, 4 university students/graduates, 4 village residents, an MNEC coordinator and a member of a government-run Mon language curriculum committee. [2] **Figure 2** illustrates this distribution of interviewees.

[2] Of 88 children interviewed, 41 were aged 10-14 years old, while 13 were 5-9 years old, 27 were aged 15 to 18 years, 3 were 19 years old and 4 didn't say.

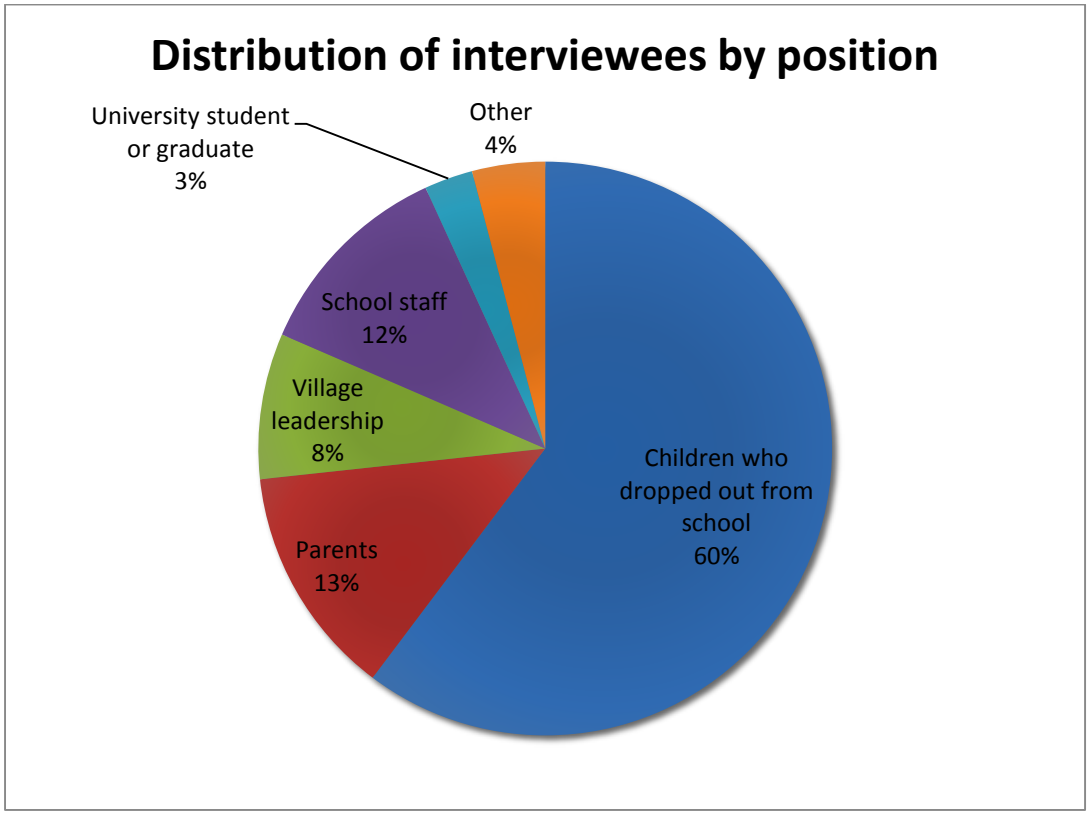

Figure 2: Distribution of interviewees by position (WCRP Interview Data).

The majority of interviews were conducted in the Mon language, with a small portion of interviews in Ye Township carried out in Burmese. Interviews were semi-structured, with a standard list of questions used to structure discussions. For interviews with children, questions focussed on the level at which the child had dropped out from school, their reasons for doing so and their current situation. In other interviews, notably interviews with village and school leadership, a broader set of questions was constructed, covering questions about the village's education profile, questions specific to dropout and questions regarding resource challenges in the village's school. Interviews were recorded and audio files sent back to WCRP's Thailand office for transcription, translation into English and data analysis.

During the data analysis process, interviews were coded by theme to draw out notable trends. Field research and data analysis were then supplemented by online research into education law, policy and experiences, throughout Burma and in Mon regions; in particular, through reports by Burma's Comprehensive Education Sector Review (CESR), the United Nations

Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and news articles from Burma-specific news outlets.

2. Challenges

WCRP encountered several challenges in the research process. Notably, transportation and access problems meant that field reporters were unable to visit some villages they had originally intended to survey. In particular, some villages were not surveyed because ethnic armed groups imposed restrictions on access.

WCRP also found that some children surveyed appeared noticeably uncomfortable during interviews, likely due to in-depth questions being asked by persons they had not previously met, and were reluctant to answer questions in full. While WCRP interviewers made all possible efforts to make children feel at ease, in some cases some apprehension was unavoidable. Although the relatively high number of interviews conducted meant that considerable data was still collected, this factor nonetheless limited the richness of data WCRP were able to obtain.

Finally, information from village leaders and school staff was not always considered wholly reliable. It is suspected that in some cases interviewees presented an overly positive picture of education in their villages, due to discomfort with discussing problems regarding government or armed group affiliated school structures. Meanwhile, in other cases an overly negative picture may have been presented, due to hopes of soliciting additional support for the village's school.

II. BACKGROUND

1. Overview of Education in Burma/Myanmar

1.1 National trends

Burma's education system saw a rapid decline over fifty years of military rule. During this period, education suffered from restrictive centralisation and dramatic underfunding. By 2010 education spending had fallen to less than 1% of the country's GDP.[3]

Despite moves towards reform since 2011 under Thein Sein's quasi-civilian government (see **Section 2** below), the legacy of decades of military rule for Burma's education system remains clear. A 2013 joint study by The Myanmar Development Resource Institute's Centre for Economic and Social Development (MDRI-CESD) and The Asia Foundation concluded, "Overall, the education system is characterized by poor quality, outdated pedagogy and insufficient geographic coverage".[4]

The findings of Burma's own Comprehensive Education Sector Review (CESR) confirm this picture. Findings from Phases 1 and 2 of the CESR, released in 2013-15, detailed an education system dominated by rote learning, an outdated curriculum, lack of critical thinking, insufficient resources, low capacities at all levels of the system and poor access to formal education in low-income, conflict-affected and remote areas.[5]

Burma's school enrolment and attendance statistics reflect these findings. According to UNDP, 12% of Primary School-aged children throughout the country fail to enrol in Primary School.[6] Whereas, when children successfully enrol in education their school careers are on average short-lived. A 2013 Human Development Index put Burma's mean number of years of schooling at just 3.9 years.[7] Fitting this picture, only 54% of Primary School-aged children are reported to have finished Primary School on time,[8] and approximately 60% of Secondary

[3] CESR, *Data Collection Survey on Education Sector in Myanmar: Final Report* (Yangon: CESR, 2013), 18.
[4] Brooke Zobrist and Patrick McCormick, *A Preliminary Assessment of Decentralization in Education* (Yangon: MDRI CESD – The Asia Foundation, 2013), 10.
[5] CESR*, Myanmar CESR Phase 1 Consolidated Report Findings* (Yangon: CESR, 2013); CESR, *Draft Presentation of All Components (Phase 2)* (Yangon: CESR, 2014).
[6] "Achieve universal primary education, Where we are?," UNDP Myanmar, accessed April 2, 2015, http://www.mm.undp.org/content/myanmar/en/home/mdgoverview/overview/mdg2/.
[7] Zobrist and McCormick, *A Preliminary Assessment of Decentralization in Education,* 10.
[8] "Mon State: A Snapshot of Child Wellbeing,", UNICEF, accessed April 2, 2015, http://www.unicef.org/myanmar/Mon_State_Profile_Final.pdf .

School-aged children are not enrolled in Secondary School.[9] **Figure 3** shows the school trajectory of Burma's children, as represented by the CESR.

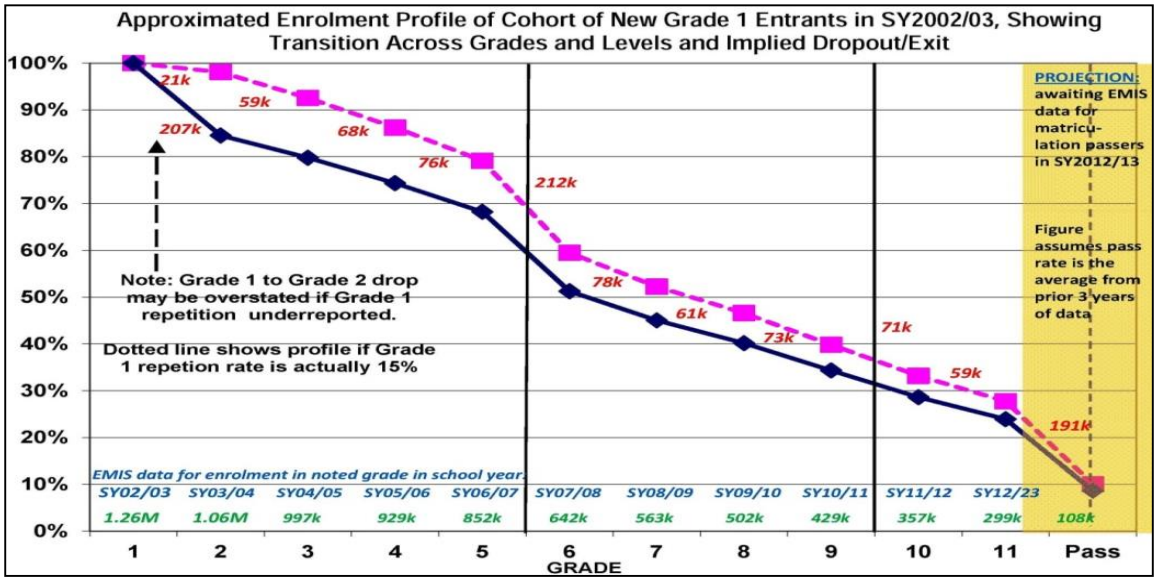

Figure 3: Enrolment profile of Grade 1 Entrants 2002-3 (CESR, *Initial Assessment of Post-Primary Education in Myanmar*).

Substantial variations are seen, particularly for Secondary Education, between rural and urban contexts, and between families of varying socioeconomic status. In 2009-10, Secondary level attendance rates varied from 76% for children in urban areas to 52% in rural areas.[10] While, between the richest and poorest households, Secondary Education attendance varied from 85% to 28%.[11]

1.2 Education law and policy

Currently, education in Burma is governed by a number of overlapping laws and policies.[12]

[9] CESR, *Data Collection Survey on Education Sector in Myanmar: Final Report,* 28.
[10] Myanmar Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development and Ministry of Health, *Myanmar Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2009 - 2010 Final Report* (Nay Pyi Taw: Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development and Ministry of Health, 2011), 44.
[11] *Ibid.,* 45.
[12] Legal references are derived from: CESR, *Data Collection Survey on Education Sector in Myanmar: Final Report,* 7-14.

The **1973 Basic Education Law** (amended 1989) provides the overarching framework for Primary and Secondary Education, outlining its goals, institutions and administrative structures. Crucially, legislative powers over education are, by the **2008 Constitution**, restricted to Union-level governance, with education designated an area of responsibility over which regional parliaments have no authority.[13]

There are various policy and legal instruments which confer on the government a responsibility to ensure compulsory and free education for all citizens; however, this currently only extends to Primary-level education. Instruments citing government responsibilities for free and compulsory Primary Education include:[14]

- The 1993 **Child Law**, passed to implement the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Burma's **2008** Constitution (Article 28)
- The 2003 **Education for All National Plan of Action**, prepared to consolidate the country's efforts to meet the 2001 **UN Millennium Development Goal No. 2**: that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of Primary Schooling[15]
- President Thein Sein's 2011 **10 Point Education Policy**.

Burma's government is also bound to promoting education within ethnic states. Article 22(b) of the **2008 Constitution** states that the Union must "promote socio-economic development including education, health, economy, transport and communication, so forth, of less-developed National races".

1.3 School systems

i. Basic Education schools

Education in Burma is primarily administered through government-run Basic Education schools. Basic Education schools provide 11 years of schooling, comprised of five years of Primary (Kindergarten to Standard 4) and six years of Secondary Education; the Secondary component is split between four years of Middle School (Standards 5 to 8) and two years of

[13] Zobrist and McCormick, *A Preliminary Assessment of Decentralization in Education,* 8.
[14] UNESCO-IBE, *World Data on Education VII ed. 2010/11* (2011).
[15] "Goal 2," United Nations, accessed April, 2, 2015, http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/education.shtml.

High School (Standards 9 and 10).[16] While children are expected to enrol in Primary School at 5 years of age, they should typically graduate aged 16 or 17.[17]

All curriculum materials are set centrally by the Ministry of Education, in whose hands decision-making power is concentrated. **Figure 4** illustrates the flow of power downwards from the Ministry of Education, through various regional bureaus, to individual Basic Education schools. Orders to implement work are reported to flow down this chain, with little feedback being channelled back upwards.[18]

Ministry of Education
↓
Basic Education Curriculum, Syllabus and Textbook Committee
↓
Departments of Basic Education 1, 2 and 3
↓
State and Regional Education Office
↓
District Office (as of 2012)
↓
Township Education Office
↓
Basic Education School

Figure 4: Basic Education System Structure (Brooke Zobrist and Patrick McCormick, *A Preliminary Assessment of Decentralization in Education*, 10).

While, in line with the above policy and legislation, Primary Education is in theory free of cost at Basic Education schools, this fails to transpire in reality. High costs arise for the purchase of uniforms, books and stationery, as well as extra "fees" levied by school administrators.[19] In addition, after-school tuition has become an integral part of the Basic Education system for

[16] Education in Burma is also discussed in terms of "Grades", whereby Grades are one higher than their corresponding Standard. For example, Grade 5 corresponds to Standard 4.
[17] Zobrist and McCormick, *A Preliminary Assessment of Decentralization in Education,* 11.
[18] *Ibid.,* 20.
[19] *Ibid.,* 10.

most students, with parents required to pay fees for extra tuition or otherwise see their children put at a substantial disadvantage.

