



Joint Evaluation of Myanmar Non-Formal Middle School Education-Equivalency Pilot Programme

Final Evaluation Report

Undertaken on behalf of UNICEF by EPRD and Synergia



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Glossary of acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AE	Alternative Education
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CBOs	Community-based Organisations
DAE	Department of Alternative Education
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DTVET	Department of Technical and Vocational Education and Training
EFA	Education for All
FGD	Focal Group Discussion
GoM	Government of Myanmar
INGOs	International Non-Governmental Organisations
MLRC	Myanmar Literacy Resource Centre
MoE	Ministry of Education
NEL	The National Education Law
NESP	National Education Sector Plan
NFMSE	Non-Formal Middle School Education
NFPE EP	Non-Formal Primary Education Equivalency Programme
NFMSE-EP	Non-Formal Middle School Education Equivalency Programme
OOSC	Out-of-school children
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
ToC	Theory of Change
TOR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
YUOE	Yangon University of Education

Executive Summary

In 2016, The Non Formal Middle School Equivalency Programme (NFMSE)¹ was launched with the objective of piloting NFMSE as an alternative and flexible strategy for the continuing education of both Non Formal Primary Education (NFPE) achievers and out-of-school children in Middle School education aged 13 and above. UNICEF, in cooperation with the Department for Alternative Education (DAE) and UNESCO initiated a partnership agreement with Myanmar Literacy Resource Centre (MLRC) to provide Non-Formal Middle School Education (NFMSE) to Out-of-school children (OOSC) aged 13 and above. NFMSE was established with the following objectives:

- To develop an alternative and flexible strategy for the continuing education of NFPE achievers and out-of-school children of middle school education aged 13+ years.
- To develop robust non-formal education policy.
- To implement or scale up flexible learning strategies for OOSC to complete 4 years of lower secondary education in 3 years.
- To support the strengthening and expansion of NFMSE in Myanmar.

Evaluation purpose, objectives and intended users:

The NFMSE pilot was initiated by the Ministry of Education (MoE), Department of Alternative Education (DAE) in 1 township (Dala), UNICEF in 3 townships (Myitkyina, Loikaw, Sittwe), UNESCO Bangkok (with support from the Government of Japan and the Korean National Commission for UNESCO) in 2 townships (Hlaingthayar, Kyaikhto), local education donors in 1 township (Hinthada) and Help Without Frontiers in 1 township (Myawaddy-Maesot). The Programme has been provided to 14 centres in the 8 townships with initially 286 children enrolled (170 male, 116 female, Gender Parity Index (GPI) 0.68)² through two main batch intakes. The programme is to be undertaken over 6 semesters, each semester being half a year, for a total of 3 years, and is presently being implemented in the final semester. As of Semester 6 (S6) there are 180 enrolled (male 106, Female 74, GPI 0.70).

In line with the United Nations (UN) Evaluation Norms and Standards (2016)³, the purpose of this evaluation was both summative and formative, with a view to assess the performance of NFMSE in Myanmar. The summative component of the assessment measured the Programme's effectiveness, efficiency, impact, relevance, sustainability and cross-cutting considerations. The formative component made

¹ In 2013, with support from the Government of Japan, the programme was initiated and developed by the Myanmar's Ministry of Education's Department of Education Research Bureau, UNESCO Bangkok and the Myanmar Literacy Resource Center.

² The Gender Parity Index (GPI) is a socioeconomic index usually designed to measure the relative access to education of males and females. This index is released by UNESCO. In its simplest form, it is calculated as the quotient of the number of females by the number of males enrolled in a given stage of education

³ UNICEF, United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) *Norms and Standards for Evaluation* (UNICEF 2016), <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1914>, Accessed on 15 April 2019

recommendations for the possible expansion of the Programme as well as technical recommendations for future engagement to strengthen delivery of the NFMSE in Myanmar.

The evaluation was designed to provide an independent and impartial assessment of NFMSE, and to be forward-looking in providing conclusions and recommendations that should be actionable in terms of promoting the partnerships with the aim of implementing NFMSE Programme across entire country.

The primary beneficiaries of this evaluation are the MoE DAE and ancillary bodies, and the development partners active in supporting education in Myanmar. This evaluation is designed to inform the future programming requirements of the Government of Myanmar, MoE, and UNICEF, and is required now as both parties must review and formulate programmes at the beginning of the academic year in July 2019. Thus the evaluation had been planned to be concluded by June 2019 to help inform these programmes.

The secondary beneficiaries of this report are those active in NFMSE Centres, Townships, Districts and States who support efforts to ensure that children who are out of school receive opportunities for obtaining middle school education equivalence. Therefore, children who are out of school are also secondary beneficiaries of this report.

Evaluation methodology:

The evaluation questions were answered through primary qualitative evaluation, complemented by an analysis of secondary quantitative data and existing documents. A mixed-method approach was used to consolidate the findings from qualitative and quantitative evidence gathered from multiple sources⁴. The evaluation utilized: literature reviews; reviews of the external environment; analysis of the Programme, secondary data obtained from government and partners; cost effectiveness analysis and unit cost analysis; collection and analysis of primary data which consisted of classroom analysis and individual and group key informant interviews and focus discussion groups (FDG) at union, township and NFMSE Centre levels.

The evaluation utilized a focused, non-experimental design. Mixed methods were used drawing on key background documents and the monitoring framework for guidance. A theory-based methodology underpinned the overarching evaluation framework, which entailed examining the assumptions underlying the causal chain from inputs to desired outcomes and impact and the original evidence base on which the interventions were designed.

25 evaluation questions were responded in the main findings under the thematic areas of Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact, Relevance, and Sustainability.

⁴ Bamberger, M. InterAction, *Introduction to mixed methods in impact evaluation (No. 3.)*. (2012), Retrieved from <http://www.interaction.org/sites/default/files/Mixed%20Methods%20in%20Impact%20Evaluation%20%28English%29.pdf> website:

Main Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations:

Main Findings and Conclusions

On relevance: NFMSE was found to be relevant to the education goals, priorities and policies of the MoE and the needs of out-of school children in Myanmar.

NFMSE meets the objectives of the Transformational Shift for Alternative Education specified in the National Education Sector Plan (NESP) which concerns the *learners being able to access and graduate from quality-assured, certified and nationally credentialed alternative education programmes to achieve their learning and career aspirations*⁵. NFMSE achieves this by demonstrating a workable model for middle school equivalency education in the selected townships.

As of 2015 there were estimated to be 456,947 children aged between 10 and 13 being out of school in Myanmar many of whom are engaged in work to survive⁶. NFMSE can provide a flexible and practical learning programme for most older (13+) vulnerable children who have dropped out of the formal education system. The flexible operating hours, emphasis on life skills and vocation subjects and support given to vulnerable children ensure that NFMSE fulfils a purpose not met by the formal system. This provides an opportunity for children to re-enter the formal or vocational education systems or gain practical skills to help them achieve professional success.

The Programme is aligned with NFPE, formal and the vocational education. Although NFMSE is not intended to be exclusively for NFPE graduates, students from NFPE can transition easily into NFMSE as both programmes are designed to provide vulnerable children with an educational equivalent to the formal system. **The majority of NFMSE activities and their outputs were consistent with the intended impacts and effects.** The curriculum duration and daily length of the classes were considered relevant to vulnerable children, while the curriculum itself was found applicable and relevant to the context of the children. The formal education provides equivalence to formal middle school education. The Quality of life Improvement and community development subjects were seen to help stabilize children and improve their behavior and communication skills. The Basic Vocational subjects provided skills which would enable children to earn income if they leave NFMSE or to gain experience necessary for transition into vocational training.

The theoretical linkages to formal middle school and vocational education are strong. The capacity for students to undertake vocational subjects and core formal middle school subjects should in principle ensure that students are prepared for transition to either upper secondary school or vocational education. However, the MoE is yet to issue a policy statement concerning the qualifications obtained at the conclusion of NFMSE and until such is issued students may encounter barriers to transition. NFMSE must cater to students who cannot attend formal education. Ensuring proper selection criteria will be critical to promoting NFMSE as a solution to out-of-school children in Myanmar.

⁵ NESP 10.2: AE Transformational Shifts

⁶ Out of School Children (OOSC), *Myanmar Report on Out of School Children Initiative*, (The Republic of Myanmar, Ministry of Education, Department of Education Research Planning and Training, 2018) referencing DERPT 2015 data.

The curriculum, materials, timetable and committee and Programme intakes were founded on the principle of equality and inclusiveness. The teachers were trained to treat both girls and boys equally and to encourage active participation of both genders.

On effectiveness: NFMSE was found to be effective in ensuring vulnerable children receive an opportunity to complete the middle school equivalency programme. NFMSE achieved its objectives but questions remain as to its capacity to meet the need of a wide range of vulnerable children and concerning the longer-term outcome for vulnerable children having participated in the programme. Retention, completion and transition rates were high⁷. **84 percent of the graduation target has been achieved** which was acceptable given the vulnerable circumstances of the students.

NFMSE had increased access to education for vulnerable children in the selected townships. The predominant type of vulnerable children targeted by the Programme were those who were older and from poor households where work was a necessity, as well as children of ethnic backgrounds. Challenges are likely to emerge if the Programme expands to include other types of vulnerable children such as those who cannot speak, read or write Burmese or children with disabilities. **The Programme has made efforts to include vulnerable children from poorer backgrounds who have missed middle school to attend.** These include both formal and informal provision of stipends, textbooks, transport allowances, food and field trips⁸. Attribution of retention and participation to these efforts is difficult to establish.

Data on out-of-school children is poor in Myanmar and methods for tracking out-of-school children were weak. It is therefore difficult to determine how effective the Programme is in identifying and including all types of vulnerable children. The geographic limitations also inhibited the Programme's capacity to support children from transient or mobile families: due to limited number of Programme Centers and the need to remain in one location for an extended period of time in order to participate in the Programme.

The materials designed and used contributed towards effective delivery if the Programme, as evidenced through classroom observations and student completion and pass rates. Teaching quality was likely slightly below that of formal middle school owing to a number of factors, including high facilitator turnover. It is likely that higher staff remuneration and better employment packages would help improve the teaching quality. The credit transfer system is appropriate and supports vulnerable children who are more likely to drop out and then re-enter the school system. However, it is cumbersome to implement, is locally-based and was not fully tested during the Programme.

The township management committees were effective in mobilizing resources, providing local advocacy, and helping to locate out-of-school children and ensuring cooperation and coordination of local stakeholders. However, expansion of the Programme and reaching more children will be contingent on funding and awareness. The Programme has the potential to reach more children but awareness in the local communities and township level government agencies must be enhanced.

On efficiency: NFMSE was moderately efficient in achieving its outputs and has demonstrated an effective partnership model applicable effective in increasing access to middle school equivalency education for vulnerable children. However, there are some areas where cost gains may be achieved if the programme is scaled and if compromises are made in some areas such as ICT. Partnerships with religious institutions,

⁷ The overall % dropout throughout the cycle S1 to S6 was 31.7% (refer Annex 6).

⁸ Different levels of support were provided in different townships.

NGO and government organizations have demonstrated effective delivery of NFMSE in diverse environments such as monasteries, basic education institutions and across diverse geographic areas. The partnership model also had constraints which included increased management and coordination issues and limited capacity to share resources effectively. DAE has limited experience in managing the Programme and MLRC has resource limitations in the capacity to provide technical and coordination support. These issues need to be addressed to expand the NFMSE.

NFMSE was moderately effective in utilization of resources compared to other approaches, both alternative and formal⁹. Given the limitations of the Pilot in terms of size and geographical spread. Unit costs per child per year (\$433 USD) were higher than but comparable to costs estimated to deliver middle school education in other developing countries (\$377 USD). The smaller class sizes and requirement for multiple facilitators to teach the diverse subjects were contributing factors alongside high partner administrative costs. The cost per graduate was higher, at 478 USD per graduate per year. The total cost per graduate was 1435 USD over the duration of the pilot. However, these unit cost estimates must be taken within the limitations of the analysis and available data¹⁰.

There is scope to reduce unit costs per student. Utilizing Basic Education facilities and teachers to deliver courses would likely help share the costs. Public-private partnerships may also help provide materials for vocational and ICT subjects. Management and monitoring costs of partners could be reduced and streamlined over larger scale deployment of NFMSE. The cost per beneficiary is calculated using enrolment rates, as the focus is on the opportunity to learn. If partners offered more targeted support to students to increase retention, then this would improve the Programme's impact and cost efficiency by increasing student retention.

In terms of cost effectiveness, the cost of not educating these children must be weighed against the impact on Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the longer term and on the impact on the individual children and their families. The cost effectiveness will be dependent on the longer-term impact for the individual students as a result of participating in NFMSE. The evidence suggests that children are already benefiting from the Programme and will benefit in the long run.

On impact. NFMSE resulted in a positive impact on children and their families. Children experienced positive impact academically, socially and in life skills applicable to their circumstances. However the longer term impacts are uncertain and may be dependent on further government support for these children.

The evaluation was undertaken just prior to the end of the final semester and therefore final outcomes could not be measured, such as transition rate to formal and vocational education or into the workforce. A

⁹ Research on unit cost analysis of NFMSE is sparse and costs are highly contextual to the implementation environment and location.

¹⁰ These included: Difficulties in confirming costs because 4 different partners provided non- standard support to their respective NFMSE centers and reported using different financial formats; 2. Different modes of implementation were undertaken in each township. For example DAE was implementing directly and UNICEF was implementing through a formal partnership agreement with MLRC; 3. ICT tablets were of different types/models and costs and the adequacy in terms of capacity and supply were questioned in some townships. 4. Different rates of exchange of MMK to USD were used by different partners from 2016-2019.

tracer study is required to assess final outcomes. Children and parents expressed a desire for their children to transition into either High School or vocational education however financial barriers remain for many families and there is presently no High School Equivalency Programme¹¹.

To help ensure a positive impact, the government must make a clear policy statement concerning the recognition of the NFMSE award and the options it makes available to children. Policy recognition can be facilitated through the Central Accreditation Committee (refer annex 10) however at present the unit has not formed.

Students have experienced learning significant gains beyond solely academic ones. The basic vocation subjects have helped equip them with practical skills which can be used in their work and home life such as agriculture, sewing and handcrafts. The Quality of Life Improvement and Social and Community Development skills have been beneficial in students' interactions with others and helping them to focus and stabilize their lives towards a productive future. Parents also benefitted from the stability the Programme has brought to their children. Facilitators gained benefits from being trained under the Programme, however low retention rates are likely to dilute the benefits to the Programme if it is continued. The same is true of others who have participated in the Programme such as township monitors and heads of Centers.

Negative changes or impacts cannot be analyzed due to lack of data. There were no negative consequences reported for individuals having participated in the Programme and no apparent or reported negative impacts on any individuals.

On sustainability: Sustainability of NFMSE under its current modalities is highly dependent on the partnerships which enabled the pilot to occur successfully. The government is undergoing a transition and DAE is a relatively new department. The DAE and MLRC both have capacity issues which will need to be addressed in order to sustain and expand the programme.

Partners who participated in NFMSE - UNESCO, UNICEF and HWF - have expressed interest in continuing the Programme. Interested partners also include Save the Children, Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO), World Bank, MLRC and World Education. The DAE has a lead role in the formulation of the AE subsector policy framework and on determining and coordinating funding and budget for NFMSE. The DAE can play a lead role in establishing a recurrent budget for NFMSE and an effective partnership model under which partners can support implementation of NFMSE at the township level. Strengthening partnerships with DBE and TVET and utilizing their expertise and services will also increase the likelihood of sustainability and help reduce costs per student.

There are challenges to sustainability of the Programme. At present the NFMSE is highly dependent on development partner support. The MoE has also expressed concerns that it does not want NFMSE to enroll students who would otherwise have participated in formal middle school education. Closely related to this is increasing the capacity of DAE and others to understand the different target population groups and ensuring NFMSE needs their needs. At present monitoring systems concerning individual children are weak and data on out-of-school children is poor and needs to be strengthened.

Ensuring consistent funding will also be important when considering sustainability. The ability of NFMSE to attract funding will be reliant on promotion of the Programme and its benefits. Development partners

¹¹ MLRC provided survey results indicating 43% (76) children want to attend High School and 33% (58) want to attend TVET institutions but the results are not yet evidenced.

should promote the Programme at forums and events throughout Asia and in Myanmar using the clear messages delivered in this evaluation.

Sustainability of the impacts of the NFMSE on individual students is likely. The evidence suggests students have experienced significant educational and personal gains which will benefit them in their future lives, further study and careers.

Lessons learned:

1. NGOs operating at a local level can play a vital role in identifying target beneficiaries, selecting centers, recruiting, facilitating the training of teachers and supervisors, assisting in the management of centers, monitoring and evaluation, and financial management. NGOs therefore require a strong commitment combined with a significant amount of experience and sound financial and project management. NGOs can also play a role after completion of the training through continued support for the vulnerable children having participated in the program to either continue further study, facilitate integration into the workforce and offer ongoing livelihood support. The role of NGOs is critical in the successful implementation of NFE programs, for quantity and quality and therefore NGO selection should be carefully considered, and NGOs managed and communicated with throughout the programme. Selecting NGOs with a strong track record, local presence, commitment, and if possible, capacity to offer further support after the program will likely result in the greatest probability of long term success for children participating in the programme.
2. There is a need for innovation to move away from replicating the same model to actually scaling the impact of programmes such as NFMSE. With multiple children facing multiple barriers, no single intervention can be expected to be a blanket solution and therefore NFMSE programmes need to have flexible approaches to supporting children and ensuring they complete the programme and afterwards transition to successful outcomes. Non-formal education programmes for school-aged children provide education for those who face specific barriers in accessing the formal, general provision. NFE programmes, therefore, cannot themselves expect to meet these multiple needs by being generalists. Flexible approaches dependent on the local context such as targeted support, flexible operating hours, and variations in vocational training, are likely needed to ensure NFE can meet the need of a broader range of children.
3. Programmes such as NFMSE which include vocational and life skills subjects can demonstrate many tangible and intangible benefits to vulnerable children including assisting them with their home and work life and preparing them for the workforce or transition to vocational education. However vocational training requires materials which are expensive and add to the costs of operating such subjects. A balance must be met between the provision of materials to support subject delivery, and the cost of providing these benefits. There is scope to reduce costs of Costs can potentially be reduced with a broader range of partnerships such as with industries in sectors relating to some subjects. At the same time it is essential to ensure that NFMSE has an acceptable commonality with the formal middle school education curriculum, especially for academic and communication subjects (e.g. Maths, Myanmar language, English language, the Sciences, Social Studies). This is to create better opportunities through official recognition so that graduates are acceptable and can pursue their high school education in formal schooling.