Speaking to the Irrawaddy newspaper in 2013, education consultant Julian Watson explained, "The amount of money that parents are putting into the education system is massively high compared to other countries in Southeast Asia. It's because previous Myanmar governments didn't put money into education in the past, so Myanmar parents are carrying a really high burden of costs, and that's dangerous because it creates a risk that the poor will give up paying for education because they cannot afford to do so".[20]

ii. Alternatives to the Basic Education system

There are several prominent alternatives to the Basic Education school system. Notably, over 1,500 Monastic Schools are reportedly in operation across Burma, under the purview of the Ministry of Religious Affairs.[21] Mostly providing Primary-level education, Monastic Schools have for decades provided a more locally administered and cheaper alternative to the central government's education system. However, while these schools enable students to develop basic literacy skills, children studying in this system are unable to access the same formal qualifications offered by Basic Education schools.

In another key alternative, advanced non-state education systems have developed in ethnic areas of the country, of which the Mon National School system, outlined in **Section 3** below, is one example.

[20] Samantha Michaels, "It's Balancing the Interests of Both Sides," *The Irrawaddy,* October 22, 2013, accessed April 2, 2015, http://www.irrawaddy.org/interview/balancing-interests-sides.html.
[21] Chit Su, "Govt to Provide Monastic Schools with 3 Million Kyat," *The Irrawaddy*, May 10, 2013, accessed April 2, 2015, http://www.irrawaddy.org/education/govt-to-provide-monastic-schools-with-3-billion-Kyat.html.

2. National-level Education Reform

Since the inauguration of President Thein Sein's nominally civilian government in 2011, there have been a number of moves towards education sector reform.

2.1 CESR

In 2012 the government initiated the Comprehensive Education Sector Review (CESR), a Ministry of Education led effort to undertake analysis of all sectors of education within the country.[22] In collaboration with development partners, including UNICEF and UNESCO, the Ministry of Education aims to use the CESR as the basis for education reform planning

The CESR consists of three phases: (1) Rapid assessment, (2) In-depth analysis, and (3) Development of an education reform plan, with a corresponding budget. Phase 1 was completed in 2013 and draft findings of Phase 2 are now available through the initiative's publicly accessible website.

2.2 Budget increases

Nationally, Burma's education budget has more than tripled since 2010. Education spending rose from 310 billion Kyat in 2010-11 to 1,142 billion Kyat in 2014-15.[23] Promisingly, this trend looks set to continue, with a proposed 1,409 billion Kyat education budget for the 2015-16 fiscal year.[24]

However, this still remains low in comparison to other countries in the region. Even with significant budget increases, in 2014 education spending was just 1.33% of Burma's GDP;[25] in comparison, the regional average for education spending sits at around 3% of GDP.[26]

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[22] For more details see: Zobrist and McCormick, *A Preliminary Assessment of Decentralization in Education,* 25.
[23] UNDP, *The State of Local Governance: Trends in Kayin* (Yangon: UNDP, 2014), 68.
[24] Yen Snaing, "Govt Proposes 20% Budget Rise Boosting Education, Defense and Health," *The Irrawaddy*, Jan 30, 2015, accessed April 2, 2015, http://www.irrawaddy.org/burma/govt-proposes-20-budget-rise-boosting-education-defense-health.html.
[25] UNDP, *The State of Local Governance: Trends in Kayin*, 68.
[26] CESR, *Data Collection Survey on Education Sector in Myanmar: Final Report,* 18.

2.3 National Education Bill (2014-15)

Perhaps the most contentious of all education reforms, in 2014 Burma's parliament passed a new National Education Bill. The Bill was submitted to Parliament in March 2014 and finally passed in September 2014, following recommended amendments by President Thein Sein.[27]

Throughout the Bill's passage through parliament, and after it was eventually passed, there was significant protest against its contents and drafting process. Criticisms include a lack of consultation, failures to make provisions for mother tongue education and concerns over the centralised structures it enshrines; the Bill puts education under the control of a "National Education Council", comprised of the Vice President, ministers and other government officials.

As soon as the Bill was submitted to parliament, the National Network for Education Reform (NNER), a coalition of various parties concerned with education (from student unions and politicians, to civil society organisations and religious actors), released a statement rejecting the Bill.[28] The National Education Bill has also been rejected by the Myanmar Teachers' Federation and, most prolifically, by a large sector of the nation's university students.[29]

Student protests escalated after the Bill was passed in September 2014.[30] Protests across Rangoon in November were followed by the initiation of student marches from Mandalay and other regions towards the old capital. Despite quadripartite negotiations in February 2015, in March violence erupted in Letpadan, as protests threatened to reignite following perceived government backtracking on agreed concessions.[31] As protesters attempted to break through police blockades, they were forcefully suppressed by the Burmese police force, with 127 protestors and journalists detained.[32]

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[27] Yen Snaing, "National Education Bill Rejected by NLD-backed Group," *The Irrawaddy,* March 28, 2014, accessed April 2, 2015, http://www.irrawaddy.org/burma/national-education-bill-rejected-nld-backed-group.html; Nobel Zaw, "Students Protest Education Law in Downtown Rangoon," *The Irrawaddy,* November 14, 2014, accessed April 2, 2015, http://www.irrawaddy.org/burma/students-protest-education-law-downtown-rangoon.html.

[28] Yen Snaing, "National Education Bill Rejected by NLD-backed Group".

[29] Yen Snaing, "Teachers' Federation Decries Lack of Consultation on Burma's Education Bill," *The* Irrawaddy, August 26, 2014, accessed April 2, 2015, http://www.irrawaddy.org/burma/teachers-federation-decries-lack-consultation-burmas-education-bill.html.

[30] "Updates: National Education Law - Student Protests ," Burma Partnership, accessed March 16, 2015, http://www.burmapartnership.org/updates-national-education-law-student-protest/.

[31] Sithu, "Myanmar, Students Agree on Education Reforms," *Voice of America,* February 11, 2015, accessed April 2, 2015, http://www.voanews.com/content/myanmar-students-agree-education-reforms/2639271.html.

[32] The Irrawaddy, "Timeline of Student Protests Against Education Law," *The Irrawaddy,* March 10, 2015, accessed April 2, 2015, http://www.irrawaddy.org/burma/timeline-of-student-protests-against-education-law.html; Yen Snaing, "Dozens Charged as Govt Vows Legal Action Against Demonstrators," *The Irrawaddy,*

As protestors await trial, amendments to the National Education Bill continue to be debated in Parliament.[33]

2.4 Mother tongue education

While provisions for mother tongue education were not included in the 2014 National Education Bill, post-2011 reform has seen some regional-level gains on this front in Mon State. In April 2014 Mon State's parliament voted to allow government schools to offer Primary-level classes in ethnic languages, literature and culture, becoming the first region of the country to do so. With the start of the 2014-15 school year in June 2014, teaching began of Mon, Karen and Pa-O languages in government-run schools across Mon State.[34]

However, some Mon State villages have reportedly faced difficulties implementing this new system. In particular, schools faced a shortage of Mon language teachers, likely due to low salaries on offer. While a regular Basic Education school teacher receives a monthly wage of around 100,000 Kyat, a government-hired Mon language teacher is paid just 30,000 Kyat per month.[35]

Despite operational difficulties, the policy of mother tongue education in Mon State government schools continues to develop momentum. Nai Gon Lwai, member of a government-run curriculum committee, explained that Mon scholars have been developing a new curriculum and class materials for Mon language tuition in government schools, to be completed for the 2015-16 school year. [36]

March 11, 2015, accessed April 2, 2015, http://www.irrawaddy.org/burma/dozens-charged-as-govt-vows-legal-action-against-demonstrators.html.

[33] Nobel Zaw, "Upper House Approves Education Law Amendments," *The Irrawaddy,* March 26, 2015, accessed April 2, 2015, http://www.irrawaddy.org/burma/upper-house-approves-education-law-amendments.html.

[34] Lawi Weng, "Mon State to Allow Ethnic Language Classes in Govt Schools," *The Irrawaddy*, April 10, 2014, accessed April 2, 2015, http://www.irrawaddy.org/burma/mon-state-allow-ethnic-language-classes-govt-schools.html.

[35] Lawi Weng, "Mon State Faces Shortage of Teachers for Mother-Tongue Education," *The Irrawaddy,* June 11, 2014, accessed April 2, 2015, http://www.irrawaddy.org/burma/mon-state-faces-shortage-teachers-mother-tongue-education.html.

[36] WCRP Interview No. 133, Moulmein, 11/03/15.

2.5 International aid

A number of international agencies have offered substantial financial and advisory support to Burma's education reform process.

In 2014 the World Bank initiated a 100 million USD project to support pre-existing government education initiatives aimed at expanding access to education.[37] In another large-scale effort, a Multi-donor Education Fund (MDEF) has been established, pooling resources from Australia, Denmark, Norway, the United Kingdom, the European Commission, UNICEF and UNESCO. The MDEF is valued at around 65 million USD and is scheduled to run from 2012-16.[38]

Using resources from the MDEF, and in partnership with the Burmese government, UNICEF has implemented a Quality Basic Education Programme, aimed at supporting access to Primary-level education through teacher training, resource provision, non-formal education initiatives and Pre-Primary Education.[39] The initiative involves advisory support on national education policy and service provision to 34 selected "disadvantaged townships".[40] Notably, around a third of these townships are in Mon State; after the programme began a decision was made to extend interventions to a "Whole State Approach", across all of Mon State's 10 Townships.[41] Alongside work with each of these townships' government Education Offices, the approach has also included engagement with the Mon National Education Committee (MNEC), a key non-state education provider in Mon State (see **Section 3** below).

[37] Kyaw Hsu Mon, "World Bank Project Puts $100m Toward Education in Burma," *The Irrawaddy,* May 21, 2014, accessed April 2, 2015, http://www.irrawaddy.org/burma/world-bank-project-puts-100m-toward-education-burma.html.
[38] Japan Ministry of Finance, *Myanmar Donor Profiles* (2012), accessed April 2, 2015, https://www.mof.go.jp/about_mof/councils/customs_foreign_exchange/sub-foreign_exchange/proceedings/material/gai240625/03.pdf.
[39] Denmark Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Minutes from External Grant Committee Meeting June 17, 2014* (Bangkok: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014).
[40] "Quality Basic Education Programme," UNICEF, accessed March 16, 2015, http://www.unicef.org/myanmar/education_20838.html.
[41] Denmark Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Minutes from External Grant Committee Meeting June 17, 2014.*

Some international support for Mon region schools was visible in WCRP's data collection for this report. Schools surveyed in Ye, Yebyu and Kyainnseikyi Townships reported receiving support from UNICEF and IOM. UNICEF was reported to have donated school supplies and conducted non-formal education trainings,[42] while IOM had reportedly conducted health trainings.[43]

[42] WCRP Interview No. 4, Koh Ann Htaw village, Kyainnseikyi Township, 02/11/14; WCRP Interview No. 104, Sixty Mile village, Yebyu Township 12/11/14.
[43] WCRP Interview No. 43, Kyon Laung (Old) Village, Ye Township, 08/11/14; WCRP Interview No. 48, Kwin Shay village, Ye Township, 08/11/14; WCRP Interview No. 91, Alae Sakhan village, Yebyu Township, 12/11/14

3. School Systems Unique to Mon Regions

In addition to the national-level education structures described above, there are various school systems unique to Mon regions. Overall, while villages surveyed for this report contained 3 Basic Education Schools, they also contained 10 Mon National Schools and 10 'Mixed Schools' (a breakdown by village is found in **Appendix 1**). This section provides an overview of the latter two school structures, which are both to varying extents administered by the Mon National Education Committee (MNEC), a branch of the dominant Mon non-state armed group, the New Mon State Party (NMSP).

3.1 'Mixed Schools'

In a unique arrangement, 'Mixed Schools' are essentially government Basic Education schools that, through an informal partnership with MNEC, teach additional courses on Mon language, culture and history. On this arrangement Mon course teachers are recruited and paid through MNEC. Yet, despite MNEC influence over Mon language and culture components of the curriculum, these schools are predominantly managed and resourced through the Burmese government Basic Education system. At present there are 107 'Mixed Schools' throughout Mon and Karen States, and in Tenasserim Division.[44]

3.2 MNEC Mon National Schools

i. Overview and history

Working outside the government Basic Education school system, the Mon National School (MNS) system includes 142 schools,

[44] Lall and South, "Education, Conflict and Identity: Non-state ethnic education regimes in Burma/Myanmar. Summary of Report.," (2012), 1.

which together contain over 13,000 students.[45]

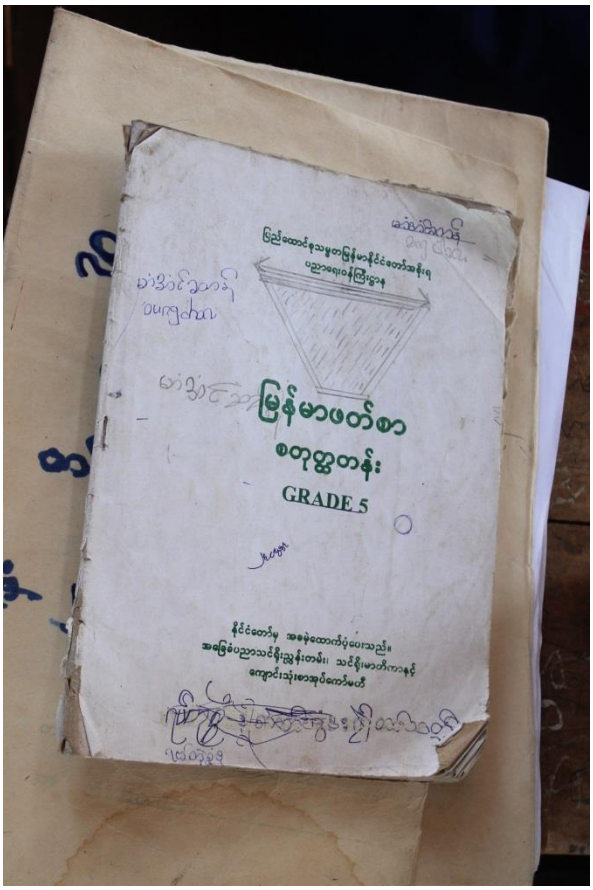
The system, devised by MNEC, was first developed in the 1970s in NMSP-controlled territories; while this began at a basic level, by 1992 MNEC had opened its first High School.[46]

The MNS system expanded considerably following the 1995 ceasefire between the NMSP and Burmese government, which gave the system some legal legitimacy.[47] In 1995 the MNS system contained 76 schools, all in NMSP-held areas and Mon refugee camps. Since the ceasefire this number has almost doubled, with the post-ceasefire expansion of the MNS system into government controlled areas of Mon State.[48]

[45] Pon Nya Mon, "Education reform and national reconciliation in Burma" (paper presented at 2014 Western Conference Association for Asian Studies, Arizona State University, October 3-4, 2014); WCRP Interview No. 132, Moulmein, 29/02/15.
[46] Lall and South, "Comparing models of non-state ethnic education in Myanmar: The Mon and Karen national education regimes," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 44:2 (2014): 309.
[47] Zobrist and McCormick, *A Preliminary Assessment of Decentralization in Education,* 22.
[48] Lall and South, "Comparing models of non-state ethnic education in Myanmar: The Mon and Karen national education regimes," 309.

While many schools within the MNS system are chronically under resourced (see **Section IV**), the MNS system offers a largely cheaper alternative to Basic Education schools, with students often avoiding the substantial fees levied in government schools.

ii. Integration with government structures



Recently, in the context of the nationwide peace process, the MNS system has been held up by Burma analysts as an example of service provision in which ethnic autonomy has successfully been balanced with integration into a wider state.[49] In the MNS system children are taught in the Mon language at Primary level, with a shift into Burmese in Middle School and teaching entirely in Burmese at High School level. At the end of High School MNS students sit the government matriculation exam at a partner Basic Education High School, enabling them to achieve identical qualifications on graduation to their Basic Education school counterparts.

An MNEC coordinator explained this approach:

> "We use some modules from the Government curriculum. For Primary School we teach Burmese and science subjects in the same way as in the government school, but we translate [the curriculum] into Mon to teach the students, while for Mathematics, English, Geography and History we use modules from MNEC. When students join Middle School, we teach them with the government curriculum, but we increase this

[49] Lall and South, "Comparing models of non-state ethnic education in Myanmar: The Mon and Karen national education regimes,"; Zobrist and McCormick, *A Preliminary Assessment of Decentralization in Education;* MPSI, *Lessons Learned from MPSI's Work Supporting the Peace Process in Myanmar* (Yangon: MPSI, 2014).

by two subjects to include Mon language and history. When they get to Standard 9 and 10 we cut those two subjects and we just use the government school modules.

…In Mon National Schools the students need to do exams twice in Standard 10, in an MNEC school and then again in a government school. Some students pass the government school exam and some students pass the New Mon State Party Mon National School exam. The students who pass the government school exam can join university."[50]

iii. Community and international support

WCRP's interviewees reported substantial financial support to Mon National Schools from within the Mon community. Villagers reported that they had contributed to teachers' salaries, in efforts that ranged from supplementing teachers' salaries with a 10,000-20,000 Kyat monthly food allowance, to paying the teachers' salaries in full.[51] In addition, the Mon Agriculture Community Development Organization (MACDO), a Mon civil society development project, was noted to have assisted financially with the construction and development of school buildings and facilities in Yebyu Township villages.[52]

MNEC schools have also been the beneficiaries of considerable international funding and support. USAID has contributed substantially, supporting Mon teachers through its Project for Local Empowerment (PLE).[53] Additionally, as discussed above, UNICEF has more recently engaged with MNEC through its Quality Basic Education Programme, providing teaching materials for MNEC's schools. Further, in 2013 the Myanmar Peace Support Initiative (MPSI), funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, facilitated a 'Mon Education Project'.[54] The project included community consultations on Mon education policy and work towards MNEC curriculum development.

However, representing concerns for the future, a MNEC fundraising officer recently expressed worries that international funding for education is increasingly moving towards being channelled through Burma's central government, as opposed to support of ethnic service structures. This move is considered to pose serious concerns for the future of MNEC's already

[50] WCRP Interview No. 132, Moulmein, 29/02/15.
[51] WCRP Interviews Nos. 1, 3, 9, 16-21, 77, 81, 91, 104, 107, 109-10, 131.
[52] WCRP Interview No. 104, Sixty Mile village, Yebyu Township, 12/11/14; WCRP Interview No. 109, Sin Swe village, Yebyu Township, 09/11/14; WCRP Interview No. 112, Sin Swe village, Yebyu Township, 10/11/14.
[53] "Mon National Education Committee (MNEC)", World Education Thailand, accessed April 22, 2015, http://thailand.worlded.org/files/2014/10/MNEC-Fact-Sheet2.pdf.
[54] MPSI, *Lessons Learned from MPSI's work supporting the peace process in Myanmar*, xx-xxi.

stretched resources.[55] Programmes facing funding gaps for the 2015-16 academic year include the Bop Htaw Education Empowerment Program (formerly Mon Post-10), which provides pre-service teacher training to future MNS teachers. However, a lack of transparency regarding MNEC's finances means that the precise extent of MNEC's budget deficits remains unknown.

iv. Offers of government support

Recently, Mon National Schools have received offers of financial support from the Burmese government. WCRP's research indicated that the NMSP do not prohibit schools from receiving this support, leaving it to the discretion of individual school and village leadership.[56]

WCRP's research showed government support had been accepted by schools in Wae Thar Lee (East) (Kyainnseikyi Township) and Sin Swe (Yebyu Township) villages. In Wae Thar Lee (East) village the government was reported to contribute 1 million Kyat per year to the school, in addition to providing teaching materials. In both Wae Thar Lee (East) and Sin Swe villages, increased government support reportedly allowed the schools to increase the extent of education provided; Sin Swe village expanded its highest level from Standard 4 to Standard 5, while Wae Thar Lee (East) school expanded to Standard 7.

However, interviewees commented that such offers generally involved substantial concessions as a pre-condition for assistance. In particular, reverting from teaching entirely in Mon at Primary level, to teaching in Burmese with only one hour per day dedicated to Mon language instruction. It was also noted that accepting support led to the introduction of Burmese government teachers into schools and requirements for students to wear the Burmese government school uniform.

In each of the villages where government support was accepted, this appeared reluctant. One teacher from Sin Swe village school said, "We did not want to accept Burmese teachers, but as the NMSP could not provide support to our school we had to accept support from the Burmese government".[57]

Meanwhile, four schools that reported refusing government support illustrated that they had done so vehemently. Nai Kun, Village Administrator of Phae Kapoe village, Kyainnseikyi Township, stated, "We would rather be poor than accept their support".[58]

[55] Nai Kasauh Mon, "Speech at Closing Ceremony of Post-10 Program," (given at Mon Post-10 Closing Ceremony, Sangkhlaburi, March 30, 2015).
[56] WCRP Interview No. 9, Koh Ann Htaw village, Kyainnseikyi Township, 02/11/14.
[57] WCRP Interview No. 110, Sin Swe village, Yebyu Township, 10/11/14.
[58] WCRP Interview No. 15, Phae Kapoe village, Kyainnseikyi Township, 02/11/14.

Refusals of support were universally attributed to concerns about a loss of independence from the government education system as a result of accepting support. Nai Tun Shein, Village Administrator of Leik Pyaw village, Kyainnseikyi Township, commented, "The Burmese government offered to support the school, but it would become their school….We have no plan to get their help and support".[59]

Such concerns were articulated alongside related fears that subsequent changes would cause a decline in Mon language and culture within the school's community. Nai Soe Naing Nai, Village Administrator of Wae Thar Lee (West) village, Kyainnseikyi Township, elaborated:

> "The Burmese government is willing to support [Wae Thar Lee (West) school] but we do not accept this because we would have to follow their rules and they do not allow teaching in the Mon language. We are concerned that our children will not be able to read, write, and speak their mother language in the future. Our opinion is that we only want our [Mon] National school. Although the Burmese government would support everything for our [village's] education it would threaten our [Mon] nation."[60]

Similarly, Mi Day Wi Mon, a teacher in Wae Thar Lee (West) village school, told WCRP, "Even if the government builds us a new school or provides us with everything, we may not have our ethnic rights".[61]

While these claims may appear extreme, they must be understood within the context of ethnic conflict and entrenched mistrust of central government from which MNEC's autonomous school system was born. WCRP advocates that, for the benefit of all children and teachers within MNEC schools, for whom additional support is urgently required, the Burmese government must consider that such strict pre-conditions for support may require greater concessions from village and school leadership than they may reasonably be expected to make; a less 'all-or-nothing' approach may be more likely to engender cooperation.

[59] WCRP Interview No. 16, Leik Pyaw village, Kyainnseikyi Township, 03/11/14.
[60] WCRP Interview No. 19, Wae Thar Lee (West) village, Kyainnseikyi Township, 03/11/14.
[61] WCRP Interview No. 20, Wae Thar Lee (West) village, Kyainnseikyi Township, 03/11/14.

III. EDUCATION DROPOUT

1. Overview of Education Dropout

WCRP undertook a study of education dropout in the rural Mon villages surveyed. Of 146 total interviewees, WCRP interviewed 88 children who had dropped out from education. Interviews with these children were used to identify key trends regarding education dropout.

1.1 Stage of dropout

Among various questions, children were asked at which stage of education they had dropped out. **Figure 5** represents this data, for the 51 children who stated when they had dropped out from school. Significantly, over a third of these children dropped out before the end of Primary Education, while just under a third dropped out directly after completing Primary School. These figures suggest problems with the transition from Primary to Secondary Education, as well as with Primary School student retention. In particular, the presence of 35% who did not complete Primary School indicates that, at least within this sample, the government's commitment to Millennium Development Goal No. 2 (Universal Completion of Primary Education) remains unfulfilled in the surveyed townships.

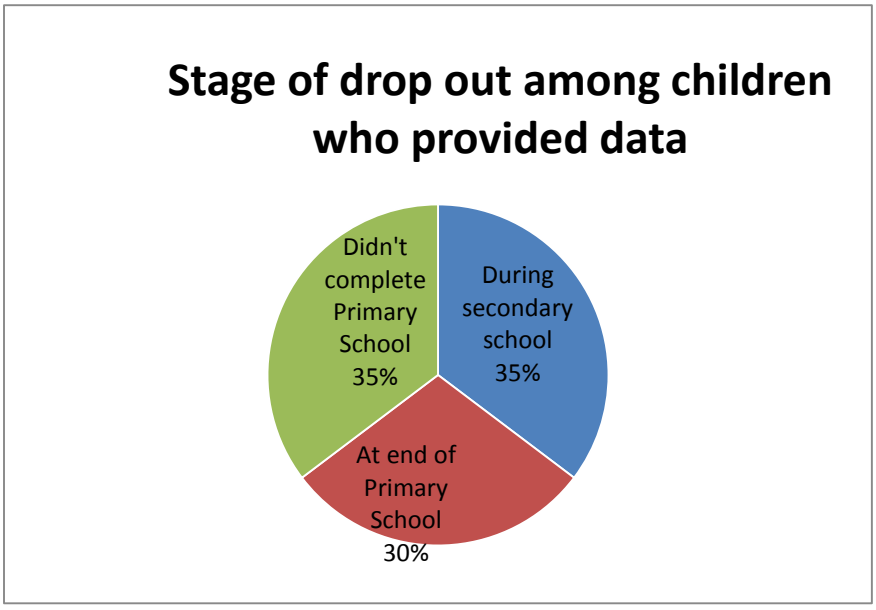


Figure 5: Stage of drop out (among children who provided data on when they dropped out) (WCRP Interview data).

1.2 Prospects after exits from education

When dropout interviewees were asked about their current occupation, almost two thirds said that they were now in employment, either locally or in neighbouring Thailand (see **Figure 6**).

WCRP notes that while only 9% said that they worked in Thailand, this likely does not represent the full extent of this post-dropout option. As WCRP's interviews were conducted in home villages, children who had migrated to Thailand after dropout were largely not present for interviews. Suggesting a more significant role for labour migration, over half of parents interviewed said that they had at least one child who had migrated to work in Thailand following education dropout.

For the 46 children now employed locally, **Figure 7** gives a more detailed breakdown of types of employment undertaken. Reiterating findings from WRCP's 2013 report *Children for Hire*, agricultural work proved to be overwhelmingly the most common route. Wages reported by children in local employment ranged from 20,000 Kyat per month for part-time sales work to 3,000 Kyat per day for plantation labour.

Aside from employment, 11 interviewees stated that they were now responsible for domestic chores in their family home (seven of whom did this in addition to local paid employment) while other post dropout prospects included monastic life, marriage, unemployment and non-formal education.

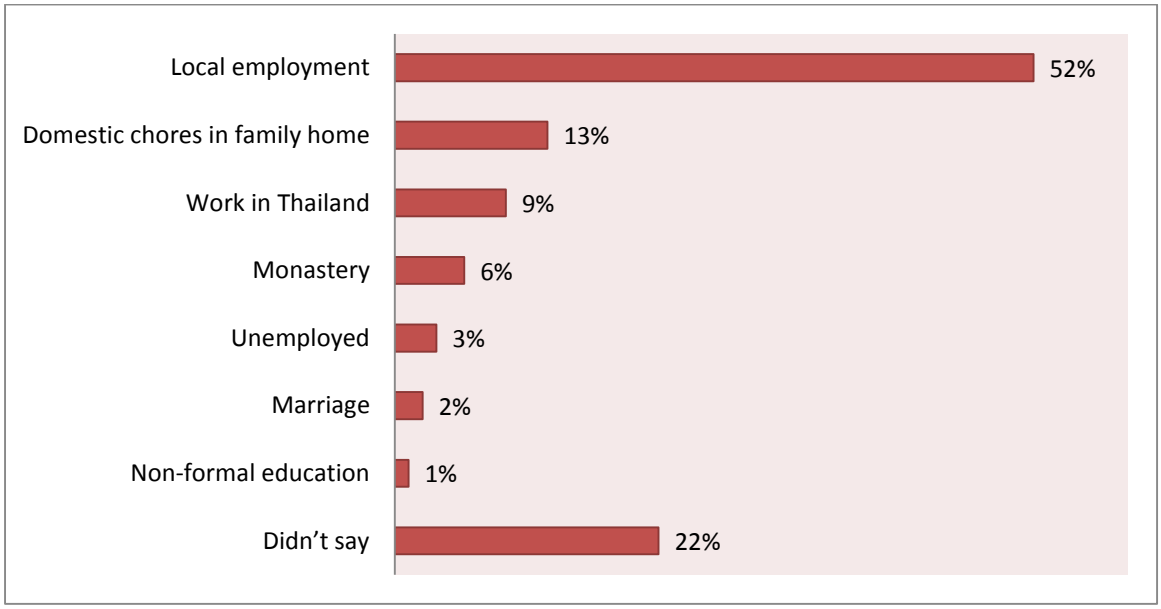


Figure 6: Current occupation of dropout interviewees (as % of total dropouts interviewed) (WCRP Interview data).