Main recommendations

- 1) A list of recommendations is detailed in the recommendations framework at the end of this report (in order of priority) with secondary recommendation presented in annex 18. Each recommendation is assigned a responsibility, priority and timeframe. A narrative summary is presented below. **Credit transfer and accreditation alignment with formal middle school:** The MoE, led by DAE, MLRC, DBE and DTVET, should issue a policy statement authorizing NFMSE accreditation as suitable for transition into vocational training and upper secondary education during 2020. The Central Accreditation Committee should form and assist in policy drafting and approval. The policy should be encapsulated in the AE sub-sector policy framework and in the revised education law.
- 2) **NFMSE Formal curriculum alignment with that of formal middle school.** The DAE, with support of MLRC and DBE, should revise the formal curriculum component of NFMSE during 2020 to ensure alignment with revisions to the Basic Education Curriculum being undertaken by DERPT. Consideration should be given to a revision of the curriculum with the possible consolidation of some subjects, such as Morality and Civics or Applied and Specialized Mathematics, to teaching Mathematics and English each semester (in all semesters).
- 3) **Greater Incentives to ensure facilitator retention should be provided.** High facilitator turnover increases the costs of delivering NFMSE and lowers the quality of service provision. The DAE and DBE should review facilitator remuneration during 2019 to ensure proper compensation leads to increased facilitator retention.
- 4) **Enhance support for children from vulnerable backgrounds to Systematic support to enable them to study:** The DAE, with assistance from development partners, should review financial support incentives to poorer households during 2020 to encourage and aid children to participate in NFMSE. For example, the Mother Child Cash Transfer Programme for children up to two years old could be extended to include vulnerable families in which the child is enrolled in middle school of NFMSE.
- 5) **Strengthening DAE capacity to develop and manage partnerships.** Strong public and private partnerships have been critical to the success of NFMSE. The DAE is developing a policy, strategy and guidelines during 2019 to help encourage and managing Partnerships in AE. The policy and guidelines should include mechanisms for developing local public private partnerships and to encourage local contributions to NFMSE. Such contributions can support the delivery of vocational subjects and subjects such as ICT. For vocational subjects, partnerships between NFMSE with TVET colleges through DTVET could ensure resource persons for vocational subjects and help share responsibility for capacity development and for course load. Partnering with DBE at the township and Centre level would enable DBE teachers to teach NFMSE in some regions. It is also essential that lessons learned from the NFMSE in operating partnerships at the township level and mobilizing resources for NFMSE are incorporated into the proposed Partnership Coordination Mechanism. The partnership framework should also specify standards for partner monitoring and financial reporting.
- 6) **Improve tracking of OOSC nationally and target demand for out-of-school children:** Identifying where vulnerable children are located and understanding their movements between townships will help target NFMSE interventions. The DAE should work with the EMIS Implementation Unit (EIU) to help improve the tracking of vulnerable children in and out of the non-formal and formal sector. This will also help assess the demand for NFMSE in each township in order to scale resources accordingly. Greater understanding of target populations can also facilitate towards children from mobile families to participate, possibly through innovative methods such as mobile schools.

- 7) **Better understand the longer-term outcomes of NFMSE on individuals:** This will help inform future iterations of the programmes and other forms of support including post-programme support to children who have participated. The DAE, with assistance of the EIU, should conduct a tracer study of students 6 months, 12 months and 3 years following completion of NFMSE. The tracer study should inform future programme recommendations/changes.
- 8) **Investigate unit cost reduction strategies:** DAE, with assistance of implementation partners, should review options for reducing the unit costs of delivering NFMSE during 2019/20. Reducing unit costs will enable NFMSE to reach more children. Larger class sizes would help reduce per student costs but would likely degrade the learning experience and jeopardize the support available to vulnerable children. Other recommendations are also likely to lead to cost reductions such as measures to increase facilitator retention.
- 9) **Expand the capacity for NFMSE to reach different types of vulnerable children:** During 2020/20, the DAE should lead a review of the capacity for the programme to accommodate a wider range of vulnerable children such as those having disabilities. In the broader scheme, the MoE should develop a means for properly identifying and tracking children with disabilities to help identify children with disabilities who may be able to benefit from programmes such as NFMSE. NFMSE also needs to work in conjunction with reforms to child protection to help address issues affecting truancy. At present, families and children do not automatically qualify for counselling however, in poorer families, drug use and violence may be more prevalent.

1. Introduction and Context

1.1. Introduction

This Final Report presents an evaluation of the NFMSE conducted between February 2019 and June 2019. It provides a summative and formative assessment of the Programme and concludes with recommendations for the future development of the Programme.

1.2. Myanmar Country Context

The Union of Myanmar is geographically situated in Southeast Asia, bounded on the north and northeast by the People's Republic of China, on the east and southeast by the Lao's People Democratic Republic and the Kingdom of Thailand, on the south by the Andaman sea and the bay of Bengal and on the west by the People's Republic of Bangladesh and the Republic of India. Myanmar with a land area of 676,553 square kilometers is the largest country in mainland Southeast Asia. The Union of Myanmar is administratively divided into seven states and seven divisions. According to census (2014 March), the total population is estimated at 51.41 million (51,486,253); of which 21.8 million or 49.72 percent is male and 26.5 million or 50.28 percent female. 29.2 percent of the population (15 million) live in urban areas and 71.8 percent of the population live in rural areas. The annual population growth rate is 2 percent¹².

There are as many as 135 ethnic groups. It is estimated that 65.4 percent of the population is engaged in the agricultural sector, 14.0 percent in the industrial sector and 20.6 percent in the services sector. Since ancient times, people enjoy freedom of worship. Buddhism is practised by 45.2 million people (87.9 percent of the population), Christianity by 3.0 million (6.2 percent), Islam by 1.1 million (4.3 percent), Hinduism by 0.3 million (0.5 percent), Animism by 0.4 million (0.8 percent), other religions by 0.1 million (0.2 percent)¹³.

Poor education and poverty are closely associated, and education can be an effective means of raising people out of poverty¹⁴. A recent poverty estimate based on 2015 living conditions released by the Ministry of Planning and Finance and the World Bank finds that poverty is estimated at 32 percent in 2015¹⁵. Poverty in Myanmar's rural areas is substantially higher than that in its urban areas: 38.8 percent of the rural population are estimated to be poor compared to 14.5 percent of those in its towns and cities. Further, poverty remains geographically spread in Myanmar: in the coastal and mountainous areas, 4 in 10 of the population are poor and 1 in 6 will struggle to meet their basic food needs, while 65 percent of the poor live in the Dry Zone and Delta¹⁶.

¹² MoIP, *The Republic of the Union of Myanmar, The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census, The Union Report*, Department of Population, (Ministry of Immigration and Population (MoIP), 2015)

¹³ MoIP, *The Republic of the Union of Myanmar*

¹⁴ World Bank, *Achieving Learning for All*, (World Bank Group, 2013)

¹⁵ World Bank. *An Analysis of Poverty in Myanmar, December 2017, Part 2, Poverty Profile*, (Myanmar Ministry of Planning and Finance, World Bank Group, 2017)

¹⁶ The report associates poorer households as those being characterized as having more family members and more young and elderly dependents per working age adult and that children of poor households have

Conflict affects several states in Myanmar, including Kachin, Northern Shan and Rakhine, and the government has accelerated efforts in the peace process under the leadership of State Counsellor, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. On August 31, 2016, government representatives, military officials, representatives of armed ethnic groups and other stakeholders gathered in Nay Pyi Taw for the Panglong 21st Century Peace Conference, yet as of early 2018, Nay Pyi Taw peace efforts have stalled to a degree^{17,18}.

1.3. Myanmar Education System

1.3.1. Myanmar Education

Schooling is compulsory in Myanmar from age 5 at the start of elementary (primary) level to age 9 at the completion of elementary level. There are 3,830 high schools, 14,280 middle schools and 27,871 primary schools, or a total of 45,981 basic education schools. Just over 41,000 of these are in rural areas¹⁹. Nearly all are government-operated, although there has been a recent increase in private schools. Monastic schools operate under the supervision of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and some ethnic schools run by ethnic communities also provide the national basic education curriculum. In principle, primary school is free and lasts five years, from age 5 to 9. The school year is broken down into two semesters and lasts roughly 36 weeks. Education pathways and the school system are summarized in Annex 9.

For those continuing to higher education, there are 48 universities and degree colleges under MOE, 24 teaching colleges and 60 technology and computer universities; there are 26 universities under other ministries. There are also 33 technical schools²⁰, 25 nursing schools, 22 midwifery schools and 4 sports academies²¹.

1.3.2. Myanmar Out-of-school children

Among lower secondary school age children (10-13 years) nationally, the out-of-school children rate is 11.7 percent, with GPI of 0.95, indicating more boys out of school than girls. As indicated in the table below, 456,947 children aged between 10 and 13 were estimated to be out of school in Myanmar in 2015. The number of out-of-school children in this age group also varies significantly by state and region²². However,

limited access to official documents that enable access to public services and formal credit sources such as formal education.

¹⁷ OOSCI, *Myanmar Report on Out of School Children Initiative*, (The Republic of Myanmar, Ministry of Education, Department of Education Research Planning and Training, 2018)

¹⁸ OOSCI pp5, <http://www.mmpeacemonitor.org/research/monitoring-archive>

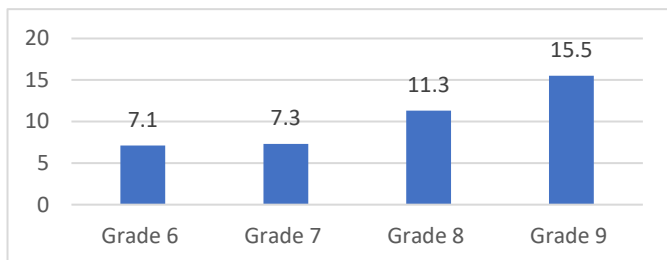
¹⁹ OOSCI pp6, Source: DBE data (20 March 2017)

²⁰ Myanmar Department of TVET (DTVET), March 2017

²¹ Myanmar Ministry of Health and Sports (MOHS), 2017

²² OOSC, *Myanmar Report on Out of School Children Initiative*, (The Republic of Myanmar, Ministry of Education, Department of Education Research Planning and Training, 2018)

the percentage of children who had never attended school increased significantly after 13 years of age with over 7 percent of children aged 17 having never attended school. Likewise, dropout rates for children aged 13 years and older were very high with over 16 percent of children aged 16 having dropped out of school.



Source: DERPT (2014-2015) (OOSC 2018)

Figure 1. (left) Percent of Children dropping out of School between Grade 6 to Grade 9 by Grade (2014-2015)

The most common reason for children to be out of school is participation in the workforce. In a 2015 Labor Force Survey (LFS)²³, 33.3 percent of respondents mentioned the reason for not attending school as “participating in the workforce”; in the 2010 ILCHAS, this was 27.1 percent²⁴.

Table 1. Number and Percentage of Lower-Secondary School Age (Ages 10-13) Children out of School, by Age and Sex (2015)

Sex	Number			Percentage			
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	GPI
Age							
10	40,856	46,218	87,074	7.7	8.7	8.2	1.13
11	26,380	30,090	56,469	6.5	7.3	6.9	1.12
12	74,475	69,000	143,475	13.8	12.1	12.9	0.88
13	90,177	79,752	169,929	19.7	17.3	18.5	0.88
Total	231,888	225,060	456,947	11.97	11.34	11.65	0.95

Source: Labor Force Survey (LFS), 2015

According to the 2014 National Population and Housing Census, nearly one-quarter of children aged 10 to 17 in Myanmar participate in the workforce, and in a 2014 child labor index that evaluated child labor risk, Myanmar fell in the top 10 of 197 countries. This normalization of child labor continues to damage

LFS, *Labor Force Survey*, (Myanmar Ministry of Labor, Immigration and Population (MOLIP), 2015)

²³ Ministry of Labor, Immigration and Population (MOLIP), *Labor Force Survey*,

²⁴ Reasons for children not having attended school varied by age group but generally included: Support family business (21.0 per cent); Disability (17.2 per cent); Schooling is too expensive (12.2 per cent); and Child is not interested (10.5 per cent)²⁴. The predominant reason for older children is because they are working. Interestingly, respondents mentioned this more often than they mentioned poverty. However, poverty is the main driver of child labor.

Myanmar's reputation and competitiveness²⁵. The recent out-of-school children study also determined that children who work are much more likely to be out of school than children who do not work²⁶. The major cause of child employment is household financial hardship,²⁷ with around one-third of Myanmar's households estimated to be living in poverty.²⁸

The GoM, has increased education expenditure since academic year 2011-2012 with the objective of providing free and compulsory Primary Education, and lower secondary education²⁹. Despite this, as indicated above, the number of out-of-school children remains high.

In response, inclusive education programmes have been conducted since 2004 as part of a national attempt to address out-of-school children. Programmes which have since been introduced include mobile schools, post-primary schools, special programmes for over-aged children, special programmes for border areas, monastic schools, voluntary programmes for orphans, voluntary night schools and NFPE programmes³⁰. These programmes help address the problems of unreached groups such as children from poor families, children in rural, border and remote areas, children with disabilities, working children and socially outcast children.

The National Education Law (NEL) (2014) recognises the role of AE in Myanmar's education legislation for the first time. The law defines NFE as "*education outside the formal school system, based on a curriculum for upgrading learners' education and which organises and instructs learners through flexible methods*". The NEL also recognises equivalency programmes as equivalent to formal education.

The Ministry of Education (MoE) currently implements two core AE programmes: The Non-Formal Primary Education Equivalency Programme (NFPE) and a Summer Basic Literacy and Functional Literacy Programme for youth and adults. Of those, the NFPE provides equivalent education to primary school and is targeted towards vulnerable children. NFMSE is designed to provide equivalent education to middle school level.

In addition to these government programmes, there are also a number of Alternative Education (AE) programmes delivered by non-government organizations (NGO)s, international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs). These include programmes in basic and functional literacy, vocational training and life skills. However, there is limited data on the scope and impact of these programmes and their coordination with the MoE is weak. Other government ministries are also involved in AE programmes, predominantly in the provision of non-formal skills training.

²⁵ OOSCI, *Myanmar Report on Out of School Children Initiative* (UNICEF, 2018)

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ ILO KAP study, p. 35.

²⁸ According to World Bank estimates

²⁹ NESP, *National Education Strategic Plan (2016-21)*

³⁰ NESP, *National Education Strategic Plan (2016-21)*, Government of Myanmar, (Ministry of Education (MoE), 2016)

AE is also included under the draft Basic Education Sub-Sector Law. There are three key policy commitments outlined in this law (NESP 2016):

- Strengthen Alternative Education (AE) governance through forming an AE Co-ordination Committee.
- Ensure equivalency of standards between formal and alternative education systems to enable learners to easily transition between both systems.
- Expand access to quality AE pathways for out-of-school youth.

In the National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) 2016-2021, non-formal education (i.e. alternative education) is also clearly stated as one of the transformational shifts. To help address this challenge of out-of-school children, the Government of Myanmar, Ministry of Education (MoE) established the Department of Alternative Education (DAE) in September 2016. The DAE has as its mandate to invest in alternative education to help address the issue of out-of-school children³¹. To assist in this mandate, the DAE is to develop plans to help assure the quality of Alternative Education Programmes for out-of-school children³².

1.3.3. Non-Formal Education Equivalency

NFE is recognized under Sustainable Development Goals (indicator 4.3.1) which require countries to monitor the percent of youth and adults participating in both formal and non-formal education or training in a given time period (e.g. last 12 months). NFE is characterized by a high degree of flexibility and openness to change and innovation in its organization, pedagogy and delivery modes, non-formal education caters to diverse and context-specific learning needs of children, young people and adults worldwide. It thereby involves a wide range of stakeholders, including educational establishments, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and public institutions. Non-formal education has evolved over past decades and regained currency in recent years in light of changing educational and developmental landscapes^{33, 34}.

³¹ NESP, *National Education Strategic Plan (2016-21)*

³² The national Education Law (National Education Law 2014, 31(c)) states that the Ministry of Education shall provide 'an equivalency program by which students can transfer from non-formal education into formal education or technical and vocational education'. In support of this the NESP (2016) states as one of its key objectives 'to improve the quality of life of people with limited educational qualifications, through middle and high school equivalency programmes and vocational training.'

³³ Council of Europe, *Non-Formal Education*. (Council of Europe, Brussels, 2003).

Rogers A., *Non-Formal Education: Flexible Schooling or Participatory Education?*. (Hong Kong: Comparative Education Research Centre, The University of Hong Kong, 2004)

Hoppers W., *Integrating formal and non-formal-basic education: A policy case-study from Uganda*. (Paris: IIEP., 2007)

Hoppers W., *Non-Formal Education and Basic Education Reform: a conceptual review*. (Paris: UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning, 2006)

³⁴ Adapted from (UNESCO 2014)

Equivalency programmes are part of the wider non-formal sub-sector (NFE), which refers to ‘any systematic out-of-school activities designed to meet specific learning needs’ (UNESCO 2006). Examples of NFE programmes include basic and functional literacy programmes, skills development, and life-long learning programmes. These programmes can cater for out-of-school children as well as adult-learners.

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Member States (AMS) have committed to strengthening Education at the 28th ASEAN Summit³⁵ which reaffirms: a) the right of every person to education; b) primary education shall be compulsory and made available free to all; c) secondary education in its different forms shall be available and accessible to all through every appropriate means; d) technical and vocational education shall be made generally available: e) higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

1.3.4. Non Formal Primary Equivalency Programme

Since 2008, under the leadership of Ministry of Education, a primary level equivalency programme called the NFMSE has been conducted in Myanmar. According to DAE, 75,000 students attended the programme from the 2008-2009 to 2017-2018 academic years. Strategy 2, Component 1 of the NESP seeks to ‘expand the NFMSE through ‘increasing the number of government, non-government service providers and private sector organizations formally accredited to deliver this programme by the MOE. The initial focus of the expansion will be in disadvantaged areas with the highest number of children dropping out of primary school and remote areas. Learners who graduate from the NFMSE will be issued with an MOE-recognized completion certificate to continue to middle school education and other AE programmes. Since 2016, Myanmar has been piloting NFMSE.

1.4. Non-Formal Middle School –Equivalency Program (NFMSE)

1.4.1. Overview of NFMSE

In 2013, with support from the Government of Japan, UNESCO Bangkok, in collaboration with the MoE’s Department of Myanmar Education Research (DMER) and the MLRC, developed the Programme. Upon drafting the curriculum, textbooks and facilitators’ guides, in 2016, the NFMSE was launched in six townships, with the objective of piloting NFMSE as an alternative and flexible strategy for the continuing education of both NFPE achievers and out-of-school in Middle School education aged 13 and above³⁶. UNICEF, in cooperation with the DAE and UNESCO initiated a partnership agreement with Myanmar Literacy Resource Centre (MLRC) to provide Non-Formal Middle School Education to out-of-school children aged 13 and above.

The NFMSE was established with the following objectives:

³⁵ The ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening Education for Out-of-School Children and Youth (OOSCY) was developed by the Thailand’s Ministry of Education with support from UNESCO Bangkok, UNICEF and the ASEAN Secretariat. The Declaration was endorsed by all AMS at the 28th ASEAN Summit, held in Vientiane, Lao PDR in September 2016; https://asean.org/storage/2016/09/ASEAN-Declaration-on-OOSCY_ADOPTED.pdf

³⁶ Later expanded in two additional townships

- To develop an alternative and flexible strategy for the continuing education of NFPE achievers and out-of-school children of middle school education aged 13+ years.
- To support the strengthening and expansion of NFMSE in Myanmar.

Vulnerable Children: NFMSE targets vulnerable children - children who are especially susceptible to the effects of environmental, economic, political, and social shocks and hazards. They may be marginalized by their society due to their ethnicity, age, gender, sexual identity, disability status, class or caste, political affiliations or religion.

Source: UNICEF's Programme Policy and Procedure Manual (PPPM)

likely demand for NFMSE in terms of likely numbers vulnerable children suitable for inclusion in the Programme.