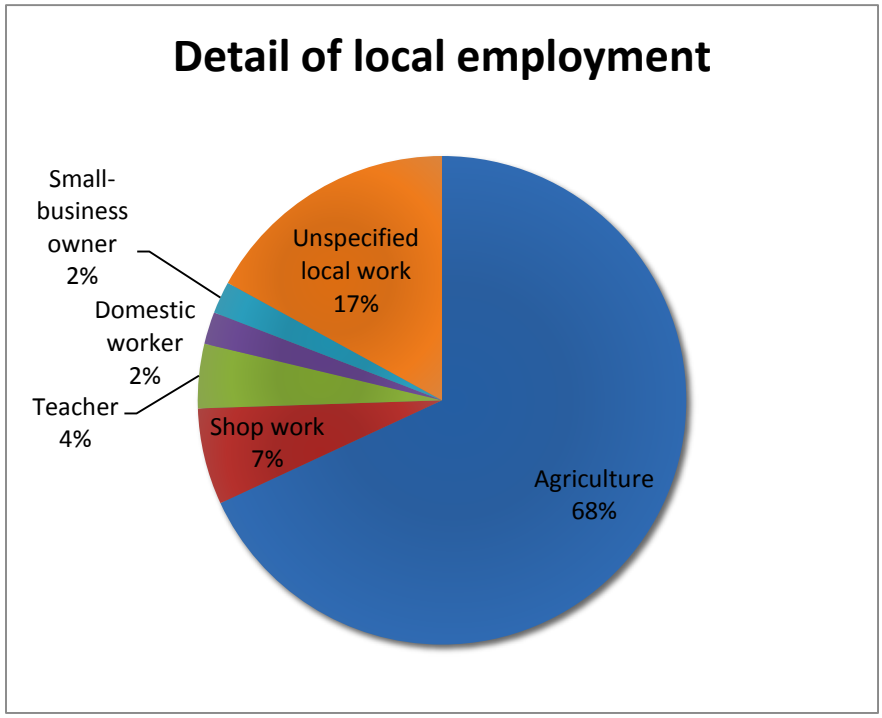


Figure 7: Detail of local employment (WCRP Interview Data).

1.3 Perspectives on return to education

Over a quarter of children interviewed explicitly detailed wishes to return to education. Maung Phyo Nay Soe, a 13-year-old from Sixty Mile village, Yebyu Township, said, "I want to study again because my dream is to become a doctor. I hope that one day I can go back to school again".[62]

However, some children noted that, despite wishes to go to school again, a return to education was not at present feasible. For example, Mi Don Htaw, a 17-year-old from Koh Ann Htaw Village, Kyainnseikyi Township, explained, "When I see others going to school I do want to go to school too, but right now I have no other plan except supporting my family".[63] Some interviewees mentioned that if a return to formal education was not possible they would like to receive vocational training. In particular, trainings in sewing skills were requested by numerous respondents.

Meanwhile, 11 of 88 dropouts stated that they did not want to return to education. Three children said that this was because they felt they were too old now to continue in school. Six children stated that they did not want to return to school because they wanted to work to earn money instead. For example, Maung Phyae Zaw Aung, a 12-year-old from Kyon Laung (Old) village, Ye Township, commented, "I don't want to study any more. I want to earn money".[64]

1.4 Drop-out monitoring procedures

Research for this report confirmed different approaches to monitoring drop-out rates within government and MNEC school systems.

Principal of Kwin Shay Basic Education Primary School, Ye Township, recounted how government schools are required to send a report to the government education authorities at the beginning and end of the school year, listing student numbers. Where students have dropped out during the year, teachers at the school must provide reasons.[65]

In contrast, MNEC stated that it had no such documentation process. However, MNEC indicated plans to collect data on MNS dropouts during the 2015-16 school year.[66] WCRP

[62] WCRP Interview No. 106, Sixty Mile village, Yebyu Township, 12/11/14.
[63] WCRP Interview No. 10, Koh Ann Htaw village, Kyainnseikyi Township, 02/11/14.
[64] WCRP Interview No. 45, Kyon Laung (Old) village, Ye Township, 08/11/14.
[65] WCRP Interview No. 48, Kwin Shay village, Ye Township, 8/11/14.
[66] WCRP Interview No. 132, Moulmein, 29/02/15.

encourages this move and furthermore advocates that, given parallel education structures within Mon regions, the Burmese government and MNEC should implement a system to collaboratively track school attendance rates among school-age children in rural Mon communities. This would allow government and non-state parties to build on WCRP's research to comprehensively assess the scale of education dropout in rural Mon areas, allowing for comparison with national trends and the design of targeted interventions.

2 Livelihood Concerns

Of 88 children interviewed, 73 detailed reasons why they had dropped out from education. **Figure 8** displays, for the children who explained why they had dropped out, the main reasons cited for leaving school. Significantly, over three quarters of these children indicated that the main reason for their exit from school surrounded family livelihood concerns.[67]

[67] This includes 7% who left school due to labour migration; in this report labour migration is considered under the umbrella of livelihood difficulties.

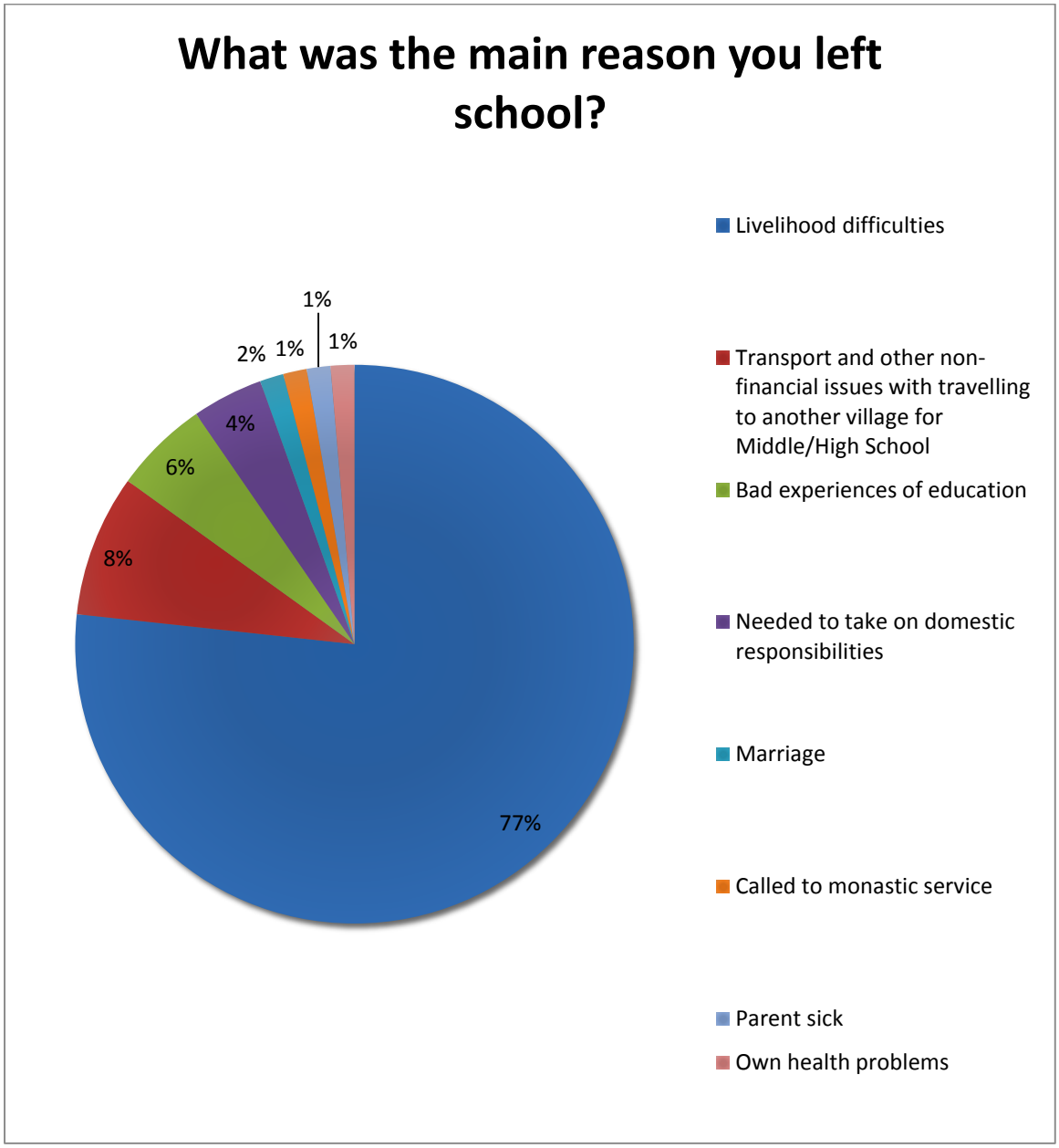


Figure 8: What was the main reason you left school? (As % of dropout interviewees who gave a reason) (WCRP Interview Data).

Overall interviews reflected themes evident from the smaller cross-section of former students; of 135 total interviews, 87 discussed family livelihood concerns as a major cause of

education dropout. For example, Mi Sandar Son, a teacher from Wae Thar Lee (East) village, Kyainnseikyi Township, detailed:

"There are around 280 children who could attend [Wae Thar Lee (East)] school but only 235 go to school. The other children don't go to school because their parents face difficulties with livelihood problems."[68]

Financial problems were noted to derive from wider economic difficulties in the region. With agricultural work the predominant income source for villagers, multiple interviewees expressed that the falling price of rubber had plunged their family into financial uncertainty. Some respondents also indicated problems relating to family debt, while others detailed how low wages for day labourers posed problems for families without land.

2.1 Paths from livelihood difficulties to dropout

Respondents indicated four main paths by which livelihood difficulties led to education dropout:

1) Children needed to work to supplement their family's income (discussed in **2.1.1**).

[68] WCRP Interview No. 2, Wae Thar Lee (East) village, Kyainnseikyi Township, 03/11/14.

2) Families were unable to afford costs related to education (discussed in **2.1.2**).
3) Livelihood difficulties created a need for families to migrate, taking their children out of school (discussed in **2.1.3**).
4) Poverty affected community perceptions of education's value (discussed in **2.1.4**).

2.1.1 Children supplementing income

Maw Gyi village resident Mi Hong Mon represented one case where livelihood difficulties led to dropout because, coming from a poor family, she felt compelled to take her children out from school in order to send them to work. She explained:

> "I have two sons. Neither of them go to school because we are a poor family. We have to struggle for our livelihood. My husband is a hard labourer. He works when people hire him to work on their plantation. He earns 6,000 Kyat per day, which is not even enough for our daily expenses. My sons work with their father. They each earn 3,000 Kyat per day. If their father worked alone, it would not be enough for our family. That is why my sons have to work too. I am pregnant now and cannot work. We want our children to study, but due to the daily struggles in our family we cannot afford for them to go to school."[69]

As discussed in **Section 1.2** above, almost two thirds of the children interviewed detailed that they were now helping to support themselves and their family with wages from local or migrant work. In one case a 13-year-old, who had lived with her sister since her parents migrated to Thailand, indicated that she needed to work in order to support her own food costs:

> "My parents are working in Thailand. I live at my sister's house with her husband and child. All my siblings are working in Thailand too…Although my parents work in

[69] WCRP Interview No. 96, Maw Gyi village, Yebyu Township, 10/11/14.

Thailand, they can only send [home] very little money. I have to work for my own expenses, such as food."[70]

However, it was reported that the need to assist with family income generation didn't in all cases lead to children dropping out from education completely. School teachers in Lae Gyi and Alae Sakhan villages, both in Yebyu Township, indicated a seasonal approach to school attendance: while children were noted to attend school during the rainy season they would periodically disappear from classes in the summer months to help their parents with plantation work.[71]

2.1.2 Unaffordable costs of education

Some interviewees reported that the costs of education were simply too high for poor rural villagers to afford; this was indicated in 56 interviews, consisting 40% of all interviews conducted.

i. *Primary Education*

From WCRP's research, inaccessible costs at Primary level stemmed from high fees demanded by village schools. Despite the Burmese government's repeatedly stated commitment to free

[70] WCRP Interview No. 106, Sixty Mile village, Yebyu Township, 12/11/14.
[71] WCRP Interview No. 75, Lae Gyi village, Yebyu Township, 10/11/14; WCRP Interview No. 82, Alae Sakhan village, Yebyu Township, 12/11/14.

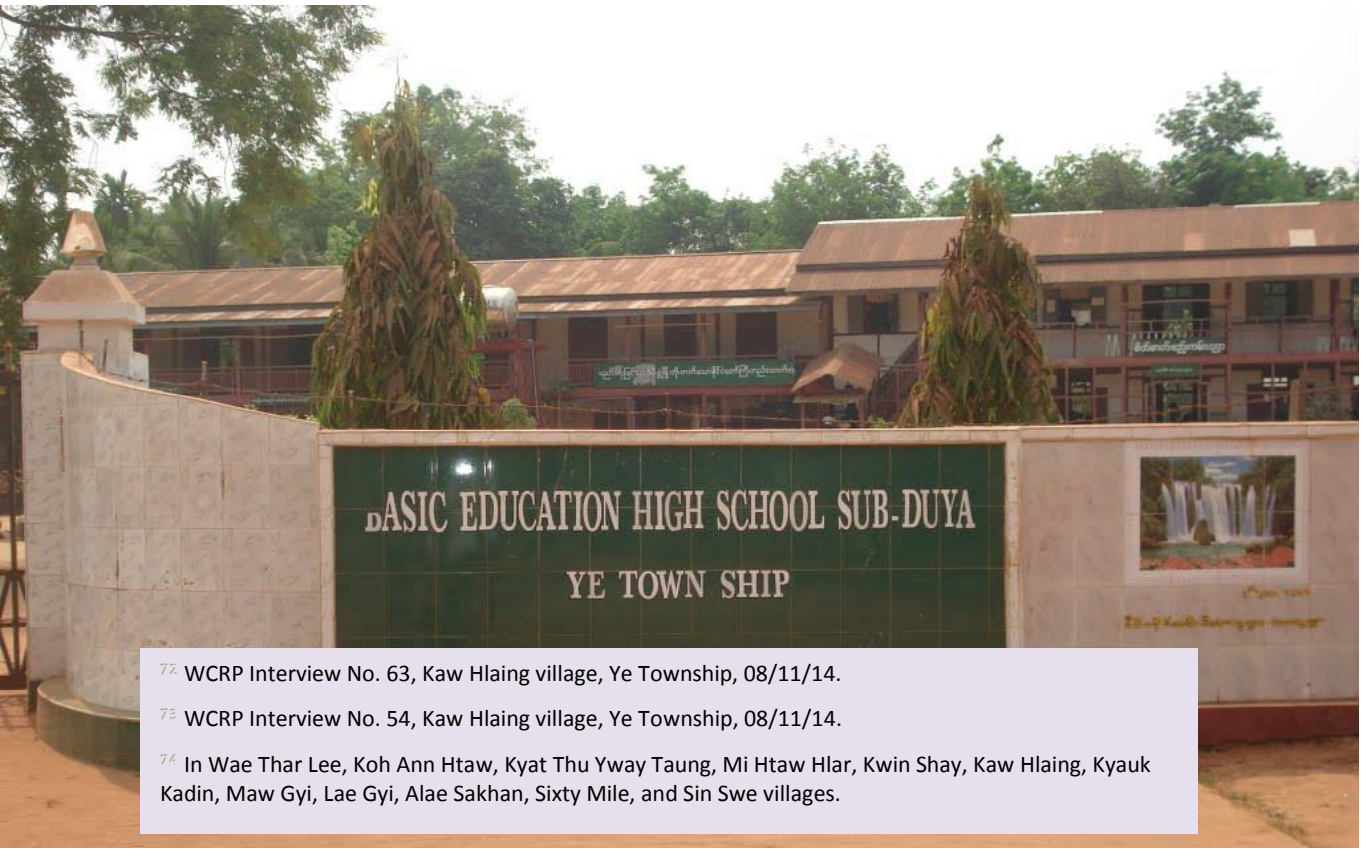
Primary Education, 14 interviews indicated inaccessible costs attached to Primary Education, largely regarding government managed schools.

In particular, concerns were expressed regarding the Mixed School in Kaw Hlaing village, Ye Township. Daw Than Yu, the mother of a student who dropped out from Kaw Hlaing school, explained, "Students have to pay for everything, including the teachers' wages and class tuition fees".[72] Daw Khin Moe, a university student from the village, elaborated further:

> "The teachers collect too much money from students. When teachers don't receive their wages from the government, the students have to pay them. Students who take tuition, extra private classes, pay 25,000 Kyat twice per year…Students have to pay for teachers' personal spending, school facilities and for textbooks. There are some students who cannot pay these fees and leave school."[73]

ii. *Secondary Education*

At Secondary level costs were reported to rise significantly. In particular, interviews indicated that this was due to an insufficient network of Middle Schools and High Schools in rural Mon regions. 29 interviews, coming from 12 different villages, indicated worries about the financial costs attached to attending Middle or High School in a village far from home.[74]



[72] WCRP Interview No. 63, Kaw Hlaing village, Ye Township, 08/11/14.

[73] WCRP Interview No. 54, Kaw Hlaing village, Ye Township, 08/11/14.

[74] In Wae Thar Lee, Koh Ann Htaw, Kyat Thu Yway Taung, Mi Htaw Hlar, Kwin Shay, Kaw Hlaing, Kyauk Kadin, Maw Gyi, Lae Gyi, Alae Sakhan, Sixty Mile, and Sin Swe villages.

Figure 9 shows the full breakdown of education available in the surveyed villages; in 11 of 21 villages surveyed no Secondary Education at all was available within the village, while not a single village surveyed had its own High School and only two villages had a full Middle School. Moreover, of all village leaders interviewed, only one, in Phae Kapoe village, Kyainnseikyi Township, commented that there was sufficient Secondary Education in closeby surrounding villages.[75]

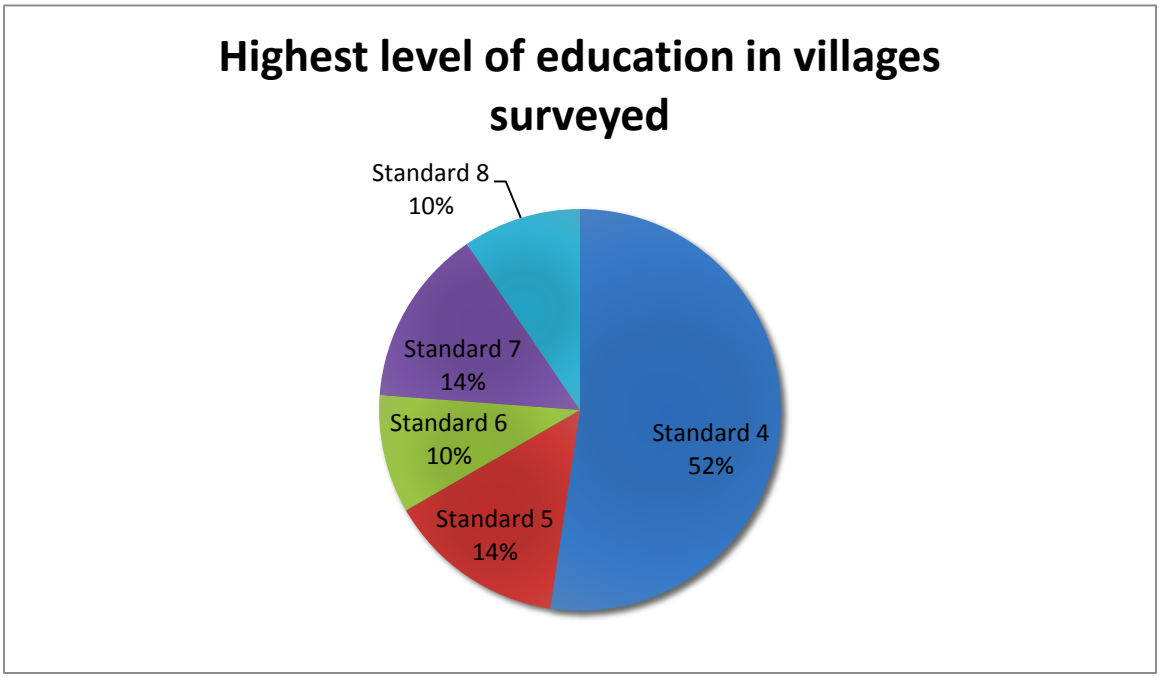


Figure 9: Highest level of education in villages surveyed (WCRP Interview Data).

With poor Secondary Education access in their own and surrounding villages, students had to travel long distances in order to continue education, which prompted high costs for families. One child who left school due to the financial burden of travelling to another village explained:

> "I studied in [Sixty Mile] village. After I passed Standard 4 I had to transfer to Yapu village for [Standard] 5. But my parents are poor so I dropped out from school. If this village had a Middle School, I would continue attending school. We don't have the money to study in another place."[76]

Some interviewees discussed costs incurred for transport to school in another village. For example, Mi Wut Yee Hlaing, 11, explained that her family could not afford for her to travel to

[75] WCRP Interview No. 15, Phae Kapoe village, Kyainnseikyi Township, 02/11/14.
[76] WCRP Interview No. 98, Sixty Mile village, Yebyu Township, 12/11/14.

school by motorbike, " I dropped out from school after Standard 4 because I had to attend Standard 5 in another village. It is very far to walk. We would have to take a motorbike but we are poor. My parents could not afford to support me with all these costs".[77]

In other cases, high financial costs were reported to arise when long distances between students' home villages and Secondary Education rendered daily travel untenable, meaning that if students wanted to continue their education they had to pay to board at a school outside their village. This was reported to cost anything from 160,000 to 700,000 Kyat per year.[78]

2.1.3 Labour migration

Livelihood difficulties were also noted to precipitate dropout due to a connection with the need for family labour migration; a consideration detailed by 18 respondents.

In poor rural villages of Southern Burma it is common for poor, landless families to migrate between villages within the country, across the border to neighbouring Thailand, or even further afield in order to find work. Interviews suggested that, unless children could stay with a relative in their original village, they had to move away with their families and so leave their village school.

U Lwin Moe Aung, a Village Elder from Kyon Laung (Old) village, Ye Township, explained:

> "The reason [children] leave school is because of their parents' livelihood problems. Due to financial problems, they take their children with them when they move to another place. The children leave school and follow their parents."[79]

i. *Migration within Burma*

When families migrated between different villages in Burma, children were sometimes reported to continue school in their new village. However, it was noted that patterns of repeat migration in many cases eventually led to education dropout. Nai Than Chaung, Village Chairman of Alae Sakhan village, Yebyu Township, said, "Some parents move from village to

[77] WCRP Interview No. 105, Sixty Mile village, Yebyu Township, 12/11/14.
[78] WCRP Interview No. 80, Alae Sakhan village, Yebyu Township, 12/11/14; WCRP Interview No. 124, Sin Swe village, Yebyu Township, 10/11/14.
[79] WCRP Interview No. 42, Kyon Laung (Old) village, Ye Township, 08/11/14.

village. When they enrol [their children] in school, [the children] drop out over and over again, and finally lose interest in schooling".[80]

In other cases, it was reported that families migrating between villages had been unable to re-enrol their children in their new village's school because they lacked necessary paperwork from their previous school. Ma Mi, a 33-year-old resident in Maw Gyi village, Yebyu Township, explained the difficulties her family had faced:

> "I am originally from Ah Nin village….Now I have moved to Maw Gyi village to work. I live at my uncle's house. I have been here for just over one month. My husband works in this village as a fisherman. I have four children. Two of them work in Thailand and the other two have just left school at Ah Nin government school to move here, because we don't have a relative in Ah Nin village to leave them with. When we moved we did not ask for a recommendation letter from the school they left. That is why my two children still have not enrolled in the school in this village." [81]

ii. *Cross-border migration*

Where families migrated across the border to Thailand this was usually noted to lead to dropout from education, as children would have to transfer to the Thai school system in order to continue their studies. Mi Dar, a parent of six children from Koh Ann Htaw village, Kyainnseikyi Township, described her family's migration across the border:

> "We don't have our own farm, so we have to work on other people's farms. I have a lot of children and we couldn't survive with our small salary, so we migrated to Thailand for two years and took all of our children with us. All of our children who attended school had to stop their studies and go with us."[82]

While Mi Dar's family returned to Koh Ann Htaw village two years later, due to work in Thailand failing to provide sufficient income, five of her six children did not return to school. In a case typical of many families, by the time they returned to Koh Ann Htaw her children had fallen behind their peers, who had now progressed to higher grades. Mi Dar's son, Mehm Ong Sorn, 13 years old, explained, "Even if I wanted to continue my education, all my classmates are now at a high grade. I don't want to continue studying because I am getting older".[83]

[80] WCRP Interview No. 91, Alae Sakhan village, Yebyu Township, 12/11/2014.
[81] WCRP Interview No. 70, Maw Gyi village, Yebyu Township, 10/11/2014.
[82] WCRP Interview No. 14, Koh Ann Htaw village, Kyainnseikyi Township, 02/11/14.
[83] WCRP Interview No. 13, Koh Ann Htaw village, Kyainnseikyi Township, 02/11/14.