The Programme provided the following interventions:

- 9 days of training each semester was afforded to a total of 55 individual facilitators who participated in the programme at various stages³⁷. As of 2019, 40 facilitators and 8 township monitors were participating in the programme.
- 180 students received NFMSE instruction and completed 6 semesters of course content.
- 1 workshop was conducted to share experiences from NFMSE and to help inform the AE Sub-sector Policy Framework.
- Materials were supplied for NFMSE subjects including laptops and vocational subject supplies.
- Local support to students was provided by INGO/NGO in each township in the form of transport, food, stipends, uniforms, textbooks and counselling.

The Programme was originally budgeted for 58,287 USD^{38 39} for UNICEF which included costs for implementation in the three townships assisted by UNICEF. Other partners contributed budget to support in their respective townships. The Programme was expanded after the first few months and NFMSE expenditure for the 3-years programme (2017-2019) totaled 382,542,000 MMK or 252,478 USD⁴⁰ (refer to

³⁷

³⁸ included 12,500,000 MMK from and 55,526 USD from UNICEF which totaled 89,383,870 MMK in 2015

³⁹ Programme document MCO-PRC/2015/07/1704/MLRC/BEGE/001

⁴⁰ Exchange rate estimated as of 14 August 2019.

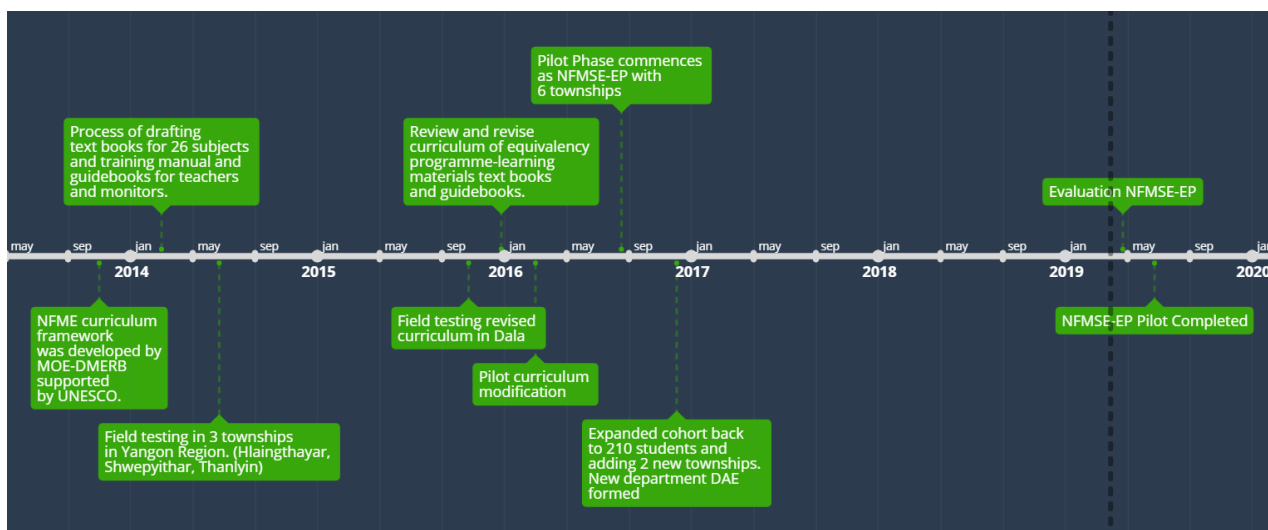
annex 14 for more information). The expenditures by partner are shown in the table below. Of note, UNICEF contributed 50,723 USD to the overall training costs of facilitators.

Table 2. Programme budget by Partner 2017 to 2019

Sr.	Implementing Partners	2017 (11Months) Feb to Dec		2018-19 (18 Months) 2018 Jan to 2019 July		2018, 2019 ICT Support	Other Support t by Community	Total MMK	% Total
		US\$	MMK (000s)	US\$	MMK (000s)				
1	UNICEF (3-tcps)	56,951	76,884	71,645	101,377	19,942	3,396	201,599	52.7%
2	UNESCO(2-tcps)	18,051	24,640	26,582	37,044	2,690	1,750	66,124	17.3%
3	DAE (1- tsp)		7,680		10,880	1,750	1,466	21,776	5.7%
4	Help Without Frontiers (1-tsp)		5,720		11,440	400	15,346	32,906	8.6%
5	Well-wishers (Hinthada) (1-tsp)		5,195		9,731	1,500	8,301	24,728	6.5%
6	CSO (MLRC)		12,500		12,960	3,250	6,700	35,410	9.3%
	Grand Total	75,002	132,619	98,227	183,432	29,532	36,959	382,542	

A reconstructed timeline of the programme is shown in the figure below.

Figure 2. Reconstructed timeline of the NFMSE including curriculum development prior to the Programme implementation (2013-2019)⁴¹



⁴¹ Reconstructed as part of this evaluation

NFMSE was initially designed as a two-year programme, but was later extended to three years to accommodate the subject load and rate of learning of students. The NFMSE pilot concluded in May 2019, after the date of the evaluation.

Formal Education	Non Formal Education Equivalent
Basic Primary (FE) - 5 years (Grade-1 to 5)	NFPE- 2 years (Level-1 + Level-2)
Basic L Secondary - 4 years (Basic middle School Education)	NFMSE (L. secondary) - 4 years comprising 6 semesters

1.4.2. NFMSE Accreditation and Credit Transfer

NFMSE curriculum has been designed based on credit system. The credit system is undertaken at the township level by the accreditation and credit transfer committee. Under NFMSE “Accreditation” should be understood as *‘the procedure by which an authoritative body gives formal recognition that an assessment body, in accordance to the standards and technical regulations, is competent to carry out specific tasks such as testing and certification’*. Credit transfer is understood ‘determination of required credits to be achieved based on accumulated credits on previous learning (or) description of credits acquired by completers or drop-outs of the Programme.’⁴²

This committee is responsible for determining the credit that is accumulated by each learner. The assessment is based on an alternative education quality standard assessment framework which may provide for an expansion of multiple alternative education pathways to reach those yet unreached. This can potentially have the advantage of promoting equity to provide education opportunity to disadvantaged children who have access to middle school education through NFMSE, provided the equality guidelines are adhered to.

However, challenges have been noted, which include: the need to strengthen accreditation & credit transfer for assessment and evaluation and the need for more experience and training. The Township monitor in Khine also notes the challenges of irregular attendance of learners on accreditation and the need to advocate to parents, the community and students on the value of education.

1.4.3. NFMSE Theory of Change and Logframe

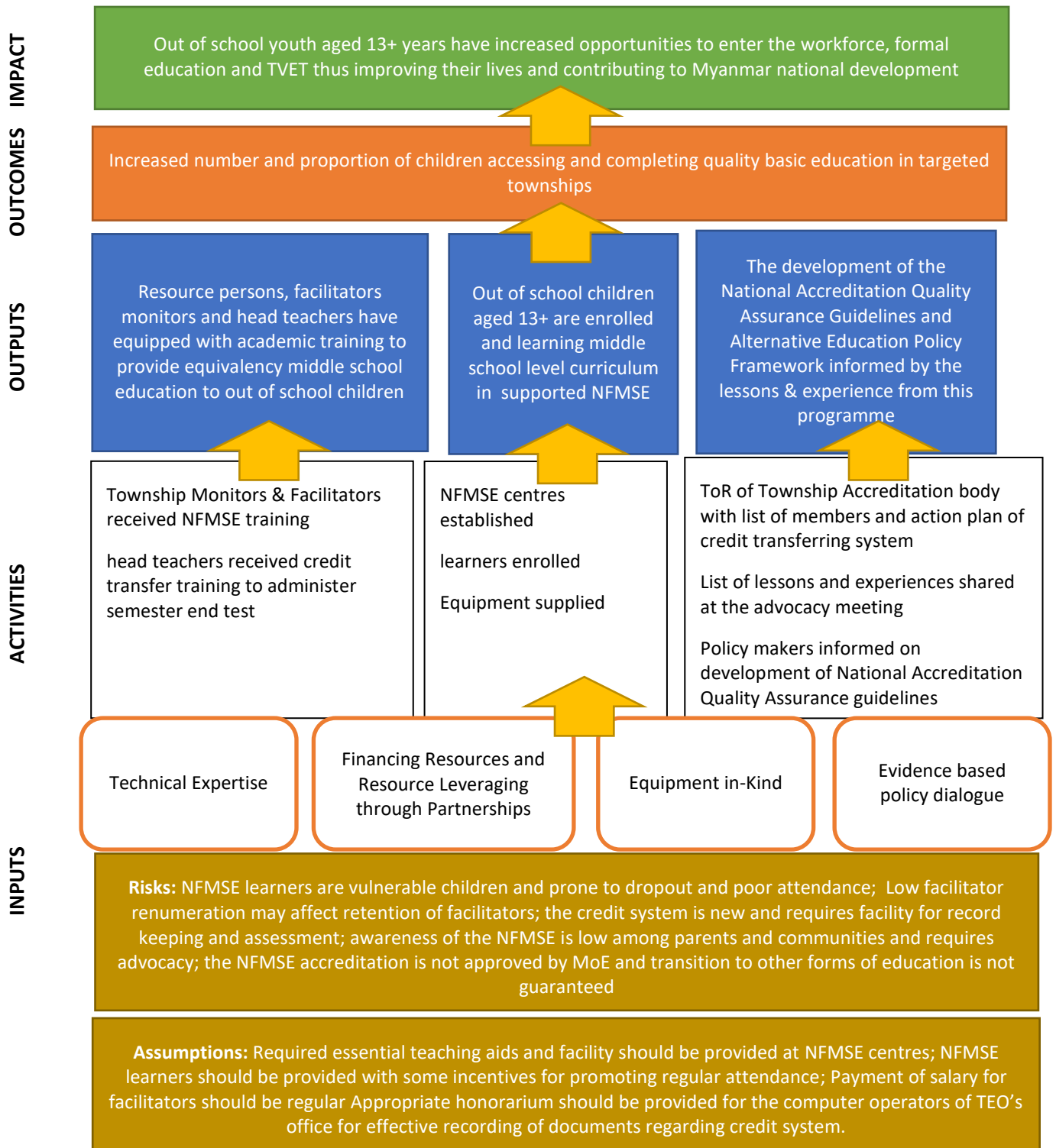
The reconstructed Theory of Change (TOC) (Figure 3) was developed as part of the evaluation and reflects the monitoring framework logical structure and interventions (Annex⁴³). Each outcome and output are referenced in the TOC. Whilst output 1 and 2 are directly targeted towards the delivery of NFMSE, output 3 supports the delivery of all forms of Alternative Education in Myanmar and thus must be evaluated in the broader context of Alternative Education in Myanmar. The specific objectives of each output and the means of verification are articulated in the Programme monitoring framework shown in Annex 4.

The TOC was used to provide a framework to help visualize relationships between the different inputs of NFMSE and contextualize how each contributed towards the NFMSE outputs and outcomes.

⁴² NFMSE Guidebook Chapter 4.

⁴³ Constructed as part of this evaluation.

Figure 3. Theory of Change for NFSME



1.4.4. Organizational Arrangements

The Programme has been designed to support and operate within the organizational structure which has been designed to support NFMSE. The organizational structure, the relevant entities and the roles and responsibilities of each is shown in Annex 10.

The main stakeholders participating NFMSE include:

- MLRC which has provided technical support to the training of supervisors and monitoring of the Programme in all townships.
- DAE which has provided overall support to the AE sub-sector policy framework and support to NFMSE in one township.
- Development partners UNESCO, HWF, 1 local partner which have funded and monitored NFMSE at the township level.
- UNICEF which has funded and monitored NFMSE at the national and township level having given support to training facilitators and to zonal training.

From an organizational perspective the main entities and staffs are:

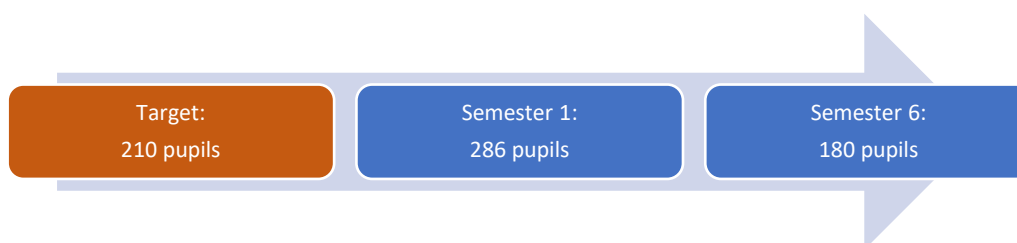
- Central Management Committee (**not yet formed**): providing overall management and monitoring of NFMSE
- NFMSE Technical Team: the Implementation committee responsible for overall implementation of the NFMSE pilot.
- Central Working Committee: monitoring of NFMSE
- NGO (and INGOs): provide funding and logistical support to NFMSE
- Township and Central Management Committee: monitor NFMSE
- Central Accreditation Committee (**not yet formed**): to advise on standards for accreditation and credit transfer nationally.
- Township Accreditation Committee: manages all aspects of accreditation and credit transfer for Centers under its jurisdiction. This committee is responsible for determining the credit that accumulated by each learners.
- Township Monitor: monitor the Programme at township level, liaise with partners, provide support to center heads and facilitator.
- Teacher (facilitator): Deliver the curriculum to students.

The curriculum is summarized in annex 13 and comprises three types of subjects: Academic and Communication Skills; Basic Vocation; Quality of Life Improvement; Social and Community Development.

1.4.5. Programme Graduation and Flow Rates

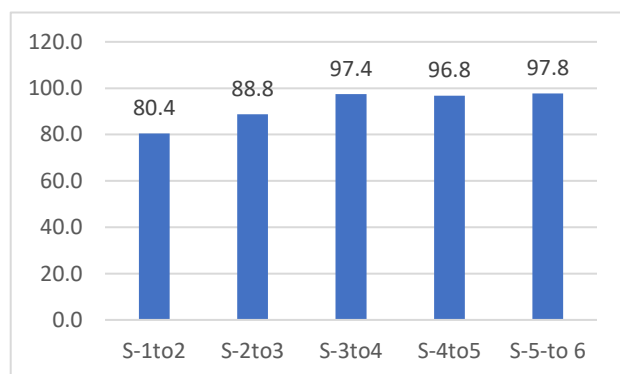
The NFMSE Programme monitoring framework according to the last updated progress report is presented in annex 4⁴⁴. The Programme monitoring framework has indicators to measure the programme outcome and three Programme outputs shown in the TOC above. The latest data submitted by MLRC is presented in annex 6. The Programme had a target of reaching 210 in out-of-school children 8 townships. At the commencement of the Programme, there were 286 children enrolled (170 male, 116 female, Gender Parity Index (GPI) 0.68)⁴⁵ through two main batch intakes. As of Semester 6 (S6), there are 180 enrolled (male 106, Female 74, GPI 0.70) of which 176 (103 male, 73 female, GPI 0.71) attending.

Figure 4. Students targeted, enrolled in semester 1 and enrolled in semester 6 in NFMSE



Completion rates and transition rates for each semester were very high. Completion rates progressively increased between semester 1 (S1) and S4 indicating higher retention rates each year. Transition rates of completers to the following year were also very high being consistently above 96%.

Figure 5. Completion Rate by Semester (Source: MLRC 2019)



The overall percentage of dropout throughout the cycle S1 to S6 was 31.7%. However, the majority of dropouts occurred in the first semester (22.0 percent). This indicates that a 71.6 percent of children who dropped out did so in the first semester after enrolment. The data also indicates that the children who dropped out in the first semester did so before attending school.

⁴⁴ Update end 2017

⁴⁵ The Gender Parity Index (GPI) is a socioeconomic index usually designed to measure the relative access to education of males and females. This index is released by UNESCO. In its simplest form, it is calculated as the quotient of the number of females by the number of males enrolled in a given stage of education.

Figure 6. Percentage Dropout by Semester S1 to S6
(Source: MLRC 2019)

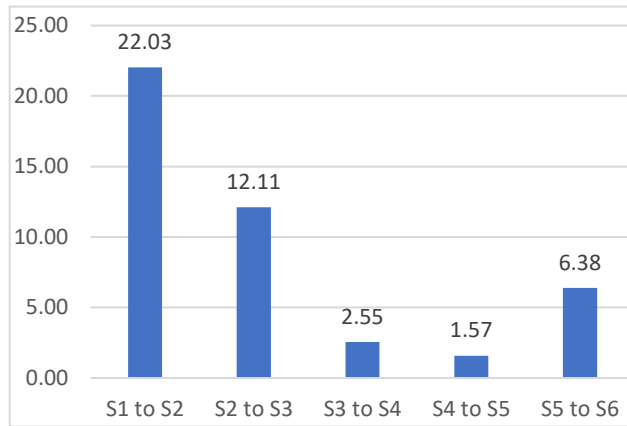
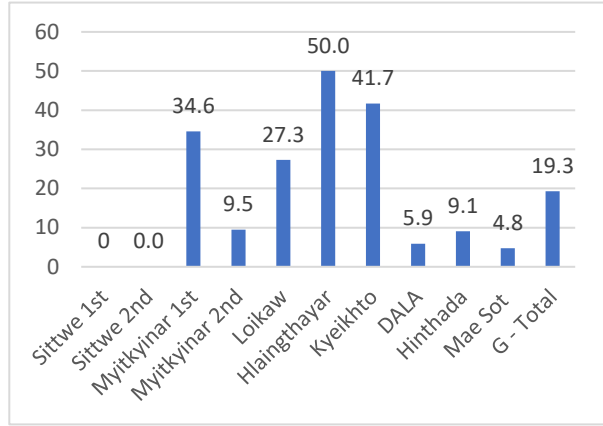


Figure 7. % Dropout by Township and Intake Batch S2 to S6
(Source: MLRC 2019)



2. Evaluation Purpose, Objectives and Scope⁴⁶

2.1. Evaluation Purpose

The evaluation was designed to provide an independent and impartial assessment of NFMSE, and to be forward-looking in providing conclusions and recommendations that should be actionable to promote the partnerships to implement NFMSE Programme throughout Myanmar. Recommendations were designed to demonstrate an understanding of the current delivery mechanisms at the national, state and township levels, including the role of the Department of Alternative Education (DAE) in the implementation of the NFMSE. The evaluation was designed to assess and improve NFMSE rather than to be judgmental towards individuals or organizations, departments or other entities.

The evaluation identified lessons learned, good practice and innovations to inform the development of strategies to scale up Non-Formal Middle School Education (NFMSE) and inform the MoE's mid-term review of the National Education Sector Plan (NESP).

The primary beneficiaries of this evaluation are the Government of Myanmar, Ministry of Education and ancillary bodies, and the development partners active in supporting education in Myanmar. This evaluation is designed to inform the future programming requirements of the Government of Myanmar, Ministry of Education, and UNICEF. The evaluation is required as both parties must formulate programmes by July 2019.

The secondary beneficiaries of this report will be those active in Centers, Townships, Districts and States who are supporting efforts to ensure that children who are out of school receive opportunities for obtaining secondary education equivalence. Children who are out of school are therefore also secondary beneficiaries of this report (refer to theory of Change in Figure 3).