2.1.4 Perceptions of education

Finally, WCRP's research also linked livelihood difficulties to community perceptions of education's value.

i. *Lacking value of education completion*

Overall, 12 interviews suggested that members of the community did not value education completion. In particular, two school Principals, one teacher and a doctor made some strong comments about parents failing to understand or lacking knowledge about the importance of education. This was considered to play a key part in dropout. Various interviewees gave the opinion that dropout could not be combatted unless parents, in collaboration with teachers, worked harder to encourage children to continue their education. Daw Khant Khant Chaw, Principal of the Basic Education Primary School in Kwin Shay village, Ye Township, asserted, "If parents wish for their child to study it really depends on them; they must encourage them".[84]

ii. *Effects of poverty on community perceptions*

Largely, though not exclusively, perceptions of education as lacking value appeared to stem from poverty. As Daw Sandar Myint, a teacher from Alae Sakhan village, noted, "[Villagers] are poor. They are so focused on their daily expenses. That is why they cannot pay much attention to education".[85] With survival a predominant concern, parents were asserted to believe that education was not a necessity. Daw Lay Lay Myint, Principal of Lae Gyi village's Mixed Primary School, commented, "Most parents in this village believe that you can survive even if you are not educated. [They believe that] it is enough if you can read a little".[86]

Crucially, in the context of widespread poverty, interviews showed that the value of education was often placed in opposition to possibilities for children to join the workforce; a competition which education often lost. Mi Dar, a parent from Koh Ann Htaw village, Kyar In Seik Kyi Township, said, "For me, I think it's enough for my children to complete around Standard 7. If we work we will get money".[87] Similarly, Mi Yu Yu Lwin, wife of Saryar Mon village's Chairman,

[84] WCRP Interview No. 48, Kwin Shay village, Ye Township, 08/11/14.
[85] WCRP Interview No. 82, Alae Sakhan village, Yebyu Township, 12/11/14.
[86] WCRP Interview No. 75, Lae Gyi village, Yebyu Township, 10/11/14.
[87] WCRP Interview No. 14, Koh Ann Htaw village, Kyainnseikyi Township, 02/11/14.

explained, "Parents don't motivate their children [to continue school]. After Standard 4, they just want their children to work".[88] Perceptions of education as lacking value in comparison to work were even seen to extend to members of village leadership. Nai Soe Naing, Village Administrator for Wae Thar Lee village, Kyainnseikyi Township, commented, "I do not want my child to continue studying after finishing Standard 7. I want my child to work".[89]

Enhancing these perceptions, two interviewees explained that poor job prospects for graduates reinforced the idea within the community that education was not important or beneficial to students, particularly in terms of economic prospects. Mi Lyi Nan, a third year university student from Kyauk Kadin village, detailed how a lack of jobs within Burma meant that even school and university graduates would end up going to Thailand to work.[90] Elaborating on this theme, Daw Kyin Myoe, a university student from Kaw Hlaing village, explained:

"There are nine students who have earned a degree and nine university students in this village. Those who have degrees don't have a job. That is why the villagers are not motivated to support the education of their children. The government cannot create jobs for graduates. The villagers assume that studying is a waste of money for parents."[91]

iii. *Positive perceptions and mediating factors*

Interviews made clear that some members of the surveyed communities *did* value education, at least to some extent. Various parents expressed aspirations for their children to graduate from university, or to become teachers or doctors. U Win Htay, from Alae Sakhan village, Yebyu Township, told WCRP, "My dream is that I want my children to be educated and have a career to support themselves".[92] However, it was also made clear that restrictions due to poverty often prevented positive values from translating into action to support children to remain in education. For example, Ma Soe, a 48-year-old shopkeeper from Alae Sakhan village, Yebyu Township, explained:

> "My son is named Kyaw Lin Oo and he is 16 years old. He left school at Standard 7. Now he works in Thailand. I cannot afford to support him to study in another village. Our business is not running well… I want my child to study but currently we are so focused on our livelihood."[93]

[88] WCRP Interview No. 107, Saryar Mon village, Yebyu Township, 12/11/14.
[89] WCRP Interview No. 19, Wae Thar Lee village, Kyainnseikyi Township, 03/11/14.
[90] WCRP Interview No. 69, Kyauk Kadin village, Yebyu Township, 10/11/14.
[91] WCRP Interview No. 54, Kaw Hlaing village, Ye Township, 08/11/14.
[92] WCRP Interview No. 88, Alae Sakhan village, Yebyu Township, 12/11/14.
[93] WCRP Interview No. 90, Alae Sakhan village, Yebyu Township, 12/11/14.

2.2 Risk factors

WCRP's interviews indicated various factors that appeared to increase children's risk of dropout, due to their role in exacerbating family financial problems.

i. Large families

Families with large numbers of children were reported to suffer from greater livelihood difficulties, with many children from these families unable to continue in education. For example, Daw Sein, a 43-year-old hard labourer from Alae Sakhan village, Yebyu Township, told WCRP:

> "I have 7 children. All of them have left school except two. We have been living in this village for 10 years. We still don't own a house or farmland. We live and work on another's land. My child is still very little, that is why I cannot work. My husband works at whatever job he finds. My [other] children left school at Standard 2 or 3, when they could read and write a little... I have many children, which makes it difficult for our livelihood."[94]

ii. Parents unable to work: sickness, old age and pregnancy

In numerous cases children left school because one of their parents, or another major family breadwinner, became unable to work, either at all or to full capacity. In total 16 interviewees discussed extra strains on livelihood due to sickness, accident, old age or pregnancy. In these situations children were reported to drop out as financial support for their education disappeared, or as they were required to take over from their parents in financially supporting the family.

Mi Seik Chan, 13 years, from Ye Township's Kaw Hlaing village, described the problems she faced when her sister was injured:

> "My single sister worked in Thailand. I studied with the money she sent home. After she had an accident, she could not work. Then she came back home. Now there is no one to support me."[95]

[94] WCRP Interview No. 84, Alae Sakhan village, Yebyu Township, 12/11/14.
[95] WCRP Interview No. 68, Kaw Hlaing village, Ye Township, 08/11/14.

Similarly, Mi Pakao Mu, 14, from Kaw Hlaing village, Ye Township, described her family's difficulties due to her parents' old age, "I don't go to school because we are poor and my parents are old. I have to help them with work".[96]

iii. Disruptions in the family unit: death and remarriage

Disruptions in the family unit also appeared to exacerbate livelihood difficulties, leading to greater risk of dropout. Five children reported that they had left school following the death of a parent, while two noted exits from education following a parent's remarriage.

Where a parent had died, children explained that they had subsequently left education as their remaining parent could not support the family alone, financially and otherwise. Mi Don Htaw, a 17-year-old from Koh Ann Htaw village, Kyainnseikyi Township, described how she left school to support her elderly mother after her father's death:

> "After my father passed away only three members of the family were left. After going to school for one year I had to leave…My mother is getting older. She relies on my wages. When my mother and sister go to work I look after the house…I left school because it is important to support our family, since my mother is getting older and she needs help."[97]

WCRP also interviewed Mi Don Htaw's younger sister, who reported that, due to these difficulties, she had never started school.[98]

3 Other Reasons for Dropout

While interviews indicated livelihood difficulties as the most influential factor behind education dropout, some other significant concerns arose.

[96] WCRP Interview No. 60, Kaw Hlaing village, Ye Township, 08/11/14.
[97] WCRP Interview No. 10, Koh Ann Htaw village, Kyainnseikyi Township, 02/11/14.
[98] WCRP Interview No. 11, Koh Ann Htaw village, Kyainnseikyi Township, 02/11/14.

3.1 Transport difficulties

In total, 22 interviews suggested transportation difficulties to be in part or wholly to blame for education dropout, at both Primary and Secondary levels.

Six interviews indicated that children dropped out at Primary level due to problems with travel to school. While all of the villages surveyed had a full course of Primary Education available in their community's school, transport was still reported to present a problem for families living and working on plantations far from the village centre. This was noted in Kyainnseikyi Township's Phae Kapoe and Koh Ann Htaw villages, in addition to Ye Township's Mi Htaw Hlar and Kyon Laung (Old) villages. Travel to school from outlying plantations was reported to be particularly difficult in the rainy season, with flooded roads posing problems.

Like with financial costs, travel difficulties were reported to worsen at Secondary level, given the need, discussed in **Section 2.1.2** above, for children to travel to other villages to attend Middle and High School. 16 interviews, across over half of the villages surveyed, discussed difficulties with transportation to Secondary Education in another village.[99] Buses were reported to be irregular and distances long to walk.[100] Daw Lay Lay Myint, Principal of Lae Gyi village school, explained, "Students who go to school in Maw Gyi have to leave at 6 a.m. in the morning. It is even worse [for them] during the rainy season because of the bad road and heavy rain".[101] One interviewee from Kyat Thu Yway Taung village, Kyainnseikyi Township, detailed that when the road flooded students had to travel to school in another village by boat.[102]

[99] In Koh Ann Htaw, Kyat Thu Yway Taung, Mi Htaw Hlar, Kwin Shay, Kaw Hlaing, Kyauk Kadin, Maw Gyi, Lae Gyi, Alae Sakhan, Sixty Mile, Sin Swe and Palain Japan villages.
[100] WCRP Interview No. 104, Sixty Mile village, Yebyu Township, 12/11/14.
[101] WCRP Interview No. 75, Lae Gyi village, Yebyu Township, 10/11/14.
[102] WCRP Interview No. 3, Kyat Thu Yway Taung village, Kyainnseikyi Township, 03/11/14.

Interviewees also elaborated security concerns regarding travelling to school in another village. Mi Lyi Nan, a university student from Kyauk Kadin village, explained:

> "There was a case where a girl was raped in Sixty Mile Village, which shocked parents. Now they don't want to let their child walk a long distance alone to school. [The parents] have to accompany their child to school. When [the parents] have to work, students have to miss school."[103]

3.2 Emotional difficulties for children and parents

Specific to Secondary Education access, problems reportedly arose when long distances meant that students could not make the daily trip to another village for Middle or High School and would be required to board at their school. Aside from the financial concerns raised by this (discussed in **Section 2.1.2**), five interviews elaborated parents' reluctance to allow their children to continue education because they worried about them living away from home. Conversely, three interviews indicated that children feared they would miss their parents if they lived away from home. Illustrating this concern, Ma Thuzar, 17, from Alae Sakhan village, Yebyu Township, said, "I dropped out from school two years ago, after I finished Standard 7. My parents allowed me to study but I dropped out for my own reasons. Our village school only goes up to Standard 7. We have to transfer to a school in another village for higher grades. I cannot live away from my parents. I just don't want to live in another village".[104]

[103] WCRP Interview No. 69, Kyauk Kadin village, Yebyu Township, 10/11/14.
[104] WCRP Interview No. 89, Alae Sakhan village, Yebyu Township, 12/11/14.

3.3 Domestic responsibilities

Covering both Primary and Secondary Education, 13 interviews stated that children left school because they needed to take responsibility for domestic work, including childcare and housework. Often this was because both parents worked, leaving no one at home to look after the household. Mi Mol Chan, 7, from Kaw Hlaing village, Ye Township, said, "I don't go to school. I have one sibling. I have to look after the baby while my parents are tapping rubber for pay. If my parents allowed me, I would go to school".[105] Meanwhile, Ma Win Myo Htet, from Alae Sakhan village, Yebyu Township, explained, "My mother works on a farm so I stay home to cook and look after the baby". [106]

3.4 Bad experiences of education

Nine interviews linked dropout to bad experiences of education, at both Primary and Secondary level.

i. Loss of interest in lessons

Four interviews discussed children leaving school after becoming bored or losing interest in lessons. Ma Nyo Win, 32, from Kyon Laung (Old) village, Ye Township, said, "[my] older son left school just this year, at Standard 7. He said he was bored at school".[107] Similarly, former student Mehm Naung Naung, from Kaw Hlaing village, Ye Township, explained, "I studied in this village but I left school due to a lack of interest in the lessons".[108]

[105] WCRP Interview No. 55, Kaw Hlaing village, Ye Township, 08/11/14.
[106] WCRP Interview No. 79, Alae Sakhan village, Yebyu Township, 12/11/2014.
[107] WCRP Interview No. 44, Kyon Laung (Old) village, Ye Township, 08/11/14.
[108] WCRP Interview No. 64, Kaw Hlaing village, Ye Township, 08/11/14.

ii. Students falling behind

Five interviews talked about children dropping out from school after struggling in lessons or failing exams. Wah Wah Oo, 18, from Kwin Shay village, Ye Township, described her school experiences at Ye City High School, "I failed my Standard 9 exams last year and I left school. I struggled in the lessons".[109] Whereas Daw Than Yu from Kaw Hlaing village, Ye Township, recounted:

> "My younger child has already left school. I want my children to earn a degree, so they can support me when they have an education. My younger child is not interested in school. He said he cannot do the lessons well. So he left school."[110]

[109] WCRP Interview No. 50, Kwin Shay village, Ye Township, 08/11/14.
[110] WCRP Interview No. 63, Kaw Hlaing village, Ye Township, 08/11/14.

iii. Disciplinary issues

Two respondents described dropout following excessive use of disciplinary methods.

A former student from Kyon Laung (Old) village, Ye Township, described his experiences of corporal punishment, "I left school in Standard 4 last year. I left for my own reasons, because the teachers beat the students. If students don't do well in lessons, [the teachers] beat them. If students do well, they also beat them".[111]

In another incident, U Lwin Moe Aung, a Village Elder in Kyon Laung (Old) village, described how several students from his village had left Ye High School after being verbally intimidated by their teacher:

> "There are around seven students attending Ye High School who have left the school. Their reason is that, when they have weekly meetings with their teacher, their teacher said that the students from Kyon Laung would reduce the school's exam pass rate. After the students heard these words from their teacher they felt upset. I thought that the teacher from the Ye school should not have spoken to the students like that."[112]

4 Next Steps

Overall, WCRP's research indicated widespread poverty to be the crucial driving factor behind school dropout in rural Mon villages. With this in mind, first and foremost WCRP highlights the need for clear initiatives to combat poverty in these rural areas, both through wide-ranging approaches and measures specifically targeted towards groups identified as being particularly at-risk of dropout; children from large families, children from families where a parent is unable to work, and children from families who have experienced significant disruption.

Moreover, WCRP advocates for the need to reduce costs attached to education attendance in order to remove financial barriers to school access; it is considered unacceptable for families to be left in a position where they are too poor to afford education. Pre-existing policies of free and compulsory Primary Education must be fully enforced in all Burmese government and MNEC schools and extended to cover Middle School, while scholarship opportunities should be opened up to support Secondary School attendance outside home villages.

Finally, in view of problems with cost, transport and emotional difficulties for families when children have to travel far outside their village to attend Secondary Education, WCRP recommends that the Burmese government and MNEC initiate a collaborative mapping and

[111] WCRP Interview No. 45, Kyon Laung (Old) village, Ye Township, 08/11/14.
[112] WCRP Interview No. 42, Kyon Laung (Old) village, Ye Township, 08/11/14.

strategic planning initiative, to map all MNS, Mixed and Basic Education schools in Mon regions and in doing so expand access to education by determining if and where new schools should be built.

All recommended measures concerning education dropout in rural Mon areas are detailed in full in **Section V.**

IV. RESOURCE CONSTRAINTS IN RURAL VILLAGE SCHOOLS

WCRP's second focus in interviews was to discover the extent of resource constraints in Mon community rural village schools. While the analysis below is thematic, a village-by-village account can be found in **Appendix 2.**

In 14 of 23 village schools insufficient material or human resources were indicated.[113] As **Figure 10** shows, while resource difficulties were reported in all three types of school surveyed, the greatest number of complaints concerned the MNS system.

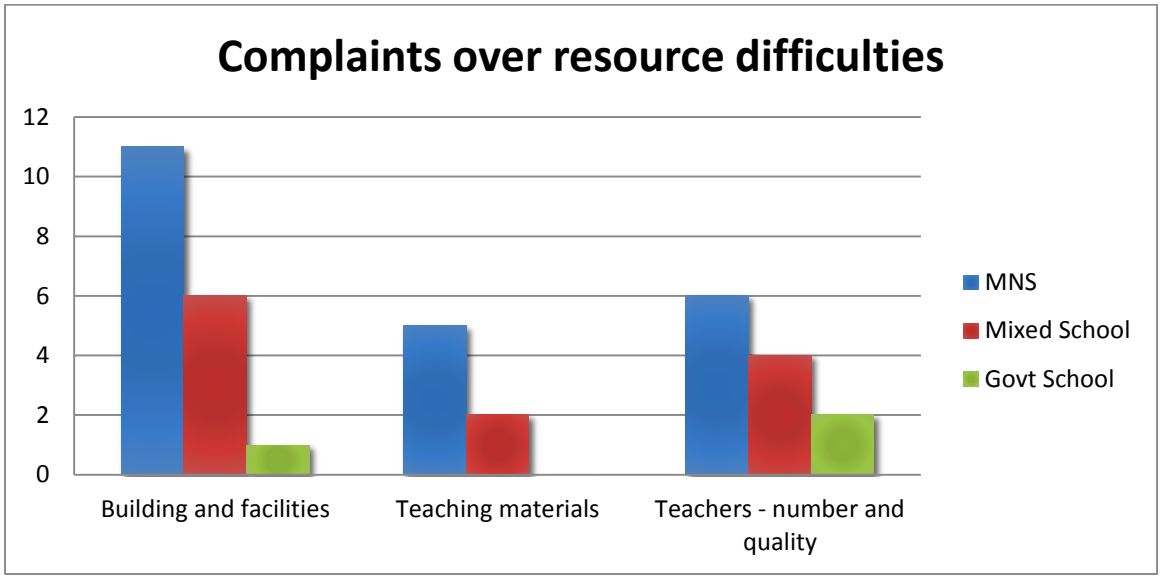


Figure 10: Number of complaints over resource difficulties (by type of school and type of complaint) (WCRP Interview Data).

[113] In Phae Kapoe, Koh Ann Htaw, Leik Pyaw, Kyat Thu Yway Taung, Wae Thar Lee (West), Mi Htaw Hlar, Kyon Laung (Old), Kaw Hlaing, Lae Gyi, Alae Sakhan, Sin Swe, Kyauk Kadin and Sixty Mile villages.

1. Analysis of Resource Problems

1.1 School buildings and facilities

18 interviews expressed concerns about school buildings and facilities. In Phae Kapoe village, Kyainnseikyi Township, it was reported that the village Mon National Primary School did not have a permanent school building. A teacher from the school detailed, "We are teaching in a tent beside the monastery. When there is a celebration in the monastery we have to close the school". [114] Meanwhile, in Koh Ann Htaw and Wae Thar Lee (West) villages, both in Kyainnseikyi Township, existing MNS buildings were reported to be old and dilapidated. A teacher from Koh Ann Htaw's school described their school building as "almost falling down".[115]

By far the most common concern expressed about school buildings or facilities was that school buildings were too small; this concern was expressed regarding Mon National Schools in Koh Ann Htaw, Leik Pyaw, Wae Thar Lee (West) and Mi Htaw Hlar Gyi villages, in addition to Mixed Schools in Lae Gyi and Sin Swe villages, and in Kyon Laung (Old) village's government school. In addition, interviewees in Mi Htaw Hlar (MNS), Lae Gyi (Mixed School) and Alae Sakhan (Mixed School) noted that a lack of private teaching rooms posed a challenge to teachers. Daw Sandar Myint, a teacher in Alae Sakhan Mixed Post-Primary School, Yebyu Township, commented:

"There are no classrooms in the school. The school is a big hall room. Each class can hear the other classes' teaching. It is very tiring for the teachers to shout so that the students can hear." [116]

Other concerns about school facilities included shortages of chairs and desks in Mi Htaw Hlar Lay

[114] WCRP Interview No. 1, Phae Kapoe village, Kyainnseikyi Township, 03/11/14.
[115] WCRP Interview No.4, Koh Ann Htaw village, Kyainnseikyi Township, 02/11/14.
[116] WCRP Interview No. 82, Alae Sakhan village, Yebyu Township, 12/11/14.

village Mon National school, and in Kaw Hlaing and Sin Swe villages' Mixed Schools. A university student from Kaw Hlaing village explained that in her village's school "the students have to bring their own chairs to sit in the classroom".[117] Meanwhile, the Village Administrator of Koh Ann Htaw village, Kyainnseikyi Township, reported that the village's Mon National School experienced difficulties with their water supply.[118]

1.2 Teaching materials

Seven interviews reported shortages of teaching materials, in Mon National schools in Koh Ann Htaw and Wae Thar Lee (West) villages (both in Kyainnseikyi Township), as well as in Mixed Schools in Sin Swe and Lae Gyi villages (both in Yebyu Township). Reported shortages related to stationery, schoolbooks and other teaching materials.

In one case, a Mon language teacher in Sin Swe village's Mixed School recalled that at exam time teachers from her school needed to purchase A4 paper themselves in order to conduct examinations.[119]

[117] WCRP Interview No. 54, Kaw Hlaing village, Ye Township, 08/11/14.
[118] WCRP Interview No. 9, Koh Ann Htaw village, Kyainnseikyi Township, 02/11/14.
[119] WCRP Interview No. 110, Sin Swe village, Yebyu Township, 10/11/14.

1.3 Teachers

Regarding human resources, 12 interviews noted concerns about the number, continuity, experience and qualification of teachers in village schools.

i. Reports of teacher shortages

In Phae Kapoe, Koh Ann Htaw, Leik Pyaw and Mi Htaw Hlar Gyi Mon National Schools, Kyon Laung (Old) village's Basic Education School and Sin Swe Mixed School, interviewees reported that village schools did not have enough teachers.

Village School	Township	Type of School	No. students	No. Teachers	Average students per teacher
Phae Kapoe	Kyainnseikyi	MNS	70	2	35.0
Wae Thar Lee (East)	Kyainnseikyi	Mixed	223	7	31.9
Koh Ann Htaw	Kyainnseikyi	MNS	91	3	30.3
Mi Htaw Hlar Lay	Kyainnseikyi	MNS	55	2	27.5
Mi Htaw Hlar Gyi	Kyainnseikyi	MNS	77	3	25.7
Kyon Laung (Old)	Ye	Government	216	10	21.6
Leik Pyaw	Kyainnseikyi	MNS	41	2	20.5
Maw Gyi	Yebyu	Government	177	9	19.7
Lae Gyi	Yebyu	Mixed	99	6	16.5
Kwin Shay	Ye	Government	74	6	12.3
Kyat Thu Yway Taung	Kyainnseikyi	Mixed	58	6	9.7
Sixty Mile	Yebyu	Mixed	38	5	7.6

Figure 11: Student/teacher ratios by village (WCRP Interview Data).

Figure 11 gives the reported student/teacher ratios for all villages where data was given, showing substantial variation in student/teacher ratios, from less than 8 students per teacher to 35 students per teacher. While the ratios here are not excessively high, concerns voiced about teacher shortages suggest that teachers may lack sufficient training to effectively handle their classes. Moreover, in some cases these ratios may not tell the whole story, given reports that some teachers in employment were in fact frequently unavailable for teaching responsibilities. Interviewees noted that in schools in Leik Pyaw, Kyauk Kadin and Sixty Mile villages, teachers' commitments to their own studies and teacher training sessions often took them away from the classroom. Mi Kyae Chan, a teacher in Leik Pyaw Mon National Primary School, explained how this compounded difficulties in her school:

"At the school we have only two teachers, including me. We have classes until Standard 4, so it is difficult for us to teach them. We don't have enough time for them. Sometimes the other

teacher attends university, so when she goes back to study there is only me left at the school."[120]

ii. Insufficient experience and qualifications

Three interviewees reported frequent changes of teachers in Mon region schools. Two referred to Kyon Laung (Old) government school, while the third made a broader comment about the MNS system as a whole. Aside from issues raised regarding teaching continuity, high turnover also suggests concerns about low teaching experience amongst teachers in rural Mon areas. Regarding the MNS system, MNEC coordinator Mi Hlaing Non said, "Teachers who have experience leave the school".[121] This comment fits reports elsewhere that low experience is a serious problem within the MNS system; in 2014-15 approximately 60% of MNEC teachers were reported to have begun the school year with four years or fewer teaching experience.[122]

Meanwhile, three interviewees expressed concerns that teachers were not sufficiently qualified. Ma Nyo Win, 32, from Kyon Laung (Old) village, Ye Township, explained of her village Basic Education School, "Last year the teachers' performance was not good. They are not qualified teachers".[123] The other two

[120] WCRP Interview No. 17, Wae Thar Lee (East) village, 03/11/14.
[121] WCRP Interview No. 132, Moulmein, 29/02/15.
[122] William Gray Rinehart, Kristi Ley and Mi Pone Han, "Using the Gradual Release Responsibility Framework in Pre-Service Teacher Training for Southeastern Myanmar" (2014), 8.
[123] WCRP Interview No. 44, Kyon Laung (Old) village, Ye Township, 08/11/14.

interviewees expressing concerns about teacher qualification referred to Kaw Hlaing's Mixed School and Koh Ann Htaw's Mon National School.

Again, further data places concern about teacher qualification in the MNS system within a wider picture. **Figure 12** displays the education background of MNEC teachers in 2013-14, showing that for over half of MNEC teachers High School was the highest level of education attended, with 44% having only completed High School and 7% having left school before High School completion.

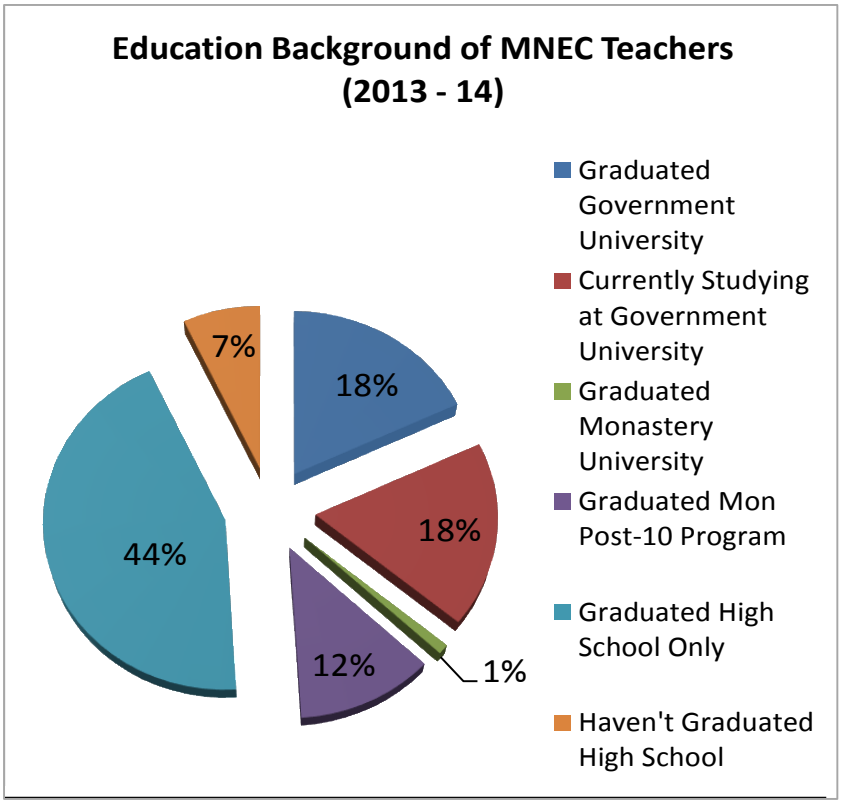


Figure 12: Education background of MNEC teachers (William Gray Rinehart, Kristi Ley and Mi Pone Han, "Using the Gradual Release Responsibility Framework in Pre-Service Teacher Training for Southeastern Myanmar", 8).

iii. Budget constraints

It is worth comment that, at least for schools within the MNS system, difficulties with recruiting, retaining and training sufficient and effective teachers may be connected to MNEC

budget constraints.[124] For example, Mi Ah Moi Ong, a teacher in Phae Kapoe village Mon National School, Kyainnseikyi Township, detailed that while the school needed more teachers, the NMSP were unable to provide funds to support this.[125]

In MNEC schools, where funds can be allocated, teacher salaries are low. Salaries for MNS teachers were reported to lie between 30-50,000 Kyat per month, with the NMSP contributing 20-30,000 Kyat and villagers providing the rest.[126] On the other hand, government-employed teachers were reported to receive 80-100,000 Kyat per month.[127] MNEC coordinator Mi Hlaing Non stated that while MNEC would like to increase their teachers' salaries, their hands were tied by budget limitations:

> "If we provided teachers with 50,000 Kyat per month, for 800 teachers we would have to spend 400 million Kyat per month. We don't have enough of money for that."[128]

However, as already noted, a lack of transparency regarding MNEC's finances means that the precise extent of MNEC's budget constraints remains unknown.

2. Next Steps

Given substantial concerns expressed regarding resource deficiencies, WCRP recommends a full resource-focussed needs assessment of all Burmese government and MNEC schools in rural Mon communities, so as to expand on information presented here regarding resource deficiencies. Following this, WCRP calls for swift and effective measures to address identified needs.