2.2. Evaluation Objectives

The objectives of the evaluation include the following:

1. Reconstruct the Theory of Change (ToC) of the NFMSE and analyse its appropriateness in meeting the needs of out-of-school children, and its relevance to the education system, examining its curriculum and delivery methods.
2. Assess the merits and worth of NFMSE and document the progress made in the implementation of the NFMSE against the targets set, as well as UNICEF and UNESCO's contribution to alternative education. Progress will also be measured against the targets set in the NESP regarding alternative education. The review will assist in determining the effectiveness and efficiency in the provision of middle-school education to out-of-school children;
3. Review the institutional, coordination, management and operational arrangements of the NFMSE and identify capacity gaps in the planning, implementation and monitoring (quality assurance) of NFMSE and recommend measures to address them;
4. Assess the overall quality of the NFMSE, include the provision of in-service training, teaching and learning materials, its likely impact in terms of learning outcomes and the provision of a second chance for out-of-school children, as well as the possibility of expanding NFMSE;

⁴⁶ Aligned with UNICEF Terms of Reference for the Evaluation

5. Identify and document lessons learned, best practices and innovations, and provide recommendations on areas that need attention for the successful scale up in the provision of NFMSE.

2.3. Evaluation Scope

The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with modified Organization for Economic Cooperation's and Development Assistance Committee's (OECD/DAC) criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability (2009; 2010)⁴⁷, as well as equity, gender equality and human rights considerations. The evaluation responded to the questions presented in the evaluation matrix (annex 5). The evaluation questions were developed by UNICEF, DAE and in consultation with partners and presented in the TOR for the evaluation.

The evaluation made use of both qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods to help evaluate the Programme and provide information on the success of its outcomes as well as its efficiency, effectiveness and other relevant factors.

The qualitative study has involved the Programme's participants and stakeholders in the eight townships in which the Programme has been active. The eight townships in which the Programme has been implemented and in which the evaluation will be conducted are listed in the table below.

Table 3. Townships included as part of this evaluation

Region/State	Township	Implementing Agent	Number of Centers
Yangon Region	Dala	Department of Alternative Education (DAE)	2
Yangon Region	Hlaing Thar Yar	UNESCO	2
Mon State	Kyaikhto	UNESCO	2
Rakhine State	Sittwe	UNICEF partnering with MLRC	2
Kayah State	Loikaw	UNICEF partnering with MLRC	2
Kachin State	Myitkyina	UNICEF partnering with MLRC	2
Ayarwaddy Region	Hninthada	Private Donor	2
Tak Province	Mae Sot District	Help without Frontiers	2

The evaluation took place between February and June 2019 with the field work concluded by end April / start May and the first draft of the final report submitted in June. The timeframe evaluated included the six semesters of the NFMSE which operated from 2016 to April 2019.

⁴⁷ OECD, *DAC Guidelines and Reference Series Quality Standards for Development Evaluation*, (Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), 2010)

OECD, *Guidelines for Project and Programme Evaluations* (Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), 2009)

The NFMSE operates under a partnership model as identified above. Therefore, the planning and programming documents of its partners, particularly those involved in the implementation, as well as concerned ministry authorities and other stakeholders, were examined as they provided evidence of the influence of UNICEF's support and of the Programme's effectiveness and longer-term sustainability of the Programme.

Component 3 of the Programme, the extent of which the development of the National Accreditation Quality Assurance Guidelines and AE Subsector Framework was informed by the lessons and experience from this Programme, is a cross cutting component relevant to the entirety of Alternative Education in Myanmar. Therefore, it was evaluated in the context of the broader implementation of Alternative Education in Myanmar.

3. Evaluation Methodology

3.1. Evaluation Methodology

Consistent with the United Nations (UN) Evaluation Norms and Standards (2016)⁴⁸, the purpose of this evaluation was both summative and formative, with a view to assess the performance of NFMSE in Myanmar. The summative component of the assessment measured the Programme's effectiveness, efficiency, impact, relevance, sustainability and cross-cutting considerations. The formative component made recommendations for possible expansion of the Programme as well as technical recommendations for future engagement to strengthen delivery of the Non-Formal Middle School Equivalency Programme in Myanmar.

The evaluation questions were answered through primary qualitative evaluation, complemented by an analysis of secondary quantitative data and existing documents. A mixed methods approach was used to consolidate the findings from qualitative and quantitative evidence gathered from multiple sources⁴⁹. Qualitative data was used to contextualize and help explain quantitative data on student flow rates and pass rates and township characteristics (refer annex 6) which were quantified and disaggregated by gender and constituency. However, with limited sites and interviews and a small cohort of students, care was taken not to draw general conclusions from insufficient evidence.

The evaluation utilized a focused, non-experimental design. The evaluation utilized the following methods:

1. **Literature review** of background documents and other relevant data including Literature review of alternative education, with a focus towards middle school education, particularly in Myanmar;
2. **Review of the external environment** affecting the NFMSE. Namely relevant government education policies and strategies, UNICEF, MLRC and UNESCO reports, reviews and studies in relation to out-of-school children;
3. **Analysis of secondary quantitative data** (enrolment rates, dropout, retention, causes of dropout and attendance, retention rates etc.) throughout the intervention years;
4. **Cost-effectiveness analysis and unit cost analysis** by reviewing annual work plans and budgets and by gaining an understanding of development, recurrent and unit costs associated with the Programme.
5. **Collection and analysis of primary data consisting of:**
 - a) **Classroom observations**
 - b) **Individual and group key informant interviews and Focus Group Discussions Groups (FGD)** at union, township and in NFMSE Centers.

⁴⁸ UNICEF, United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) *Norms and Standards for Evaluation* (UNICEF 2016), <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1914>, Accessed on 15 April 2019

⁴⁹ Bamberger, M. InterAction, *Introduction to mixed methods in impact evaluation (No. 3.)*. (2012), Retrieved from <http://www.interaction.org/sites/default/files/Mixed%20Methods%20in%20Impact%20Evaluation%20%28English%29.pdf> website:

This section details the methods of quality assurance applied during the evaluation, sampling methodology and qualitative and quantitative data analysis methods.

The evaluation employed both a theory based (e.g.: re-constructing the Theory of Change) and a utilization focused approaches. Mixed methods have been used drawing on key background documents and the monitoring framework for guidance. Finally, a theory-based methodology underpinned the overarching evaluation framework, which entailed examining the assumptions underlying the causal chain from inputs to outcomes and impact and the original evidence base on which the interventions were designed.

The evaluation took place between February and June 2019 with the field work concluded by end April / start May and the first draft of the final report submitted in June.

- **February 15 to March 21:** Inception Phase during which the project team developed the inception report, undertook a literature review and developed tools for the evaluation.
- **March 21st to May 7th:** Field work phase during which the project team visited the townships and undertook key informant interviews, focal group discussions and site observations.
- **May 7th to July 10th:** Report writing and review phase during which the team analyzed the data, wrote the report and presented findings to stakeholders for feedback.

3.2. Evaluation Questions

Evaluation questions are clustered under OECD/DAC criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability (2009; 2010)⁵⁰ as follows.

(1.0) Relevance of the NFMSE against the educational goals, priorities and policies of the MoE and the needs of out-of-school children in Myanmar

- (1.01) Are the activities and outputs of the NFMSE consistent with the overall goal of NESP and the attainment of its objectives?
- (1.02) How important is the NFMSE in the fulfilment of national educational priorities and policies?
- (1.03) What are the theoretical linkages between NFPE and NFMSE and between NFMSE and formal middle school as well as vocational training, and how do they integrate?
- (1.04) Are the activities and outputs of the NFMSE consistent with the intended impacts and effects?
- (1.05) Is the NFMSE curriculum contextualized and relevant to the benefitting children, particularly the most vulnerable?

⁵⁰ OECD, *DAC Guidelines and Reference Series Quality Standards for Development Evaluation*, (Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), 2010)

OECD, *Guidelines for Project and Programme Evaluations* (Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), 2009)

- (1.06) Has the NFMSE been adapted to meet the needs of boys and girls?

(2.0) Effectiveness of the NFMSE, measuring its achievements and implementation against its objectives.

- (2.01) To what extent have the objectives of the NFMSE been in proving alternative education been achieved or likely to be achieved?
- (2.02) Has the NFMSE increased access to education for vulnerable children?
- (2.03) How many children are reached as a result of the NFMSE.?
- (2.04) What potential is there to reach more children?
- (2.05) Have the materials designed and used in the NFMSE contributed to effective delivery?
- (2.06) What is the level of teaching quality, especially compared to formal middle school?
- (2.07) How effective has been the implementation of the credit system?
- (2.08) How active are the township management in the NFMSE?
- (2.09) What have been the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the objectives of NFMSE?
- (2.10) How has the monitoring of the NFMSE influenced the achievement of activities?
- (2.11) What have been the main challenges faced during the implementation of the NFMSE?
- (2.12) During implementation, have there been systematic and appropriate efforts to include various groups of children particularly the most vulnerable (e.g.: gender/region/children with disabilities)?
- (2.13) Is NFMSE improving gender equity within the educational system and more widely?

(3.0) Efficiency of the NFMSE outputs, given the human and financial resources available, as well as MoE, UNICEF and UNESCO contributions towards increasing access to alternative education.

- (3.01) How big is the efficiency or utilization ratio of the resources used, both in terms of human and financial resources and compared to other alternative education approaches?
- (3.02) Is the NFMSE a flexible delivery mechanism as intended?
- (3.03) How cost-effective is the NFMSE?

(4.0) Impact (positive and negative changes, intended or unintended) resulting from the NFMSE on children, NFE facilitators, as well as parents.

- (4.01) Has the NFMSE enabled students to successfully make the transition to formal education?
- (4.02) To what extent is NFMSE resulting in learning gains beyond academic achievement (i.e., vocational training, other skills)?

(5.0) Sustainability of NFMSE with regards to the implementation modalities, and in terms of the demand for quality education and the institutional capacity to deliver it?

- (5.01) To what extent are the positive effects or impacts of NFMSE sustainable?

3.3. Literature review

A literature review was conducted to gain a clearer understanding of Alternative Education in Myanmar and a focus on non-formal and middle secondary education systems, including its governance, management and financing structure, and groups of key stakeholders. Where possible, examples were taken from other countries where similar programmes have been supported, such as Lao PDR. Documents reviewed to date are referenced in Annex 1. In total 24 referenceable documents were reviewed and 57 project documents and monitoring reports and budget statements.

3.4. Secondary data

Secondary data analysis was derived from both government data and Programme data. Government data includes data on out-of-school children, data from programmes such as the NFPE Programme, data from the basic education sector and TVET. These were used to contextualize NFMSE as well as to, where possible, provide comparative data on promotion rates, dropout rates and achievement rates.

Programme data is summarized in annex 6 and was used to evaluate correlations between dropout, promotion and achievement rates and factors such as background information on students such as their gender and location. These findings were compared against government data from other sectors and programmes to help derive responses to evaluation questions.

As there is no comparable programme active in Myanmar, comparisons to data relating to the formal system or the NFPE were limited contextualized.

3.5. Cost-effectiveness analysis and unit cost analysis

The Programme budget and expenditure were analyzed along the budget lines concerning training, Non-training cost, Technical support and Administration support. The effectiveness of the expenditures was analyzed against the likely outcomes of the expenditures. Unit cost analysis was undertaken to determine the cost per student and per graduate. Unit costs were undertaken with the following caveats.

1. Difficulties in confirming costs because 4 different partners provided non- standard support to their respective NFMSE centers and reported using different financial formats.
2. Different modes of implementation were undertaken in each township. For example DAE was implementing directly and UNICEF was implementing through a formal partnership agreement with MLRC.
3. ICT tablets were of different types/models and costs and the adequacy in terms of capacity and supply were questioned in some townships.
4. Different rates of exchange of MMK to USD were used by different partners from 2016-2019.

3.6. Primary data sources

3.6.1. Main sources of primary data

Primary data collection was qualitative and included interactions with a range of respondents associated with the Programme in varying capacities at the union, township, and school/community levels to gather responses to address the evaluation questions.

The aim of qualitative evaluation was to understand NFMSE in an in-depth way by generating narrative data which answers questions regarding phenomena, events and practices, to explore the behavior, attitudes, interpretations and reasoning of the different areas of the Programme along with their implications to help provide insight and explanation.

The tools used for primary data collection encompassed:

1. Key Informant Interviews
2. Focal Discussion Groups
3. Classroom Observation

These methods were used to monitor those outcomes of interest of the NFMSE that are not easily quantifiable. This included attitudinal changes, perceived benefits of the NFMSE pilot, parent, student and community preferences and detailed investigations around the challenges entailed in improving quality of and access to NFMSE.

- The tools used for data collection are shown in Annex 16. These include guidelines for focal discussion groups and key informant interviews as well as consent forms.
- The Groups and Individuals interviewed with reference to Interview Tools is shown in annex 15.
- A list of persons and organizations consulted is shown in annex 3.
- The tools are mapped to the evaluation questions in annex 5.

3.6.2. Key Informant Interviews

Key informants were interviewed to help bring in-depth knowledge and understanding of NFMSE to the evaluation. Some of the key informants interviewed included 1 National (Union) level officer and 16 NGO and INGO who have supported NFMSE. Refer annex 3 for a list of key informants interviewed.

3.6.3. Focus Group Discussions

The use of participatory tools during FGDs helped participants to discuss, analyze, and present their views on the NFMSE. FGDs were the main means of obtaining primary data and provided opportunities to triangulate some of the results of the quantitative evaluation. Participants in FGDs included: National (Union) level officers who have been responsible for implementation of NFMSE, Township government officials, Township NFMSE Monitors, NFMSE Facilitators and Heads of NFMSE Centers, Parents whose children participated in NFMSE, Students participating in NFMSE. Groups sizes ranged from 4 to 14 people. Numbers of persons

participating in the evaluation by classification and gender, where recorded, are shown in the table below. Refer annex 3 for a list of key informants participating in FGD.

Table 4. Number of FGD informants participating in the evaluation by classification⁵¹

SN	Stakeholder	Male	Female	Total	GPI
2	National level MoE / MLRC	NA	NA	48	NA
3	Township government officials	NA	NA	35	NA
4	Township NFMSE Monitors	NA	NA	8	NA
5	NFMSE Facilitators and heads of centres	5	30	35	6.00
6	Parents whose children participated in NFMSE	17	22	39	1.29
7	Students participating in NFMSE	55	33	88	0.60
	Total			253	

3.6.4. Classroom observation:

Classroom observation was undertaken to review the quality of instruction, the effectiveness of the curriculum and the quality of classroom learning facilities and pedagogical supply. The classroom observation form was designed to be narrative rather than ordinal. The form was aligned with the Programme Centre monitoring form. The conducted observation took into account aspects such as: subject matter content; organization; rapport; teaching methods; pedagogical materials; presentation; management; sensitivity; assistance to students; personal; and physical aspects of classroom. A total of 10 classroom observations were undertaken.

3.7. Quality Assurance

3.7.1. Quality Assurance Methods

The following evaluation protocol helped ensure the quality of data:

- Well-developed evaluation framework, underpinned by appropriate methods and tools, including structured or semi-structured interview guidelines;
- Write-up of all interview notes and analysis of findings;
- Triangulation of findings against different sources, both qualitative and quantitative;
- Daily debrief during the fieldwork to discuss emerging findings and ensure adaptability throughout the evaluation;
- A comprehensive peer review and quality assurance process including internal and external reviewers during design, implementation, analysis and report production. This included the Management team of

⁵¹ NA = Not available or recorded as the data was not considered in the evaluation.

the contracting agent EPRD reviewing all submissions. UNICEF then undertook its own review using the country office and the regional office and then referred the draft to partners for further review.

- A final evaluation workshop also helped to validate and triangulate the findings. Final evaluation workshop participants are shown in Annex 3.

3.7.2. Triangulation

Triangulation was important to help ensure the quality and adequacy of data reflected the evidence and their contextual interpretation. As such, data was validated through triangulation in a number of ways.

1. Asking similar questions to multiple respondents in each field site:
2. Asking the same questions in multiple field sites:
3. Integrating qualitative and quantitative findings:
4. Evaluation protocol:

For Interviews and FGD, data was, where feasible, triangulated by comparing responses to questions from multiple sources and comparing results from interviews from different sources.

Secondary data was triangulated, where possible, by means such as comparing data collected by the Programme against government data relating to the same figure⁵². Data was also compared against available literature to assess the consistency and validity.

3.8. Sampling Analysis

3.8.1. Sampling Methodology

The evaluation was conducted in all eight townships under which the Programme has been active. Due to time constraints, in some townships one of two centers were visited for classroom observation. Purposive sampling was used in which the township selected the center for the convenience of those participating in interviews and focus discussion groups. However, facilitators, the Centre's head and students from the other center(s) were invited to participate in interviews and focus discussion groups. Where feasible all persons who had participated directly in the Programme at township level were interviewed in each township or participated in focus discussion groups.

3.8.2. Stratification

Stratification was not required as all townships and almost all persons involved in the Programme were interviewed.

⁵² The extent to which empirical data will be able to be compared will depend on access to government data and to the comparability of government data to programme data. It will also depend on the extent to which the programme itself may have considered triangulation of data in the monitoring strategy.

3.9. Qualitative and Quantitative Data Analysis Methods

3.9.1. Quantitative

Due to the small sample sizes⁵³ advanced statistical analysis was not employed as the sample size was not statistically significant. The analysis used numbers and percentages and expressed results in these terms.

Unit cost analysis was undertaken for determining the training costs of facilitators and monitors and the unit costs of educating each child for one year of the three-year programme. The analysis of costs helped to form recommendations for scaling and recommendations for cost reductions.

3.9.2. Qualitative

Interview data was analyzed for positive or negative responses and noted during narration. The frequency of positive or negative responses was noted and has been indicated next to each finding. Judgements for inclusion of responses were made based on frequency and: a) the extent to which qualitative and/or quantitative evidence generated from different sources point to the same conclusion and b) the quality of the individual data and/or source of evidence as determined by reliability/ completeness of response and capacity of the respondent to make an assessment or offer an opinion.

3.10. Evaluation Rubrics

Evaluation rubrics with broad measurement ratings for each question (indicator) are shown in Annex 8. The purpose of the rubric was to help align the evaluation with anticipated objectives on a comparative scale.

3.11. Ethical Considerations and Inclusiveness

The evaluation was considered throughout issues of equity, gender equality and human rights, in line with UNICEF's Evaluation Policy (2018)⁵⁴ and the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards (2016)⁵⁵.

⁵³ Of between 200 and 280 pupils in 8 townships and 14 NFMSE centres

⁵⁴ UNICEF, *Revised evaluation policy of UNICEF* (UNICEF, 2018), https://www.unicef.org/about/execboard/files/UNICEF_Revised_Evaluation_Policy-2018.01.30.pdf, Accessed on 15 April 2019

⁵⁵ UNICEF, United Nations Evaluation Group (*UNEG*) *Norms and Standards for Evaluation* (UNICEF, 2016), <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1914>, Accessed on 15 April 2019

The consultants adhered to the UNICEF's⁵⁶ Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis and in particular concerning data relating to children⁵⁷. Adherence to UNICEF's Procedures for Ethical Standards and Research, Evaluation and Data Collection and Analysis (2015)⁵⁸ were maintained.

There are three main tenants of evaluation ethics that the consultant aims to uphold in the evaluation⁵⁹:

- 1) Ensure informed consent from all respondents.
- 2) Ensure the sensitive treatment of vulnerable respondents, especially children or data pertaining to such persons.
- 3) General data confidentiality.

Efforts were made to ensure all respondents understand exactly how the information they have provided was to be used. An introductory letter was read to all informants containing this information.

A gender lens cut across all stages and components of the evaluation, to assess whether interventions affect some gender more than others as per UNICEF Guidance on the Integration of Human Rights and Gender Equity in Evaluation (2014)⁶⁰. Various dimensions of equity were examined to see if the interventions have differential impacts on distinct categories of beneficiaries such as disability, wealth and location. Training materials, guidelines and policy documents, where feasible, were evaluated to determine the extent to which they promoted gender equality and inclusiveness and to which they contribute towards promoting equality. Focus was on those affected by natural disasters, conflict and urban poverty.

⁵⁶ These are often adopted in UN evaluations. Director, Division of Data, Research and Policy, 2015 'UNICEF procedure for ethical standards in research, evaluation, data collection and analysis' Document Number: CF/PD/DRP/2015-001, Director, Division of Data, Research and Policy (DRP)

⁵⁷ There will be cases where data on children is obtained and analyzed including data of individual children. Caution will be taken to treat the confidentiality and reporting of all such data in accordance with all standards.

⁵⁸ UNICEF, *UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards and Research, Evaluation and Data Collection and Analysis* (UNICEF, 2015), https://www.unicef.org/supply/files/ATTACHMENT_IV_UNICEF_Procedure_for_Ethical_Standards.PDF, accessed on 15 April 2019

⁵⁹ Likewise. conventional ethical guidelines have been followed during the evaluation. Specific reference has been made to the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards and Ethical Guidelines (2008), as well as to the UNICEF's Evaluation Policy (2016), the UNEG Guidance on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation, the UN SWAP Evaluation Performance indicator", and the UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation and Data Collection and Analysis and UNICEF's Evaluation Reporting Standards. Good practices not covered therein are also followed.

⁶⁰ UNICEF, United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) *Guidance on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation* (UNICEF, August 2014), <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/download/2107>, Accessed on 15 April 2019

3.12. Evaluation Limitations and Mitigation Measures

The NFMSE was designed as a three-year equivalency programme for Grades 6 to 8 inclusive. At the time of the evaluation, the students were completing semester 6 and thus had not yet graduated or transitioned. Some outcomes of the Programme such as transition into other forms of education or employment or the impact of the Programme on the individual student beyond the completion of the Programme, were not able to be directly measured. In these cases, proxy measurements such as promotion rates and dropout rates as well as opinions have been addressed.

The evaluation team was comprised of three consultants, two nationals and an international consultant (refer to annex 11). The international consultant was given clearance to travel to two townships: Dala and Hlaing Thar. This limited the capacity to contextualize with international experience and to triangulate key informant interviews and Focal Group Discussions (FGD). To help address this issue the team:

- A) Provided constant quality assurance by reviewing the results of field work on a weekly basis.
- B) Asked the same question to multiple respondents (see tools 1-10, Annex 16).
- C) Validate key informant interviews to NGO and INGO supporting each region where feasible.

The evaluation was subject to bias as a result of evaluator areas of expertise and past experience. The quality assurance process was designed to minimize the impact of evaluator bias.

4. FINDINGS

Findings are presented below in response to each evaluation question. Conclusions (main findings) for each OEDC criteria⁶¹ are detailed in the conclusions to this report. For each evaluation question, it is specified as to whether the evidence to support the findings is considered strong, moderate or weak.

4.1. Relevance

4.1.1. (1.01) Are the activities and outputs of the NFMSE consistent with the overall goal of NESP and the attainment of its objectives?

Evidence: Strong

The activities and outputs of the NFMSE are consistent with the goals and objectives of the NESP.

The overall goal of the NESP is to ensure *improved teaching and learning, vocational education and training, research and innovation leading to measurable improvements in student achievement in all schools and educational institutions*. NFMSE seeks to achieve this by addressing the objectives specified under the transformational shift for Alternative Education.

NFMSE attempts to meet the objectives of the Transformational Shift for Alternative Education which is: *Learners can access and graduate from quality-assured certified and nationally credentialed alternative education programmes to achieve their learning and career aspirations*⁶².

The goal of the NFMSE is to **increase the number and proportion of children accessing and completing quality basic education in targeted townships**. It seeks to achieve this by demonstrating a workable model for middle school equivalency education in the selected townships.

The NESP articulates three key strategic areas which should be developed and strengthened in order to achieve the transformational shift. The activities and outputs of the Programme relevant to each are shown in the table below. As indicated the activities and outputs of the NFMSE are consistent with the goals and objectives of the NESP.

An analysis of the design of the activities and outputs of NFMSE and their relationship to the NESP is shown in annex 17 (NESP objectives under 10.2 AE Transformational Shifts in relation to the NFMSE activities and outputs).

4.1.2. (1.02) How important is the NFMSE in the fulfilment of national educational priorities and policies?

Evidence: Strong

NFMSE supports the national education priorities and policies. NFMSE fulfils an important role in addressing the significant problem of middle school out-of-school children in Myanmar by providing a flexible and

⁶¹ Relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability

⁶² NESP 10.2: AE Transformational Shifts

practical based learning programme for vulnerable children. The flexible operating hours, emphasis on life skills and vocation subjects and support given to vulnerable children ensure NFMSE fulfils a role which is not being met through the formal system. This provides an opportunity for children to re-enter the formal or vocational systems or gain practical skills to help succeed in the workplace.

Schooling is compulsory in Myanmar until the end of the elementary (primary) level, or approximately to age 9. Middle school education is not yet compulsory but seen as optional in Myanmar. However, the National Education Law (NEL) (2014) also recognizes the role of NFE in Myanmar's education legislation for the first time. The law defines non-formal education as "education outside the formal school system, based on a curriculum for upgrading learners' education and which organizes and instructs learners through flexible methods". The NEL also recognizes equivalency programmes as equivalent to formal education.

NFMSE is also in line with Myanmar's important policy commitments regarding Non-Formal Education which are also reinforced through the NESP⁶³.

Table 5. Alignment with Myanmar's Non-Formal Policy Commitments

Policy Source	Policy Commitment	NFMSE alignment
NEL, 31 NESP chapter 10	Encourage implementation of out-of-school education programmes with ward- and community-based and non-governmental organizations;	NFMSE has provided access to middle school equivalency for out-of-school children aged 13 and above in selected townships.
NEL, 31(c) NESP chapter 10	Implement basic literacy programmes;	Whilst the NFMSE has not provided a literacy programme it has contributed to literacy by providing out-of-school children with opportunities to further study.
NEL, 31 NESP chapter 10	Provide equivalency programmes for out of-school children so that they can access the formal education system or technical and vocational education;	The NFMSE includes options for students to learn formal, skill based and vocational subjects at years 6 to 8 equivalency.
NEL, 31 NESP chapter 10	Provide continuous learning opportunities, including self-learning education, to improve every citizen's knowledge and skills.	The NFMSE does not address this policy commitment.
Draft Basic Education Sub-Sector law.	Strengthening AE governance through forming an AE Co-ordination Committee (draft basic education sub-sector law).	NFMSE has piloted a management and coordination structure with coordination committees at the central level (Central management committee), Township level (Township management committee) and center level (Centre management committee).
Draft Basic Education Sub-Sector law.	Ensuring equivalency of standards between formal and alternative education systems to enable learners to easily transition between both systems.	The NFMSE curriculum was designed to be equivalent to the formal education and enable learners to transition into the formal education system. Transition is yet to be approved.

⁶³ NESP, *National Education Strategic Plan (2016-21)* (MoE, 2015)

In addition, the NFMSE conforms with the draft AE Subsector Policy Framework.

Dropout rates for formal middle school are very high with 15.48% of pupils dropping out in year 9⁶⁴. Dropout rates in rural areas are mostly higher than urban areas. The NESP notes that the out-of-school youth is a tremendous pool of talent and potential that can help close the skills gap in Myanmar and greatly contribute to the country's productivity and competitiveness. These young people deserve a second chance to achieve their learning and career aspirations.

NFMSE helps to address the issue of high dropout from middle school by ensuring an accessible alternative education pathway option at middle school level for out-of-school youth. NFMSE helps to address these issues by:

- a) Providing a learning programme that enables children to gain middle school equivalency⁶⁵.
- b) Providing an avenue to children who are out-of-school children to re-enter the school system and potentially transition to the formal education system, into vocational education, or the workplace⁶⁶.
- c) Attempting to ensure students who have participated have competencies and credentials that will lead to higher wages and further learning opportunities⁶⁷.

4.1.3. (1.03) What are the theoretical linkages between NFPE and NFMSE and between NFMSE and formal middle school as well as vocational training, and how do they integrate?

Evidence: Strong

NFMSE has direct theoretical linkages to NFPE and formal middle school and vocational training which are reflected in practice.

NFMSE's design and administrative structure is based on NFPE. Although NFMSE is not intended to be exclusively for NFPE graduates, students from NFPE can transition easily into NFMSE as both programmes are designed to provide an equivalent education to the formal system for vulnerable children. Pupils from NFPE are likely to be older students from poorer backgrounds and possibly engaged in work to support the family. The support that NFMSE provides to these students and the flexible hours provides a natural point of transfer from students who have undertaken NFPE. However, NFPE is designed based on the formal education curriculum only whilst NFMSE incorporates subjects in life skills and vocational training.

⁶⁴ DBE 2015

⁶⁵ Refer to question (1.03) What are the theoretical linkages between NFPE and NFMSE and between NFMSE and formal middle school as well as vocational training, and how do they integrate?

⁶⁶ Refer to question (1.05) Is the NFMSE curriculum contextualized and relevant to the benefitting children, particularly the most vulnerable?

⁶⁷ Refer to questions (4.01) Has the NFMSE enabled students to successfully make the transition to formal education? and (4.02) To what extent is NFMSE resulting in learning gains beyond academic achievement (i.e., vocational training, other skills)?

The theoretical linkages to formal middle school and vocational education are strong. NFMSE curriculum was developed in consultation with DTVET and DBE. It has been designed to align with the formal middle school curriculum. The capacity for students to undertake vocational subjects and core formal middle school subjects should in principle ensure that students are prepared for transition to either upper secondary school or vocational education. The representation of the DBE and DTVET on the relevant committees at central and township level should also help ensure the quality and delivery of subject content. DERPT is currently assisting DBE to reform its curriculum and this may impact the capacity of NFMSE to provide equivalent education to formal middle school.

The MoE is yet to issue a policy statement concerning the qualifications obtained at the conclusion of NFMSE and until such is issued students may encounter barriers to transition. The MoE has stated that NFMSE should not be an optional substitution for formal middle school but rather a programme for those children genuinely in need who cannot otherwise obtain middle school education. Ensuring proper selection criteria will be critical to promoting NFMSE as a solution to out-of-school children in Myanmar.

4.1.3.1. NFMSE and NFPE

Graduates of NFPE are intended to transition into the formal education system⁶⁸. Despite this objective, over half of students enrolled into NFMSE came from NFPE⁶⁹. MLRC record that 57.1% of pupils were NFPE achievers. In some townships such as Hinthada (95.5%), MaeSot (90.0%) and Hlaingthayar (87.5%) the ratio was very high. As indicated through interviews, this was likely because students who had been accepted into NFPE were older and were by necessity engaged in labor to help sustain the family. NFMSE offers the opportunity to simultaneously work and study. NFMSE, in selected townships, provided support to these types of students in the form of stipends, food, transport and textbooks (refer table 7) and offered the opportunity for life skills and vocational education.

"Yes. Since NFMSE has opened at the monastic school it is within the reachable distant for some students who completed NFPE. Most of NFMSE students are NFPE graduates. These are students who couldn't even afford to go to primary schools, so without NFMSE, they won't make middle school education."

Facilitator in Myitkyinar Township

All facilitators (35) believed NFMSE is an opportunity for students who have finished NFPE and that NFPE prepares students to study in NFMSE. All parents whose children had studied in NFPE (18) believed the NFPE assisted the child to adapt to NFMSE.

4.1.3.2. NFMSE and Vocational Education

The NFMSE curriculum structure is presented in annex 13. The inclusion of vocational subjects in principal helps prepare students for transition upon completion into vocational education (TVET). The inclusion of

⁶⁸ UNICEF reported that only 50% of NFPE students transfer to secondary school

⁶⁹ The same technical team and international consultant developed both NFPE and NFMSE programmes. Lessons learned from NFPE were applied to NFMSE. The implementation structure is the same.

skill-based subjects such as sewing, agriculture and handcrafts should help prepare students for vocational training.

To date, there has been no formal policy announcement from MoE concerning the capacity for students to qualify and transition into either vocational training or upper secondary education. The Department of TVET is represented in each of the key committees at each level of government⁷⁰ which helps to give authority to the quality of the subject contents and the qualification obtained. However, without a mandate it may be difficult for students to qualify for further vocational training. Policy recognition can be facilitated through the Central Accreditation Committee (refer annex 10) however at present the unit has not formed.

4.1.3.3. NFMSE and Upper secondary Education

The NFMSE formal curriculum was developed in consultation with the DBE and was thoroughly piloted to ensure its standard was applicable to middle school. The core subjects from the formal middle school programme are included. The DBE is represented on each of the main committees (refer Annex 10). The MoE has not issued a formal policy statement ensuring that students who complete NFMSE qualify for transition to upper secondary education.

It was also reported⁷¹ that DERPT is working in conjunction with DBE to reform the Basic Education Curriculum^{72, 73}. MLRC have not been involved in this process. For middle school education the intention is to ensure the curriculum is more child-centered and has selective subjects for life skills and vocation education. This may either help to align the middle school curriculum more closely with NFMSE.

⁷⁰ Being the Department of Vocational School and Training (DTVET) is represented in both the Central Management Committee and the NFMSE Technical Team, Township Central Committee, Central Working Committee Accreditation committee

⁷¹ In interviews with the General Director of DAE.

⁷² It was reported that DERPT are being supported by the ADB EYE project.

⁷³ As set out in the National Education Law (2014), the government is committed to restructuring the basic education system from an 11-year system to a 12-year system plus one year of Kindergarten. Accordingly, a National Curriculum Framework (NCF) for Basic Education, which is aligned with the new KG+12 structure, has been developed since September 2013 through intensive discussions and consultations among various stakeholders. It was finally approved by Myanmar's Ministry of Education in May, 2015. The Basic Education Curriculum Framework will have a significant positive impact on Myanmar's basic education system, as it is the first attempt in the educational history of the country to clarify the direction of Myanmar's future basic education. The Basic Education Curriculum Framework is defined as *"the systematic written programs of all fields in formal and non-formal education, which are designed to achieve educational objectives and which includes learning outcomes, contents instructional methods and evaluation."*

4.1.4. (1.04) Are the activities and outputs of the NFMSE consistent with the intended impacts and effects?

Evidence: Strong

Sufficient activities and outputs were provided to achieve objective 1: Out-of-school children aged 13+ are enrolled and learning middle school level curriculum in support of NFMSE and objective 3: Ensuring Resource persons, facilitators, monitors and head teachers are equipped with academic training to provide equivalency middle school education to out-of-school children. 180 students were facilitated with 6 semesters of training in NFMSE curriculum. Support for students in the form of stipends, materials and equipment was provided by development partners. Facilitators were given 10 days training each semester and supported in each township. There were likely insufficient activities and outputs to achieve objective 2: Developing the National Accreditation Quality Assurance Guidelines and AE Sub-Sector Policy Framework informed by the lessons & experience from this Programme. A single workshop was conducted to share experiences and there were no other activities to support information sharing. The central management committee was not active during the Programme, which was another barrier towards achieving objective 2. The activities and outputs are consistent with achieving objective 4 concerning the expansion of NFMSE in Myanmar.

The Theory of Change (ToC) presented in section 2.4 shows NFMSE's intended impact and effects. The Programme's overall objective is to **increase the number and proportion of children accessing and completing quality basic education in targeted townships**⁷⁴. The logframe as of the end of 2017 is presented in annex 4. The Programme objectives, activities and outputs relevant to each are shown in the table below:

Objective 1: Out-of-school children aged 13+ are enrolled and learning middle school level curriculum in support of NFMSE.

To achieve this objective NFMSE pilot delivered of 6 semesters of education in middle school equivalency to 182 of 286 originally enrolled students⁷⁵ in the 8 target townships. 45 facilitators were provided with 10 days training each semester with the objective that curriculum was delivered effectively. Materials including computers were supplied to facilitate learning in subjects such as ICT and vocational education. Partners supported the Programme locally with support for students and through monitoring and quality assurance. Innovative practices applicable to the types of students who attend non-formal education, such as support via stipends and credit transfer, have been implemented through the pilot. These activities are aligned with objective 1.

Objective 2: Developing the National Accreditation Quality Assurance Guidelines and AE Sub-Sector Policy Framework informed by the lessons & experience from this Programme

The ToR of Township Accreditation body with list of members and action plan of the credit transferring system and lessons and experiences was compiled. This was shared at a single workshop with limited representation of DAE. The management structure for NFMSE should encourage participation of DAE, however the central management committee is largely the MLRC and therefore DAE participation at the

⁷⁴ With a target of 200 pupils

⁷⁵ Fewer semesters in some townships such as MaeSot where the programme only become active in semester 2.

technical level is limited. DAE have operated a focal township (Hinthada) which has provided support, however unlikely on its own to be sufficient. These activities are not likely sufficient to ensure that NFMSE experiences and standards will be incorporated in the national guidelines and the AE Sub-Sector Policy Framework.

Objective 3: Ensuring Resource persons, facilitators monitors and head teachers are equipped with academic training to provide equivalency middle school education to out-of-school children

12 head teachers received credit transfer training. Approximately 42 facilitators received 9-days of training each semester to deliver the NFMSE lessons. A management structure was developed to enable townships to mobilize resources towards and participate in monitoring of NFMSE. Facilitators were provided with remuneration for teaching NFMSE. These activities are sufficient to achieve objective 3.

4.1.5. (1.05) Is the NFMSE curriculum contextualized and relevant to the benefitting children, particularly the most vulnerable?

Evidence: Moderate

The curriculum duration and daily length were relevant to vulnerable children. NFMSE provided flexible hours for children who must work during the day to support their families. The curriculum was applicable to the context of vulnerable children. The formal education subjects provide equivalence to middle school. The Quality of life Improvement and community development were seen to help stabilise children and improve their behaviour and communication skills. The Basic Vocational subjects provided skills which would enable children to earn income if they leave NFMSE or to gain experience for transition into vocational training.

4.1.5.1. Curriculum Length and Operating Hours

Mae Sot operated full day schooling and enabled children to work on one day of the week. All other townships (7) operated classes in the evening. All respondents (35) in townships operating evening classes noted that the structure of classes enabled children from poorer households to work in the evenings. For example, facilitators (6) in Sittwe noted that most children in the Ward of Mingan are poor and many have to work to provide their family with income. Attending school at 4pm allowed them to work during the day. Facilitators (21) also noted that the reduced contact hours benefited students who had to work and help their parents.

"This Programme really supports those children. They cannot join formal school and this Programme is ideal for them. The difference between the formal school and the NFMSE is that they cannot earn money in the formal school. Here they can earn money in the mornings and attend school in the evenings."

Hlaing Tharyar facilitator

"The less schooling hours made their children study and help with the chores at home, babysit their younger siblings, help family business and work outside the school hours."

Parent in Kyaikhto Township

Respondents (43) in townships agreed that three years was appropriate for delivery of the curriculum⁷⁶.

4.1.5.2. General Curriculum

The curriculum was designed to be integrated between basic education and vocational education and is divided into four learning strands (refer annex 13):

1. Academic and Communication Skills
2. Basic Vocation
3. Quality of Life Improvement
4. Social and Community Development

All facilitators (35) believed the curriculum was inclusive and didn't discriminate, however the lack of support for local ethnic languages was noted in Dala where 'ethnic children sometimes cannot speak Myanmar which is a barrier'⁷⁷. Facilitators (35) believed the curriculum subjects demonstrated equality for both boys and girls.

Facilitators (12) noted that unlike formal school, NFMSE subjects are changed each semester and there was concern expressed that students would not learn core subjects such as Mathematics and English sufficiently. However, most township facilitators (6 of 8 townships) believed the emphasis on vocational and practical skills is excellent and very applicable to vulnerable children. Facilitators also noted that elective subjects give flexibility to students to tailor learning to their needs which can include ensuring they are skilled to have employment outside.

"My son sells waterboards in the bus station in the morning and the in the afternoon he can come to the class. Here children can learn how to paint or other practical things. It is very beneficial to our children. They can learn vocational skills which are practical. While they are learning here, they can earn money in the mornings. This is very good for our family. Now my grandson is very enthusiastic to learn more. He is stimulated to learn because of this programme."

Parent, Hlaing Tharyar Township

4.1.5.3. Academic and Communication

Approximately half of Facilitators (5 of 8 townships) believed the NFMSE academic curriculum was equivalent to middle school and were satisfied with the formal education component of the curriculum⁷⁸. Other facilitators (3 townships) felt it was lower than middle school. Facilitators (6) in Loikaw noted that students

⁷⁶ In interviews with heads of centers, facilitators and township monitors. 3 respondents believed the curriculum was too long.

⁷⁷ Reported by a Facilitator in Dala

⁷⁸ Reported by facilitators in Myitkyina Township

can practice more creative thinking through NFMSE curriculum. Specific comments on the curriculum included:

- Maths is business-focused and very relevant to this type of child (3 facilitators in Myikyina)⁷⁹.
- Mathematics and English should be taught each semester and not every second semester. They indicated that the break in teaching meant students struggled with continuity⁸⁰.
- Facilitators in 3 townships believed the Mathematics was equivalent to the formal middle school subjects whilst in others (5) it was felt it was not sufficient.

4.1.5.4. Quality of Life Improvement and Social and Community Development

Life skills are designed to improve communication and informal decision making. Respondents noted that the life skills components help ensure children obtain knowledge to help with their daily lives such as Hygiene (6 facilitators in Sittwe), moral lessons to build students character and behaviour, business operation skills (6 facilitators in Myityina), skills useful for the Home, Family and when dealing with Natural disasters (6 facilitators Dala), amongst others. Facilitators in Kyaikhto (6) noted that the Civil and Morals subjects and life skill subjects shape the child's character which is very relevant to vulnerable children.

Potential risks to students from poor backgrounds such as becoming addicted to alcohol, smoking, or taking drugs and falling in the criminal circumstances, may be reduced by studying life skills and vocational subjects⁸¹.

Most Facilitators (5 of 8 townships) believed that these subjects were particularly beneficial to vulnerable children who often come from troubled backgrounds. They noted that the subjects helped improve the behavior of the children and give them tools to communicate more effectively.

"Actually, we know well about the agriculture and especially about fertilizers. We have to learn what time what we should do about with our plants and farms., Now, we can make traditional fans ourselves."

Male Student (Age 16), Loikaw Township

"Here they can learn how to make detergents. This is a good example of how beneficial this Programme is for the community. Here the child can learn how to sow or grow things. When they get home they test the education in the home by doing this at home."

Parent, Hlaing Tharyar Township

⁷⁹ Facilitators in Myitkyina also noted that algebra lessons are skipped in applied Maths and may cause issues when transitioning to the formal system.

⁸⁰ Reported by facilitators in 4 of 8 townships

⁸¹ A belief expressed by 2 township monitors and 12 facilitators.

4.1.5.5. Basic Vocational Curriculum

The basic vocational curriculum was lauded by all respondents⁸² as being suitable for the children who were largely from poorer backgrounds and working⁸³. As one TEO noted "*Getting to learn vocational skills would be the learning gains for NFMSE students beyond academic achievement and these skills will help them to get employment easier.*"⁸⁴. Facilitators (18) noted that skills-based subjects can help vulnerable children because if they stop studying they will have acquired skills to help them obtain work⁸⁵. Facilitators (9) noted that the inclusion of ICT meant that students who leave will be more employable and was an advantage over formal middle school education⁸⁶.

The vocational subjects were appreciated by students. Many students came from a farming background or had worked on farms prior to attending NFMSE, and commented that the agricultural subjects were very useful in their lives⁸⁷. According to the Myanmar Labor Market Force Survey Agriculture accounts for 60.5% of child labor followed closely by Manufacturing (12%)⁸⁸.

Facilitators (9) noted the lack of practical training in areas such as agriculture and sewing where equipment was expensive may reduce the effectiveness of these subjects.

4.1.6. (1.06) Has the NFMSE been adapted to meet the needs of boys and girls?

Evidence: Moderate

The needs of boys and girls as being explicitly distinct are not stated in any project documentation and interviews and the national workshop did not highlight any needs specific to either boys or girls. The NFMSE neither favors nor biases against either boys or girls. The programme design specifies that NFMSE classes should be 'open to both boys and girls on an equal basis and rights-based approach' and the curriculum has been designed with sensitivity to boys and girls⁸⁹. The curriculum, materials, timetable and committee and Programme intakes were founded on the principal of equality and inclusiveness.

⁸² 35 facilitators and 8 township monitors

⁸³ All facilitators and heads of centres spoke positively of the vocational curriculum.

⁸⁴ Reported by Kyaikhto TEO

⁸⁵ Hlaing Tharyar TEO and Loikwa facilitators

⁸⁶ Noted in 4 of 8 townships.

⁸⁷ Reported in 3 townships

⁸⁸ Myanmar Labour Force Survey 2015, <http://www.mol.gov.mm/en/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2017/03/LFS-English-Report-17-11-2016.pdf>, accessed May 2019

⁸⁹ NFMSE, Programme document MCO-PRC/2015/07/1704/MLRC/BEGE/001 (2015)

Teachers were trained to treat both girls and boys equally and to encourage the participation of both. The timetable and was structured to address the needs of boys and girls equally and the course materials were inclusive. Committees encouraged representation of both men and women.

More boys than girls participated in the Programme likely owing to the higher proportion of boys among out of school children in Myanmar. This is validated through dropout rates and transition rates which were proportionally similar for girls and boys.

The Programme was designed to ensure equity is applied towards students and teachers of both genders. The data capture tools for individual students ensure facility to disaggregate data by gender. In support of the monitoring of gender equality, all monitoring reports reviewed for the Programme disaggregate data by gender.

At the commencement of the Programme there were 170 boys and 116 girls enrolled (GPI 0.68)⁹⁰, of which 106 boys and 74 girls attended in the first semester (GPI 0.70). In semester 6 there were 79 boys and 61 girls enrolled (GPI 0.77). Pass rates in examinations were similar for both genders.

Enrolment GPI therefore changed from 0.68 to 0.70 indicating a greater percentage of boys dropped out than girls. The change is not significant and is in line with expectations in that a greater percentage of boys do not complete middle school. The implication is that the proportional dropout rates remain similar for the NFMSE.

All facilitators (35) and Centre heads (8) indicated that students can take any elective subject regardless of gender and are encouraged to do so. They emphasised that the curriculum or its delivery did not bias against boys or girls. All parents (39) of children agreed the Programme enabled participation of boys and girls equally.

"Yes, it encourages equality between boys , and girls. We teach them all the subjects , in the equal ways. For example, the boys learn, domestic works such as sewing, and the girls, try to learn how to grow. I think all is equal."

Hinthada Facilitator

All parents interviewed (88) believed the Programme had encouraged their child to participate regardless of background or gender.

4.2. Effectiveness

4.2.1. (2.01) To what extent have the objectives of the NFMSE been in proving alternative education been achieved or are likely to be achieved

Evidence: Moderate

NFMSE has proved that alternative middle school education (equivalency) can be achieved in Myanmar.

In Section 5.2.2 it is concluded that the activities and outputs of NFMSE are largely consistent with its goals and objectives. Section 5.2.3 identifies the objectives of NFMSE as aligning with the national education of developing an equivalency programme for middle school education. Section 5.2.5 concludes that the

⁹⁰ Figures exclude Hinthada, Mae Sot for which gender breakdown of enrolment wasn't provide by MLRC.

activities and outputs are consistent with the intended impact. Section 5.2.6 notes that NFMSE curriculum contextualized and relevant to the benefitting children, particularly the most vulnerable.

Retention, completion and transition rates were high and dropout rates were acceptable given the vulnerable circumstances of the students. The overall % dropout throughout the cycle S1 to S6 was 31.7% (refer Annex 6). The vast majority of dropouts occurred in the first semester (22.0%). 71.6% of children who dropped out did so in the first semester after enrolment. Transition rates of completers to the following year were also very high being consistently above 96%. However, the evaluation has taken place prior to completion of the final semester and therefore a tracer study is required to help determine the impact on students and ultimately whether the Programme is successful.

There were four specific programme objectives:

- Objective 1: An alternative strategy viable for vulnerable, out-of-school children of age 13+ has been developed. As indicated under question, (3.02) the NFMSE is a flexible delivery mechanism as intended.
- Objective 2: As indicated in section 5.6, the evidence is not strong that NFMSE has influenced the development of the AE Subsector Policy Framework, termed the Non Formal Education and Continuation Education (CE) framework.
- Objective 3: The Programme provides a transition point for students who have studied NFPE however the government has not yet approved the certification obtained from NFMSE.
- Objective 4: As NFMSE did not exist prior to the implementation of the programme, the programme has supported strengthening and expansion in Myanmar.

Taken together the assessment against objectives of NFMSE indicate that NFMSE can be achieved in Myanmar provided certain conditions such as approval of NFMSE certification is granted by MoE.

Completion rates and transition rates for each semester of NFMSE were very high. Most dropouts occurred prior to students entering the Programme. Once in the Programme, the dropout rates were low. From the third semester on promotion rates were above 97% for each semester. However, dropout rates remained high in Hlaingthayar and to a lesser extent Kyeikhto (both supported by UNESCO) due to their geographic locations⁹¹ for remaining semesters contributing largely to S3 to S6 dropout numbers.

Total dropout rates between S2 and S6 were high in Myitkyinar ((1st batch, 34.6%), Hinthada (50.0%), Kyeikhto (41.7%). High dropout rates were attributed to the requirement of students and/or their families to move location for work (mobile families). As one group of facilitators noted⁹², if they drop out and move to another area not covered by NFMSE, they cannot transfer the credits and, due to the limited numbers of centres, they cannot continue education.

⁹¹ Hlaingtharyar draws migrant workers from across the country and the township's location between Yangon and Ayeyarwady Divisions make it a popular home for mobile families looking for work. Kyaikhto is located near a border with Thailand, which makes it easier for people to move around.

⁹² Maesot Township

MLRC conducted a survey of townships and reported that 176 children will complete NFMSE of which 76 (43%) intend to join high school, 58 (33%) intend to join vocational institutions and 42 intend to join religious institutions and non-schooling. Whilst the survey questions relate to the intent of the students, it does provide an indication as to the expectations of the students having completed NFMSE.

Given the high retention rates and applicability of the curriculum to vulnerable children⁹³, it is likely that NFMSE has proved that alternative education can be achieved but within the context of the issues identified within this report.

"The Programme should be active throughout the country. If a child drops out and moves they have to wait 3 years to reattend the classes."

Dala, TEO

A tracer study on graduating students would be required in order to properly assess the outcome and determine whether they had been positive.

4.2.2. (2.02) Has the NFMSE increased access to education for vulnerable children?

Evidence: Strong

NFMSE has increased access for vulnerable children. Many of the children who participated in focus discussion groups validated their situations. However, the predominant type of vulnerable child targeted by the Programme were those who were older and from poor households where work was a necessity. There is no reason to believe the Programme would not welcome other types of vulnerable children. There are no aspects of the Programme that are friendly to children with disabilities other than the small class sizes and teacher engagement. The Programme did not increase access for disabled children. There is scope to improve national tracking of out-of-school children and in particular vulnerable children. Improved data will help confirm improvements to access and participation of these children.

The Programme principally targets vulnerable children being those older students (age 13+) from vulnerable backgrounds.

Focus discussion groups with children indicated that many of the children⁹⁴ were older than the age for middle school and from disadvantaged poorer households and were working out of necessity.

There were examples identified of ethnic children participating in the project. For example, in Maesot there were children from Kayin, Mon, Pao, Shan and Bamar. However as noted the curriculum is in

"Myanmar parents want to send children to school but some cannot afford it. Now it is available through NFMSE. Now the children are very happy. They are no longer gypsies or homeless and they can concentrate on the learning for the benefit of their lives. Now they can see more clearly the vision for where they want to go."

Parent in Dala Township

⁹³ Refer question (1.05) Is the NFMSE curriculum contextualized and relevant to the benefitting children, particularly the most vulnerable?

⁹⁴ 16 students noted their situation during FGD.

Burmese which was reportedly challenging for some ethnic children. MLRC noted that many facilitators were local and could assist children from different local ethnic backgrounds to participate.

Myanmar lacks an adequate methodology for identifying children with disabilities such as the Washington Methodology⁹⁵ and there is no central register of children with disabilities in the country. There were no children with disabilities identified on the Programme at the time of evaluation⁹⁶. The NFMSE curriculum does not support children with disabilities and the emphasis on vocational subjects may make NFMSE more challenging for disabled children than the formal system if facilitators lack adequate training⁹⁷. There were no examples of materials that may assist children with disabilities such as learning aids. Facilities were not designed to accommodate children with disabilities. The small class sizes of NFMSE and the engaging child-centered methods of teaching would be helpful for children with mild learning or physical disabilities.

“Most families are poor. MLRC have requested wealth information but it is not easily available. Most of the families are working irregular employment and are mobile families. They travel from villages and stay for a month then migrate elsewhere such as to sell produce in other towns. Most children are working children. WE sometimes have to meet the boss and encourage them to allow the children to attend”

MLRC member

The credit system is, in principal, friendly to children from mobile families who may leave and then re-enter the Programme but there were no examples identified of the credit system being used in this way. The limited geographic scope of the pilot and the need to ensure 6 semesters sequentially were likely inhibiting factors.

There were no examples of children marginalized due to sexual identification or political affiliation or religion identified however there was no reason to believe the Programme would not be welcoming to such children.

Out-of-school children can be from vulnerable families such as mobile families and can be difficult to identify and track and townships lacked adequate data on out-of-school children. Township data as obtained from townships is presented in annex 12 and indicates that targeted townships had out-of-school children however the data is not considered reliable⁹⁸. Participation of out-of-school children in the Programme validates that some demand exists and therefore access for vulnerable children has been increased to NFMSE.

⁹⁵ <http://www.washingtongroup-disability.com/methodology-and-research/testing-methodology/>, accessed during May 2019

⁹⁶ MLRC report that some centers have students with disabilities however none were identified during the evaluation. There was one reported incidence of a disabled child in Myitkyina Township who transferred early back to the formal system.

⁹⁷ Respondents noted that facilitators generally try to accommodate the special needs however the capacity to assist students is very dependent on the capacity of each facilitator.

⁹⁸ As stated by township officers (8) in discussions.

4.2.3. (2.03) How many children are reached as a result of the NFMSE.?

Evidence: Strong

A total of 176 (GPI 0.71) children attending S6 and that previous semester completion rates indicate that almost all students will pass. 84% of the target was achieved.

The Programme has a target of reaching 210 out-of-school children in 8 townships. As noted in section 5.2.7, at the commencement of the Programme there were 286 children enrolled (GPI 0.68). As of S6 there are 180 (GPI 0.70) enrolled of which 176 (GPI 0.71) were attending. This falls below the target of 210 children having achieved 84% of the target population. Previous semester completion rates (refer section 5.3.2) indicate that almost all students are likely to pass the final semester.

4.2.4. (2.04) What potential is there to reach more children?

Evidence: Strong

There are many children in Myanmar who would benefit from NFMSE as indicated by national out-of-school children data⁹⁹. There are estimated to be 456,947¹⁰⁰ children aged between 10 and 13 being out of school in Myanmar many of whom are engaged in work to survive. Tracking out-of-school children is challenging. Many vulnerable children regularly change location and are invisible to government administrations. It will be important to understand where NFMSE centers are required to ensure access to vulnerable children.

The NFMSE model is flexible and can be expanded with additional support. Under the current model for NFMSE, the capacity to reach more children will be contingent obtaining additional the funding both at the national and local levels. The partnership model would facilitate the Programme to expand access and reach children in more townships. It will be important to promote the benefits the Programme has towards vulnerable children to encourage additional partners to help support the Programme. It will also be important to ensure communities, and the parents of vulnerable children, are aware of the Programme and understand its benefits to ensure there is adequate demand for the Programme.

Many of the respondents interviewed¹⁰¹ expressed a desire to expand the Programme to additional centers and to include more children, however some (2 township monitors) also expressed concerns over locating enough out-of-school children willing to participate in the Programme.

MLRC noted that promotion of the Programme and its benefits would be important to ensuring adequate students and that awareness of the Programme outside of the communities surveyed was likely low¹⁰².

⁹⁹ Section 3.2.4. 456,947 children aged between 10 and 13 were estimated to be out of school in Myanmar in 2015

¹⁰⁰ MoE 2015

¹⁰¹ Expressed by facilitators and township monitors in all (8) townships.

¹⁰² Validated in discussions with township monitors (5)

Promoting the Programme through GAD, the TEO and other township level government agencies as well as to the broader community will be essential to ensuring increased demand for the Programme¹⁰³.

4.2.5. (2.05) Have the materials designed and used in the NFMSE contributed to effective delivery?

Evidence: Moderate

Materials designed and used contributed towards effective delivery as evidenced through classroom observation and student completion and pass rates. The supply of academic subject materials was good, however some subjects, such as ICT, agriculture and sewing, lacked sufficient materials to enable adequate practical learning owing to funding limitations. Enhancing local public private partnerships and mobilizing community funding are means of increasing resourcing to NFMSE. The capacity of facilitators to make effective use of the available materials for teaching satisfactory. Pass rates and completion rates were very high which validate the finding that the materials designed and used contributed towards effective delivery.

The curriculum is largely beneficial to children, particularly the most vulnerable however there were some issues identified which can potentially be addressed¹⁰⁴. Facilitators (35) noted the lack of materials in some vocational classes such as agriculture and sewing where students learnt the theory but not practice in a sufficient amount. UNICEF stated that deficiencies were as a result of resource limitations¹⁰⁵. For some subjects, teaching and learning aids were not provided. For example, Agriculture in some schools was only taught theoretically and not practically. Facilitators noted (9) that it was generally considered better to provide partial exposure to these subjects rather than none. DAE noted that enhancing public private partnerships could help provide resources for vocational subjects, particularly if students could undertake NFMSE in agreement with local industries and also encourage children who were working in those industries to attend school.

In all classrooms observed (7), students and the instructors had appropriate and up to date curriculum materials. Students used their own textbooks and materials for academic subjects and did not share. There were insufficient materials for ICT¹⁰⁶ with three pupils sharing a computer. Facilitators made effective use of

¹⁰³ Noted by 3 township monitors

¹⁰⁴ Refer question (1.05) Is the NFMSE curriculum contextualized and relevant to the benefitting children, particularly the most vulnerable?

¹⁰⁵ For example UNICEF reported that the IT was supposed to have started earlier than it did but that the Technical Team and UNICEF Global were concerned about the sustainability of supplying a tablet for each three students.

¹⁰⁶ In the ICT class it was noted that three students were sharing one tablet. Procurement records show that one tablet was procured for approximately 3 students.

available teaching aids¹⁰⁷ and time management was reasonable¹⁰⁸. Most facilitators (5 of 7) showed a good command of the subject matter, the remaining 2 being rated fair.

4.2.6. (2.06) What is the level of teaching quality, especially compared to formal middle school?

Evidence: Moderate

The quality is likely slightly below that of formal middle school. There was a number of inhibiting factors which included: Insufficient training of facilitators; High facilitator turnover; Small facilitator numbers in each township and the need for subject specialization; Diversity in subjects requiring expertise in vocational and academic subjects; Lack of local mentoring and support. Some of these are inherent challenges posed by the pilot. Others can be addressed through improved support mechanisms and greater commitments to training and facilitator remuneration as well as stronger partnerships with basic education schools.

4.2.6.1. Teaching Quality

Teachers were suitably qualified (refer Annex 6) with 93% of facilitators having been graduates and qualified to teach¹⁰⁹.

Teaching quality was directly observed through classroom observation. Teachers practiced effective teaching methods and engaged students. Most teachers (5 of 7) encouraged active learning participation, understood regular assessment (6 of 7), recorded learner attendance (7 of 7) and regularly recorded learning outcomes (4 of 7)¹¹⁰. In general, facilitators observed engaged with students, showed good command and knowledge of subject matter, adequate preparation for the lessons, held the interest of the students and maintained discipline and control¹¹¹.

"We see that our children gain not only knowledge but also skills like ICT and using a sowing machine. My son was too lazy to attend formal school. But now he is very enthusiastic and happy. He really wants to attend school and watches the clock until it's time to go to classes."

Parent, Dala Township

¹⁰⁷ 2 facilitators were rated good in terms of using aids effectively the remaining (5) being rated fair

¹⁰⁸ 2 facilitators were rated good in terms of achieving subjects in the time allocation, the remaining 5 being rated fair.

¹⁰⁹ 82% of facilitators were female

¹¹⁰ Remaining teachers were rated as fair in the above categories.

¹¹¹ It should be noted that teachers were aware they were being observed and in many cases the TM and Head of centre was also observing.

Few parents were able to comment on the quality of teaching, however, parents in 3 townships were happy with the communication provided by facilitators¹¹² concerning children's attendance and homework. Students have been very satisfied with their teachers and there were no negative comments. They noted that teachers had taught them 'very carefully and patiently'. The majority of students reported the teachers were kind and took care of them.

"The teacher teaches us by talking about his or her life. They give us confidence. So, we change our mindset gin. I gave up using drugs."

Student M15, Mae Sot Township

Township Monitors (3) noted that the quality of facilitators is lower than formal schools and that the 9 days training provided for facilitators each semester was insufficient. Quality was also impacted by high facilitator turnover (refer annex 8)¹¹³. Subject specialization is generally required to teach the academic subjects and owing to the low numbers of facilitators in each township, teachers often lacked specialization in a number of subjects taught¹¹⁴.

Facilitators reported the following challenges in delivering the curriculum:

- English is challenging owing to facilitator capacity and some children don't speak Burmese well either (2 townships).
- Vocational subjects such as carpentry as many of the facilitators have not undertaken this before (4 townships).
- Mathematics is challenging to teach¹¹⁵ (6 townships).

Facilitators (9) noted that the child-centered learning method was popular with students.

4.2.6.2. Teacher Training and Facilitator Retention

Facilitators receive 9 days training each semester to help prepare them for subjects. 3 of the 9 days were spent on general content such as concepts of child-centered learning rather than subject specific learning. This leaves only 6 days each semester to learn new subject content. Facilitators (32) believed the time allocated to training was insufficient and noted that 12 to 15 days of training would be more appropriate. Facilitators (12) also noted that elements of the training were repetitious for those who had attended previous trainings. They suggested having two levels of training, one for orientating new facilitators and one for training existing facilitators in new subjects.

¹¹² Reported in Loikaw, Maesot, Mitkyinar, Dala Townships

¹¹³ Also reported by township monitors (4)

¹¹⁴ Reported in Hitadha, Sittwe, Maesot and Myitkyinar Townships

¹¹⁵ Reported by Hinthada and Sittwe township facilitators

Facilitator retention was a significant issue in some Township Monitors¹¹⁶. Only 3 (7.6%) facilitators taught all six semesters. Township monitors (8) noted the low remuneration rate, at 90,000 Kyat a month, and lack of pension were obstacles to retention. In addition, some facilitators (12) reported that they often used their own funds to assist students to attend. A more appropriate remuneration was stated as 150,000 Kyat¹¹⁷ being equivalent to formal middle school teaching salaries. Poor retention will likely lead to higher training costs as skilled and trained facilitators left NFMSE and new facilitators required training. As one facilitator noted *'Right now it's a subsistence salary – I have to rely on my parents and therefore I can use my own money to help children.'*¹¹⁸ In Mae Sot facilitators undertook teaching NFMSE as a part time role in addition to teaching the formal school classes. In the case of Mae Sot, the pay for teaching NFMSE was awarded as additional for the extra commitment of teaching NFMSE. In the case of Mae Sot remuneration was considered adequate.

Owing to the small number of facilitators in each township (6) the capacity for facilitators to support each other on technical issues was limited. Facilitators (6) reported this as a barrier.

4.2.7. (2.07) How effective has been the implementation of the credit system?

Evidence: Weak

The credit transfer system, in principal, is appropriate and effective for vulnerable children who are more likely to drop out then re-enter the school system. It enables these children to carry forward credits earned upon re-entry to NFMSE. The system also encourages attendance and practical work. Facilitators believed it helped promotion and retention. The credit system was poorly understood by some facilitators (18) and standards for assessment and awarding of credits may not be applied uniformly in all townships. Owing to the limited nature of the pilot, there were no examples identified where the credit system had been used in cases of dropout and re-entry. Credits earned are not transferable to the formal education system and records of credit allocation are stored locally in each township which inhibit the capacity for students to transfer credits in cases where students relocate to a new township.

The credit system is undertaken at the township level by the Accreditation and Credit Transfer Committee. The composition of the committee is included in annex 10. The committee is comprised of the Township Education Officer (Chairperson), High School Head, Middle School Head, Primary School Head, Member of NFMSE representative, Member of NFMSE township, Member management committee, the District and the Township Education Officer. Under NFMSE Accreditation means 'the procedure by which an authoritative body gives formal recognition that an assessment body, in accordance to the standards and technical regulations, is competent to carry out specific tasks such as testing and certification.' Credit transfer means

¹¹⁶ For example in Mae Sot, HWF report a 50% teacher retention.

¹¹⁷ Pay in Myanmar for an experienced middle school teacher as stated as being between 150K to 180K KT with a pension being additional.

¹¹⁸ In Hlaing Tharyar Township

'determination of required credits to be achieved based on accumulated credits on previous learning (or) description of credits acquired by completers or drop-outs of the Programme.'¹¹⁹

This Accreditation and Credit Transfer Committee is responsible for determining whether a student is eligible to obtain a credit. Assessment is based upon an alternative education quality standard assessment framework¹²⁰.

During the Programme, credits were allocated to students using the credit system. However, no cases were identified by which students had dropped out then re-entered NFMSE and used transferred credits to complete study.

In general respondents were very positive concerning the credit system¹²¹. Facilitators and Township monitors noted that the system was particularly effective for the types of students studying NFMSE who may be from mobile families or may dropout and then later re-enter the Programme. All facilitators (35) agreed that the credit system contributed to promotion and retention.

"One thing we like is the student portfolio. This portfolio is kept in the township office and the committee decides the credit. Therefore, students are not just assessed through examinations but throughout the learning process."

Township Monitor, Dala

Strengths of the credit system included¹²²:

- Ensuring a track record of students learning achievements and being flexible for students who discontinued then re-entered the education system.
- The capacity for students to leave during the semester then attend later and be able to adopt their track record.
- Practical work and attendance were motivators to students to apply themselves

¹¹⁹ NFMSE Guidebook Chapter 4.

¹²⁰ This can potentially have the advantage of promoting-equity to provide education opportunity to disadvantaged children who have access to middle school education through NFMSE provided equality guidelines are adhered to.

¹²¹ Reported by township monitors and facilitators in 6 townships.

¹²² Stated in interviews with UNICEF, UNESCO, HWF, MLRC, DAE and validated at the final evaluation workshop

The limitations of the credit system included¹²³:

- The limited scale of the pilot and the geographically distributed location of the pilot centers meant there were no cases identified where the credit system had been used to enable a student to re-enter.
- As the Programme is three years in duration, if students miss subjects then they have to wait for the next cycle to obtain credit in missed subjects.
- Some facilitators (9) reported not understanding the system fully and that also parents and children sometimes did not fully understand it. They stated the credit system was very new and further training was required in some cases. The DAE recommended simplifying the system as much as possible.
- There may be inconsistent lack of application of standards in evaluation of the credit systems between different townships.
- Credits cannot be transferred to the formal education system as there is presently no recognition of NFMSE subjects. This inhibits the students' capacity to return to the formal system.

"Sometimes we need the authority of the township level. It has been very effective because they support provision of teaching aids, materials and nutrition for the students. It's a mechanism to help obtain resources to help the Programme. The chairman of the learning centre is also the administrator of the quarter. He is also part of the township committee so he can do many things and help obtain resources. The management committee members can help keep track of the children when they are at and out of school. There should be a stronger link."

Township Monitor, Hlaing Tharyar

4.2.8. (2.08) How active are the township management in the NFMSE?

Evidence: Moderate

The effectiveness of the township management committee varied between townships. In some townships it was very effective in mobilizing resources, advocacy, helping to locate out-of-school children and ensuring cooperation and coordination of local stakeholders. In others it was reported as not active. A key determinant was reported to be the interest and engagement of the chairman in NFMSE.

The Township Management Committee representation and its place in the hierarchy of NFMSE administration and management is shown in annex 10. The involvement and effectiveness of the township management committee varied in different townships. In Loikaw and Myitkyina the involvement was reported as weak¹²⁴. One factor attributed to determining involvement was the interest level of the presiding chairman¹²⁵. Respondents stressed the importance of ensuring the representation of key agencies at

¹²³ Ibid...

¹²⁴ By the township monitor

¹²⁵ Reported by 3 township monitors

township level such as the General Administration Department (GAD) and township administrator as they head many other committees, can provide influence and can help locate out-of-school children¹²⁶.

Areas where the committee was noted as assisting included:

- Sending monthly reports to the Township General Administration Department (GAD) and other departments (2 townships).
- Mobilizing funding and support for the Programme (4 townships).
- Assisting with monitoring the centers (4 townships)
- Helping to locate out-of-school children and children not attending (2 townships)
- Facilitating cooperation with other departments such as immigration (1 township)

4.2.9. (2.09) What have been the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the objectives of NFMSE?

Evidence: Moderate

Five significant factors influenced the achievement of the NFMSE. These are: the resources and support from partners at the township level; the commitment of the facilitators and heads of centers in ensuring children attend and remain in schools; the curriculum which includes skills and vocational education and the flexible hours of the Programme both of which are applicable to vulnerable children; the continuous technical support given centrally through MLRC.

There are multiple factors which have attributed towards the achievement of NFMSE. These are highlighted throughout the report.

The main factors the evaluation attributes to the achievements include:

- The mobilization and commitment of organizations (partners) at the township level including the Government and Non-Government organizations which have supported the Programme locally. Local partners were required to fund the Programme and representatives of local agencies dedicated their time without remuneration.
- The day to day monitoring role undertaken by heads of centers, facilitators and township monitors to help ensure that the children attended school and remained in school wherever possible¹²⁷.

¹²⁶ Reported by TM Hlaing Tharyar

¹²⁷ Detailed under question (2.12) During implementation, have there been systematic and appropriate efforts to include various groups of children particularly the most vulnerable (eg: gender/region/children with Disability)?

- The technical role the MLRC has played centrally to ensuring the Programme has continued and that NFMSE facilitators are trained and centers supported. Without proper support and training it is unlikely the Programme would have achieved its objectives¹²⁸.
- The curriculum which supports vocational, skills based and academic subjects and which are particularly relevant to vulnerable children¹²⁹.
- The flexible hours of the Programme which have enabled vulnerable children to attend¹³⁰.

The support of the partners and community financially at the township level has been the most significant factor and is the key element that will have to be managed going forward. The Programme in the townships has been heavily dependent on partner funds to pay staff salaries, provide materials and in some cases provide support to students to attend. The further development and management of these partnerships under the DAE-proposed AE partnership framework will key to the success of the NFMSE.

"My hobby is to teach. I love to teach. The students are very poor and we worry if there is no one like us the students will be homeless or helpless. That's why we want to save their life as much as we can., We are very attached to the students. We worry when they cannot attend so I have to inform the parents and look for the child. We are very attached to the students."

Facilitator in Dala Township

4.2.10. (2.10) How has the monitoring of the NFMSE influenced the achievement of activities?

Evidence: Moderate

Monitoring was conducted effectively throughout the Programme at the central level, township level and center level. The evidence indicates that monitoring influenced provision of resources and support to individual centers and to individual children. There is scope in some townships to strengthen communication with the TEO and involve the TEO in monitoring of NFMSE. Monitoring goes down to the child level in each township but individual child data is not available at the national level, which inhibits analysis and monitoring of the Programme.

Monitoring of the Programme has occurred at three levels. These are:

- The central level for which the MLRC has largely been responsible.

¹²⁸ Refer question (2.06) What is the level of teaching quality, especially compared to formal middle school?

¹²⁹ Refer question Refer question (1.05) Is the NFMSE curriculum contextualized and relevant to the benefitting children, particularly the most vulnerable?

¹³⁰ Refer question (1.05) Is the NFMSE curriculum contextualized and relevant to the benefitting children, particularly the most vulnerable?

- The township level for which the Township Monitor, Township Management Committee and Local Partnership Organizations¹³¹.
- At the center level where monitoring for which the head of the center and facilitators are responsible.

MLRC have monitored the Programme effectively at the central level. They have developed 18 forms for regular monitoring of the institutions and liaise at intervals with township monitors concerning the progress of the Programme and issues encountered. Accurate records have been maintained of student numbers as indicated in annex 6. Training was properly monitored. The monitoring at central level led to some changes to activities and expenditure. Examples include: further intakes of students to increase student numbers after the initial drop (2nd Batch Students); the procurement of Teaching aids such as ICT laptops, for tools for painting, tools for carpenters and knitting; Assistance to the recruitment of replacement facilitators as required.

There was limited evidence that central monitoring fed back into technical changes to activities such as to the modalities and duration of training for facilitators or changes to the organizational modalities of NFMSE.

Partner organizations such as HWF, UNICEF and UNESCO all undertook monitoring through monitoring visits which lead to reports. These influenced resourcing to the Programme in terms of support to students and facilitators, addressing specific problems encountered and further provision of materials. DAE was responsible for monitoring Dala township but the evaluation did not obtain a monitoring report on Dala. The evaluation did not find evidence that DAE had participated in other monitoring activities.

The Township monitors retained data on individual students in hardcopy format recorded in enrolment, attendance and achievement records. Township Monitors (TM) regularly liaised with facilitators concerning individual students to help resolve issues. TM in all townships collated data on individual student attendance and achievement. This helped inform the provision of welfare for facilitators and children (Loikaw) and the provision of coaching and feedback to facilitators (Dala). Heads of centers and facilitators monitored the attendance and performance of students on a daily basis and used the information to help address individual student issues.

One weakness in the monitoring is that data on individual students was not available at central level (MLRC or DAE). This limited the capacity to analyze Programme data and to track individual students nationally. If individual child data was available centrally it would be possible to analyze the data to determine factors which may have contributed to children dropping out of the Programme.

Another weakness in some townships was the TEO was not engaged heavily in the Programme and reported receiving very limited information on NFMSE. The involvement of the TEO in the monitoring process can help mobilize basic education resources to complement and assist NFMSE.

4.2.11. (2.11) What have been the main challenges faced during the implementation of the NFMSE?

Evidence: Strong

¹³¹ Being HWF, UNICEF, UNESCO, DAE and a Private Partner

There were numerous challenges encountered during NFMSE. Challenges included: difficulties in ensuring attendance of vulnerable children; inadequate remuneration for facilitators attributed to high facilitator turnover; lack of standards for partner financial and monitoring reporting and variations in financial cycles between partners; low resources centrally (MLRC) to give technical support; coordination between DAE and MLRC.

The main challenges encountered during NFMSE include:

- Retention of facilitators. This may have impacted the quality of teaching delivery as new facilitators had to be trained each semester¹³².
- Ensuring adequate resources at the township and center level for facilitators, materials and support for students¹³³.
- Financial cycles for different the different partners varied which reportedly introduced challenges for procurement of materials and timely support¹³⁴.
- Ensuring the attendance and retention of students, many of whom come from vulnerable backgrounds, had been out of school prior to enrolling in NFMSE and must engage in work to survive¹³⁵.
- The length of the Programme being 3 years and limited number of centers operating NFMSE meant it was difficult for some mobile children to stay in the Programme for the full 3-year duration and that there were limited opportunities for children who dropout to re-enter¹³⁶.
- Centrally resources were strained as MLRC were resource limited and operated largely by retired staff. MLRC noted the workload was very demanding.

"We have to organize and encourage and motivate the children to come to the class regularly. Normally we pay them pocket money or feed food or snacks and supporting on stationary. The ICT teacher has to support with old handphones or sim cards., Actually we assume the facilitator as volunteer work so we pay with our own money."

Facilitator in Hlaing Tharyar Township

¹³² Refer question (2.06) What is the level of teaching quality, especially compared to formal middle school?

¹³³ Refer question (2.05) Have the materials designed and used in the NFMSE contributed to effective delivery?

¹³⁴ Reported by 3 township monitors

¹³⁵ Refer question (2.12) During implementation, have there been systematic and appropriate efforts to include various groups of children particularly the most vulnerable (eg: gender/region/children with Disability)?

¹³⁶ Reported by the NFMSE Technical Team

- The DAE is responsible for overall management but MLRC report it has not yet undertaken active significant participation in this role. There is capacity for DAE to play a large role in expansion of the Programme. However, there is a need for greater collaboration and coordination with MLRC.

4.2.12. (2.12) During implementation, have there been systematic and appropriate efforts to include various groups of children particularly the most vulnerable (eg: gender/region/children with Disability)?

Evidence: Moderate

The Township Management Committee identified vulnerable children for inclusion in NFMSE¹³⁷. The curriculum, having both skill and vocationally subjects and a flexible delivery mode, facilitated the participation of vulnerable children¹³⁸. Children (24) participating in focus discussion groups identified themselves as poor, older students who had to work and therefore could not attend school during regular hours¹³⁹. There were no examples of other forms of vulnerable children identified during FDG. Ethnic children are welcomed, and facilitators often locally recruited which helped facilitators to communicate with ethnic children from the same region. The Programme has made efforts to include vulnerable children from poorer backgrounds who have missed middle school to attend. These include both formal and informal provision of stipends, textbooks, transport allowances, food and field trips. Attribution of retention and participation to these efforts is difficult to establish.

The table below highlights the additional efforts which were made both formally and informally throughout the Programme to ensure vulnerable children participated and were retained in the Programme.

Table 6. Formal and Informal Support given to students^{140, 141}

Supporting Partner	Township	Formal					Informal ¹⁴²		
		Uniforms	Food	Stipends	Textbooks Stationary	Transport	Financial	Transport	Food
UNICEF	Sittwe				Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes
UNICEF	Myitkyinar				Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes
UNICEF	Loikaw				Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes

¹³⁷ As part of their function (refer annex 10)

¹³⁸ 138

¹³⁹ Refer question (2.02) Has the NFMSE increased access to education for vulnerable children?

¹⁴⁰ Derived from interviews and reviews of DP budgets.

¹⁴¹ In addition HWF funded parents visits and field trips and Occupational learning activity for NFMSE students formally.

¹⁴² Generally supplied by facilitators or township monitors using their own funds or funds contributed from donors and the community.

Supporting Partner	Township	Formal					Informal ¹⁴²		
		Uniforms	Food	Stipends	Textbooks Stationary	Transport	Financial	Transport	Food
UNESCO	Hlaingthayar	Yes	Yes	9,000 PM	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes
UNESCO	Kyeikhto	Yes	Yes	9,000 PM	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes
DAE	Dala				Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes
Private Donor	Hinthada				Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes
HWF	Mae Sot	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Attribution of retention and attendance to these methods was difficult to establish however those interviewed¹⁴³ believed one or more of these interventions facilitated vulnerable children to attend NFMSE.

There is not a systemic or standardized approach to interventions. Different partners employed different methods formerly. Other efforts were informal. For example, facilitators (32) reported many examples of having met with parents of children who were failing to attend and trying to convince both parent and child that attendance would benefit the child. These efforts, by their nature, likely attributed towards increased retention of students and helped make the Programme more accessible for vulnerable children but many were undertaken informally.

“Donors organize food that helps keep children in the Programme. Often facilitators must find children and encourage them to attend school. Sometimes children don’t learn subjects very well so we have to perform overtime teaching. We sometimes pay for excursions for the children to help stimulate them.”

Hlaing Tharyar Township Monitor

DAE and DBE reported that the Ministry does not want NFMSE to be an optional alternative for middle school for children but rather a Programme that is available to those children genuinely in need and who cannot attend formal middle school.

The criteria for children to enter NFMSE is that they should be from vulnerable backgrounds and be 13 years or older as

defined in the NFMSE proposal. Nearly half of the children who were interviewed would not have met the age criteria upon enrolment (41.7%, 28 of 67). Township Monitors reported that the Programme was open to anyone who applied and that no filtering or discrimination was applied. With the support and limited hours required for NFMSE, there is a risk that without robust filtering criteria, it may be too attractive as an alternative to formal middle school education. The DAE and partners need to identify the reasons why each child needs to enroll in the NFMSE and why younger children are permitted to enroll in NFMSE and not formal middle school. There is a need to understand further why a child cannot go to a government school in the formal system and what makes that child eligible for NFMSE.

¹⁴³ 205 through FDG and interviews

4.2.13. (2.13) Is NFMSE improving gender equity within the educational system and more widely?

Evidence: Weak

At lower secondary level there are a greater proportion of boys out of school than girls. However, NFMSE has a higher proportion of boys enrolled in semester 6 than in the wider education system. This suggests that NFMSE can help contribute towards increasing boys' participation in education and thus improve gender equity at secondary level. NFMSE may have impact in the wider community over time through the provision of quality of life improvement and social and community development subjects. These may help reduce issues affecting girls such as teenage pregnancy. NFMSE also encourages both boys and girls to participate in any vocational subjects which may lead to helping to balance gender representation in the workplace.

As of semester 6 there were 106 boys and 74 girls enrolled (GPI 0.70)¹⁴⁴. In the formal education system, the average GPI for Net Enrolment Rate (NER) in lower secondary is 1.04¹⁴⁵ indicating a greater ratio of girls than boys. The greater ratio of boys to girls in NFMSE indicates the Programme can contribute towards improving gender equity at lower secondary level in Myanmar.

Section 5.2.7.¹⁴⁶ (1.06) concludes that NFMSE is adequately adapted to meet the needs of boys and girls and that NFMSE neither biases against nor emphasizes support to either boys or girls. 82% of facilitators are female. During interviews and focal group discussion there were no gender issues noted. It is therefore unlikely that NFMSE is helping to address gender equity in the education system.

The Quality of Life Improvement and Social and Community Development subjects include subject content that is likely to promote equality in family life and beyond by helping children to avoid issues such as drugs and teenage pregnancy. However, there is no empirical evidence to support this at present.

NFMSE has a range of vocational subjects which help prepare children for industries where there are either a predominant representation of men such as in agriculture or women such as in sewing and textiles. It could therefore be argued that NFMSE is helping to dispel gender stereotypes by encouraging children to gain skills to enable participation in industries in which one gender is over-represented. As in the case of life improvement subjects, there is insufficient evidence to support this concept at present.

4.3. Efficiency

4.3.1. (3.01) How big is the efficiency or utilization ratio of the resources used, both in terms of human and financial resources and compared to other alternative education approaches?

Evidence: Moderate

¹⁴⁴ Figures exclude Hinthada, Mae Sot for which gender breakdown of enrolment wasn't provide by MLRC.

¹⁴⁵ Source: Administrative Data (2014-2015), DERPT, MOE

¹⁴⁶ (1.06) Has the NFMSE been adopted to meet the needs of boys and girls

NFMSE was moderately effective in utilization of resources compared to other approaches both alternative and formal. Given the limitations of the pilot in terms of size and geographic spread. Unit costs per child per year (\$433 USD) were higher than but comparative to costs estimated to deliver middle school education in other developing countries (\$377 USD).

The smaller class sizes and requirement for multiple facilitators to teach the diverse subjects were contributing factors. High partner administrative costs also contributed as did the high cost of some materials such as laptops for the ICT component. These are also likely to raise the recurrent cost of the Programme. There is scope to reduce the unit cost per student by utilizing Basic Education facilities and teachers to deliver courses and to encourage public private partnerships to help supply materials such as computers.

4.3.1.1. Unit Cost Per Child

Annex 14 presents a per student unit cost and a cost per graduate. Cost estimates were applied to the Programme to include training for facilitators, recurrent materials and textbooks, management and operational costs¹⁴⁷ and procurement of laptops and equipment required for vocational training as well as estimates for informal contributions made by those at the township or center level, such as financial assistance provided by facilitators to students to encourage them to attend school. As noted in the methodology, costs are estimated with caveats applied¹⁴⁸.

- Cost per student 3 years was 1,966,796 MMK or 1,298 USD¹⁴⁹
- Cost per graduate 3 years was 2,173,533 MMK or 1,435 USD
- Cost per student per year was 655,599 MMK or 433 USD
- Cost per graduate per year was 724,511 MMK or 478 USD

In some townships, parents reported costs to the household. Parents in Hinthada noted the impact on family income of the child not being able to work all day¹⁵⁰. In Kyaikhto parents had to buy uniforms. In Maesot parents had to pay 1500 THB fees¹⁵¹ per year.

¹⁴⁷ The calculation was undertaken by the NFMSE Technical Team in 2018 based on actual budget expenditure of NFMSE Program Document 2018 in partnership with MLRC.

¹⁴⁸ These include: 1. Difficulties in confirming costs because 4 different partners provided non- standard support to their respective NFMSE centers and reported using different financial formats; 2. Different modes of implementation were undertaken in each township. For example DAE was implementing directly and UNICEF was implementing through a formal partnership agreement with MLRC; 3. ICT tablets were of different types/models and costs and the adequacy in terms of capacity and supply were questioned in some townships. 4. Different rates of exchange of MMK to USD were used by different partners from 2016-2019.

¹⁴⁹ Exchange rates MMK to USD were determined on 14 August 2019

¹⁵⁰ for 4 hours during schooling

¹⁵¹ Prior to 2018 they had to pay 1000 THB

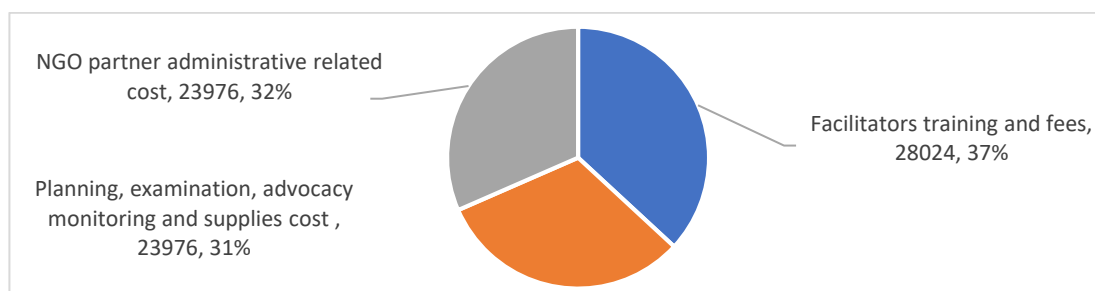
4.3.1.2. Comparison to other Education Programmes

The cost per beneficiary for the NFPE was calculated at \$110 USD per learner per year¹⁵². The DAE report that a child in basic education costs approximately \$100 USD per learner per year. The figure of \$433 USD compares favorably with the estimated \$377 USD per year for a child to attend middle school education in developing countries¹⁵³.

4.3.1.3. Analysis of Programme Efficiency

The budget breakdown is shown in the pie chart below. 32% of the budget can be attributed to NFO Partner administrative related costs and 31% to Planning, Examination, advocacy, monitoring and supply costs.

Figure 8. Annual budget breakdown (Source NFMSE Technical Team¹⁵⁴)



Administrative costs are likely to vary dependent on the partner organization assisting with delivery of NFMSE. In a small pilot these costs are likely to be much higher per child than in an expanded Programme. Facilitator wages and training was generally considered to be inadequate. The high turnover in facilitators likely added to monitoring costs and would add to recurrent training costs in an extended Programme.

The most significant factor in the high unit costs was attributed to the need to have a comparatively large number of facilitators and the relatively small class sizes observed. This is, to some extent, a result of the pilot being small but may also indicate insufficient demand possibly resulting from a lack of awareness of the Programme in target townships. NFPE has one facilitator per 10 children as a rule. Once they had received

¹⁵² Based on a study of costs at the township level in Mon State and reported:

UNICEF, *Non-formal Primary Equivalency Programme Review – Revised Report*, (Commissioned by: UNICEF, Research team: Emily Stenning, Mya Sandi Aung, Htet Aung, Montrose, 1 July 2016)

The report notes that validating this figure by producing a country-level cost per beneficiary was not possible due to inconsistencies in the data available.

¹⁵³ <http://www.globalpartnership.org/education-costs-per-child> retrieved during May 2019, using data from the Global Education Monitoring Report 2015, available at <http://en.unesco.org/gem-report/node/819#sthash.1locfe6b.6QTRZSim.dpbs>

¹⁵⁴ The calculation was undertaken by the NFMSE Technical Team in 2018 based on actual budget expenditure of NFMSE Program Document 2018 in partnership with MLRC.

training they only required refresher training after 1-2 years in areas where expertise was weak. However, in NFMSE training was required annually. For NFMSE facilitators require a very diverse range of skills. Even though, they have teaching qualifications, they still require subject specialization. Therefore, a minimum of three facilitators are required for each class. If other departments such as TVET were involved they could possibly seconder a resource person and share responsibility for capacity development and for course load.

Another significant cost related to materials for the vocational training and to tablets. Tablets are likely to have a maintenance and replacement cost of approximately 20% purchase price adding to the ongoing operational expenses¹⁵⁵. However, the opportunity for students to learn ICT and to learn practical skills through vocational subjects was lauded. Costs can be reduced by avoiding these purchases but the quality of the Programme is likely to suffer.

Mae Sot provided a possible working template in engagement of local basic education providers to deliver NFMSE. In Mae Sot experienced teachers in the centers were engaged in additional work at additional pay to teach NFMSE. This model would not be suitable in all cases but may help reduce facilitator, monitoring and management costs¹⁵⁶.

4.3.2. (3.02) Is the NFMSE a flexible delivery mechanism as intended?

Evidence: Strong

NFMSE has demonstrated flexible delivery mechanisms through its partnership model. Partnerships with religious institutions, NGO and government organizations have demonstrated effectively delivery of NFMSE. The programme has demonstrated flexibility in the delivery of education services. In Mae Sot the programme operated through the basic education schools and facilitators taught NFMSE classes as additional to formal education classes and classes were operated as full day classes. In other townships classes generally operated from late afternoon to evening. In Hinthada, the programme was operated through a monastery and some children undertook NFMSE and religious training. Different levels of support were provided to children in different locations depending on perceived needs and modalities of local support.

There are aspects of non-formal service delivery which were not demonstrated which include public private partnerships and utilization of local TVET colleges. MLRC may also have limited capacity to adapt to expansion of the Programme and DAE has limited experience in managing the Programme e.

The NFMSE partnership model provides flexibility to expand the Programme as additional partner contributions and assistance can be sought. However, there are presently limitations on the central capacity to coordinate and manage the Programme. DAE has limited experience in managing the Programme and MLRC has resource limitations in the capacity to provide technical and coordination support.

4.3.3. (3.03) How cost-effective is the NFMSE?

Evidence: Moderate

¹⁵⁵ 20% replacement / maintenance cost is an industry accepted standard for ICT

¹⁵⁶ UNESCO report that this is also a model applied in Laos

At present there is no viable alternative to NFMSE for older children from vulnerable families who must work. The cost of not educating these children is likely to be significantly higher in the longer term and negatively impact Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Providing pro-poor support to families of vulnerable children attending middle school and adjustments to middle school curriculum to offer skill and vocational subjects may help provide a viable alternative to NFMSE for some children. The cost effectiveness will be dependent on the eventual outcome for the individual students. A key factor will be national acceptance of the certification obtained through NFMSE and the capacity it affords students to transition into the workforce, vocational training or upper secondary education. The unit cost per child is acceptable and there is a possible scope to reduce costs¹⁵⁷.

There is capacity to improve the cost-effectiveness by reducing costs of NFMSE or making the Programme more effective. These recommendations are included in this report.

The cost per beneficiary is calculated using enrolment rates, as the focus is on the opportunity to learn. This means that high dropout rates will increase the unit costs per completer. If partners were can offer more targeted support to students to increase retention then this would improve the Programme 's impact and cost efficiency.

"NFMSE is really good for the community. The knowledge of the education helps them not to do the wrong things. There is a Myanmar saying "if the schools open, the door of the jails automatically closes". They can become skillful workers in agriculture, domestic work and ICT. This is really good for the community."

Loikwa Township TEO

The evidence from this evaluation indicates that children who attend NFMSE are unlikely to attend formal school due to work commitments, lack of support and inability to easily adapt back to formal schooling¹⁵⁸. Measuring cost effectiveness is therefore dependent on the comparisons to the alternative of not educating the children who will participate in NFMSE.

Research demonstrates the significant GDP drag as a result of the economic cost of out-of-school children in other South-East Asian countries where there is a high out-of-school population¹⁵⁹. This further emphasizes the importance to Myanmar as a country of encouraging re-entry to the formal system, and improving the attendance rates and transition rates for NFPE would be an important contribution in this area.

Pro poor support to children of vulnerable families may help facilitate children to return to formal middle school and changes to the formal middle school curriculum to offer skill and vocational subjects, may help to offer a viable alternative to NFMSE for some children.

¹⁵⁷ Refer question (3.01) How big is the efficiency or utilization ratio of the resources used, both in terms of human and financial resources and compared to other alternative education approaches?

¹⁵⁸ Refer question (2.12) During implementation, have there been systematic and appropriate efforts to include various groups of children particularly the most vulnerable (eg: gender/region/children with Disability)?

¹⁵⁹ Burnett, N. et al. (2015); The Economic Cost of Out of School Children in Southeast Asia; UNESCO Bangkok

4.4. Impact

4.4.1. (4.01) Has the NFMSE enabled students to successfully make the transition to formal education?

Evidence: Moderate

The evaluation was undertaken just prior to the end of the final semester and therefore final outcomes such as transition rate to formal and vocational education or into the workforce could not be measured. A tracer study undertaken on students is required to assess final outcomes. Children and parents expressed a desire for their children to transition into either High School or vocational education however financial barriers remain for many families and there is presently no High School Equivalency Programme.

The government must make a clear policy statement concerning the recognition of the NFMSE award and the options it makes available to children¹⁶⁰. Policy recognition can be facilitated through the Central Accreditation Committee (refer annex 10) however at present the unit has not formed.

Almost all students who sat exams in semester 5 passed the exams in all townships. Given the academic standard is close to middle school, this indicated that learning gains have been established. From those originally enrolled completion rates are likely to be 61%. In focus discussion groups, children expressed their intention to transition into either formal or vocational education. For example, in Maesot, approximately 80% of students wanted to transition to high school and the remainder to vocational¹⁶¹. In Hinthada, out of 17 students, 7 expressed desire to go to high school, 3 will work, 1 student will transition to vocational and 6 will become monks and join high school. MLRC provided survey results indicating 43% (76) children were to attend High School and 33% (58) to TVET institutions but the results are not evidenced.

However, parents (9) also noted the barrier of poverty which were not removed by the Programme and noted that there was presently no Non Formal Higher Education (NFHE) Equivalency Programme to which students could transition. They reported that their children still had to work which may limit the opportunities available to them upon completion.

"I want them to join High School but my grandchild feels very differently. He tells me that its going to be very expensive and we cannot afford to join. Now we cannot join further as we do not have money to do so. We want our children to be educated and I will try my best to send my child to another school afterwards."

Parent in Hlaing Tharyar Township

The DAE also questioned whether there was a path for NFMSE students to the formal system and noted the need to better understand the quality of NFMSE graduates.

¹⁶⁰ The transition path for students is not yet determined. There is a formal examination at the end of Grade 9 which determines entry into Upper Secondary school but it is not clear whether students who complete NFMSE will be permitted to sit the exam.

¹⁶¹ Verified by a recent survey conducted by HWF

Stronger links with TVET colleges at the township may help facilitate student transition to TVET colleges. The DAE had requested that students be awarded a national youth education certificate at the completion of the course but that has not occurred.

4.4.2. (4.02) To what extent is NFMSE resulting in learning gains beyond academic achievement (i.e., vocational training, other skills)?

Evidence: Moderate

Students have experienced learning significant gains beyond academic ones. The basic vocation subjects have helped equip them with practical skills which can be used in their work and home life such as agriculture, sewing and handcrafts. The Quality of Life Improvement and Social and Community Development skills have been beneficial in students' interactions with others and helping them to focus and stabilize their lives towards a productive future.

The NFMSE curriculum is contextualized and relevant to the benefitting children, particularly the most vulnerable¹⁶². All parents (39) believed the NFMSE was beneficial for the community in reducing delinquency, improving morals and manners, engaging children to become productive members of society, and in encouraging participation in community works. Facilitators (21) noted improved behavior and communication amongst students. One student in Loikaw Township noted *"We feel we communicate better with people. We can speak more meaningfully than before. We have mutual respect towards others."*

Students were able to give numerous examples of how the Programme assisted them in the home and in life. A small selection of examples is included below from students in Hlaing Tharyar Township:

I have learnt:

- 'Cooking and now I can cook Myanmar traditional style at home.'
- 'Social development and communication, and I can deal with the quarter and my home in a very good way.'
- 'Social development, quality of life and social ethics.'
- 'Agriculture for growing things at home'

The evidence suggests that students find the basic vocation subjects to help equip them with practical skills which can be used in their work and home life. The Quality of Life Improvement and Social and Community Development skills have been beneficial in student's

"Life skills, civics and morals subjects shape the children's character. Children also acquire health knowledge (the danger of eating betel nuts, smoking, etc.) and the agriculture lessons have helped them in their daily lives."

Kyaikhto Township Monitor

"They have learnt how to treat people with respect and interact with people"

Facilitator in Hlaing Tharyar Township

¹⁶² Refer to question (1.05) Is the NFMSE curriculum contextualized and relevant to