Notably, tackling resource challenges within the MNS system will first require MNEC and other concerned parties to address the issue of MNEC funding insecurity. First and foremost, WCRP calls on MNEC to conduct a comprehensive review and analysis of current budget expenditures and deficits, in order to establish a strategic organizational development plan that outlines funding requirements and specific organizational development needs. Given information presented in **Section II** regarding offers of government support to Mon National Schools, WCRP also advocates for the Burmese government to renegotiate its preconditions for support, so that MNEC schools may become able to access government resources without being required to completely give up their autonomy. Finally, until a suitable agreement is made to open up funding to MNEC schools through the central government, WCRP calls on

[124] Corresponding data was not obtained for government-led schools.
[125] WCRP Interview No. 1, Phae Kapoe village, Kyainnseikyi Township, 03/11/14.
[126] WCRP Interviews Nos. 9, 16, 17, 132,
[127] WCRP Interview No. 132, Moulmein, 29/02/15.
[128] *Ibid.*

international aid agencies to reconsider moves towards channelling education funds through the central state, instead maintaining support to the MNS system.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, WCRP issues the following recommendations:

To consolidate education reform in the light of this report's findings:

1. For the Burmese/Myanmar government and all ethnic armed groups to allow data collection and information sharing on education matters to be carried out without restriction.
2. For the Burmese/Myanmar government to increase education spending, targeting measures outlined in the recommendations below.
3. For the NMSP/MNEC to develop an education reform policy fitting the needs identified in this report. This should be done in collaboration with other parties working towards education reform (e.g. NNER), to facilitate shared information, resources and capacities.
4. For the Burmese/Myanmar government and ethnic armed groups to include discussions on education reform in the peace process, incorporating findings from this report.

To minimise the effects of poverty on education prospects:

1. For the Burmese/Myanmar government and international aid agencies to collaborate on poverty reduction initiatives targeted towards rural Mon villages and towards specific risk groups (i.e. large families, families where parents cannot work, families experiencing disruption).
2. For the Burmese/Myanmar government and MNEC to implement a system to collaboratively track school attendance rates among school-age children in rural Mon communities, to allow comparisons with national trends and for the design of targeted interventions.
3. For all parties to work to reduce costs attached to education attendance:
    - For the Burmese/Myanmar government and MNEC to ensure that pre-existing policies of free and compulsory Primary Education are fully implemented in all schools within their authority.
    - For the Burmese/Myanmar government to establish new legislation guaranteeing free and compulsory education to the end of Middle School.

- For the Burmese/Myanmar government, MNEC and international aid agencies to provide scholarship opportunities to assist with costs for Secondary education.

4. For the Burmese/Myanmar government, international aid agencies and MNEC to provide possibilities for children to undertake further education and training while in employment e.g. through vocational training, non-formal education, and distance education programmes.
5. For the Burmese/Myanmar government and MNEC to facilitate easy transfer between schools, within and between their two systems, to enhance access to education for children from migrant families.
6. For all parties to work to limit the effects of poverty on community attitudes to education:
    - For Mon CBOs and MNEC to undertake capacity building and advocacy efforts, to encourage a sense within Mon communities of the value of education.
    - For the Burmese/Myanmar government and international aid agencies to work together to open up employment opportunities for school and university graduates.

To tackle other causes of education dropout:

1. For all parties to tackle non-financial access constraints:
    - For the Burmese/Myanmar government and MNEC to initiate a collaborative mapping and strategic planning initiative, to map all schools in Mon regions and in doing so expand access to education by determining if and where new schools should be built.
    - For the Burmese/Myanmar government and NMSP to strengthen security and infrastructure on all commonly used routes to school.
2. For the Burmese/Myanmar government and MNEC to undertake a review of student experiences of education within their respective school systems.

To tackle resource deficiencies in Mon region schools:

1. For the Burmese/Myanmar government and MNEC to undertake resource-focussed needs assessments in all schools within their respective authorities, in order to assess the precise extent of resource difficulties. This may be done with the support of international aid agencies and CBOs such as WCRP.
2. For the Burmese/Myanmar government and MNEC to take action to resolve human resource problems within their respective school systems:
    - For both parties to increase teacher salaries in order to improve teacher recruitment and retention.
    - For both parties to enhance teacher training opportunities.
3. For all parties to collaborate to diminish funding instability for MNEC schools:

- For MNEC to conduct a comprehensive review and analysis of current budget expenditures and deficits, in order to establish a strategic organizational development plan that outlines funding requirements and specific organizational development needs.
- For the Burmese/Myanmar government to renegotiate the pre-conditions for government support to Mon National Schools, allowing these schools to access government resources without losing their autonomy.
- For international donors to reconsider moves towards channelling education funds through Burma/Myanmar's central state, instead maintaining distinct funding for non-state education projects until stable funding for these schools can be established via Burma/Myanmar's central government.

VI. Appendix 1: Map

Key
MNS = Mon National school **N.D = No data**

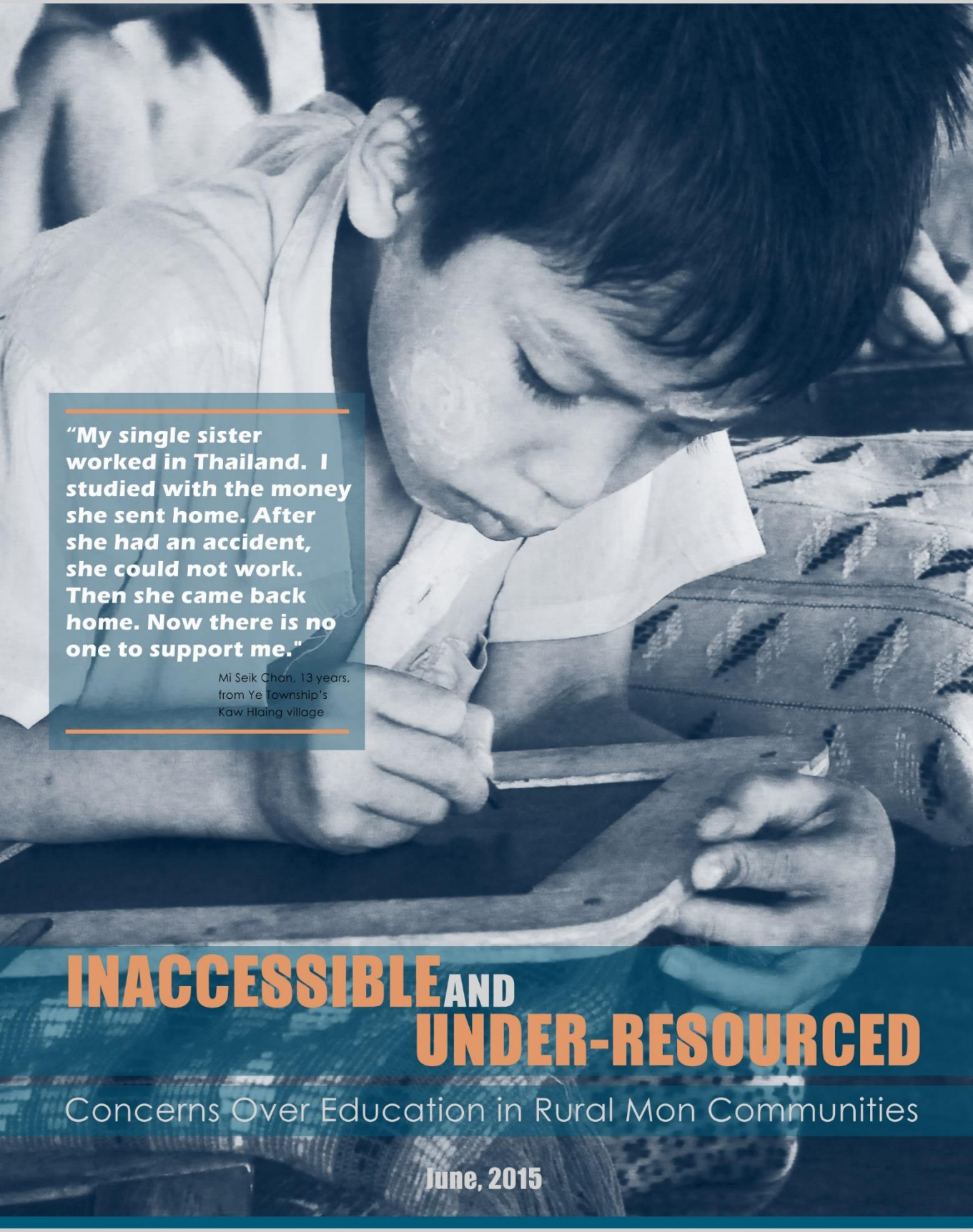
	Village Name	Village Tract	Township	State	No. interviews	Population	Type of school	Level of school	Highest Standard	Collaboration with govt?	Student/ teacher ratio	Reported resource constraints
1	Phae Kapoe	Seik Ka Lay	Kyar Inn Seik Kyi	Karen	2	400	MNS	Primary	S4	Offered but declined.	35	• No school building • Not enough teachers.
2	Leik Pyaw	Seik Ka Lay	Kyar Inn Seik Kyi	Karen	1	120	MNS	Primary	S4	Offered but declined.	20.5	• School building too small • Not enough teachers • Teachers study part-time.
3	Koh Ann Htaw	Seik Ka Lay	Kyar Inn Seik Kyi	Karen	11	360	MNS	Primary	S4	Offered but declined.	30.3	• School building too small and falling down • Poor water supply • Insufficient teaching materials • Not enough teachers.
4	Kyat Thu Yway Taung	Seik Ka Lay	Kyar Inn Seik Kyi	Karen	2	300	Mixed School	Post-Primary	S5	School built in 2007 with govt support.	9.7	• Facilities under-developed e.g. toilets

	Village Name	Village Tract	Township	State	No. interviews	Population	Type of school	Level of school	Highest Standard	Collaboration with govt?	Student/ teacher ratio	Reported resource constraints
5	Wae Thar Lee	Seik Ka Lay	Kyar Inn Seik Kyi	Karen	8	2,000 in East village, 240 in West	Mixed school in East village, MNS in West	Post-Primary in East village, Primary in West	S7 in East village, S4 in West.	East village former MNS accepted support; West village MNS offered but declined.	31.9 in East village, N.D for West.	West village MNS: • School building old and too small • Insufficient teaching materials.
6	Mi Htaw Hlar Gyi (Big) and Lay (Small)	Khaw Zar	Ye	Mon	17	326 in Mi Htaw Hlar lay 418 in Mi Htaw Hlar Gyi	MNS schools in each section	Both Primary	S4	N.D	27.5 for Small section MNS, 25.7 for Big section MNS	Mi Htaw Hlar lay school: • Lack of facilities e.g. chairs. Mi Htaw Hlar Gyi school: • School building too small • No private teaching rooms • Not enough teachers.
7	Kyon Laung (Old) village	Kout Mi Kyaung	Ye	Mon	5	N.D	Govt.	Middle School	S8	N/A	21.6	• School building too small • Not enough teachers • Teachers low qualification • High teacher turnover.
8	Kwin Shay	Kout Mi Kyaung	Ye	Mon	5	580	Govt.	Primary	S4	N/A	12.3	----

	Village Name	Village Tract	Township	State	No. interviews	Population	Type of school	Level of school	Highest Standard	Collaboration with govt?	Student/ teacher ratio	Reported resource constraints
9	Kaw Hlaing	Khaw Zar	Ye	Mon	16	N.D	Mixed School	Post-Primary	S6	N.D	N.D	• School building has no doors or windows • Not enough chairs • Teachers low qualification.
10	Suvarnabhumi	N/A	Ye	Mon	1	N.D	MNS	Primary	S4	N.D	N.D	----
11	Kaw Pe Taw	N/A	Mudon	Mon	1	N.D	Mixed School	Post-Primary	S6	2014 New Mon Course in Govt. school	N.D	----
12	Kyauk Kadin	Yarbyu	Yebyu	Tenas serim	1	400	Mixed School	Primary	S4	N.D	N.D	• Teachers often away in trainings
13	Maw Gyi	Min Tar	Yebyu	Tenas serim	11	895	Govt.	Post-Primary	S7	N/A	19.7	----

	Village Name	Village Tract	Township	State	No. interviews	Population	Type of school	Level of school	Highest Standard	Collaboration with govt.?	Student/ teacher ratio	Reported resource constraints
14	Lae Gyi	Min Tar	Yebyu	Tenasserim	4	340	Mixed School	Primary	S4	2014 New Mon Course in Govt. school	16.5	• School building too small • No private teaching rooms • Insufficient teaching materials.
15	Alae Sakhan	Yarbyu	Yebyu	Tenasserim	13	N.D	Mixed School	Post-Primary	S7	2014 New Mon Course in Govt. school	N.D	• No private teaching rooms.
16	Sixty Mile	Yarbyu	Yebyu	Tenasserim	9	287	Mixed School	Primary	S4	N.D	7.6	• Teachers study part-time.
17	Saryar Mon	Yarbyu	Yebyu	Tenasserim	2	N.D	Mixed School	Primary	S4	N.D	N.D	---

	Village Name	Village Tract	Township	State	No. interviews	Population	Type of school	Level of school	Highest Standard	Collaboration with govt?	Student/ teacher ratio	Reported resource constraints
18	Sin Swe	Min Tar	Yebyu	Tenasserim	19	507	Mixed School	Post-Primary	S5	Former MNS, accepted Govt support	N.D	• School building too small • Not enough chairs/desks • Insufficient teaching materials • Not enough teachers.
19	Gu Bao	N/A	Thai-Burma border		1	N.D	MNS	Primary	S4	N.D.	N.D	----
20	Palain Japan	N/A	Thai-Burma border		1	N.D	MNS	Middle School	S8	N.D.	N.D	----
21	Bleh Doon Phite	N/A	Thai-Burma border		1	N.D	MNS	Post-Primary	S5	N.D	N.D	----



"My single sister worked in Thailand. I studied with the money she sent home. After she had an accident, she could not work. Then she came back home. Now there is no one to support me."

Mi Seik Chan, 13 years, from Ye Township's Kaw Hlaing village

INACCESSIBLE AND UNDER-RESOURCED

Concerns Over Education in Rural Mon Communities

June, 2015

A Report by Women and Child Rights Project (WCRP)
Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM)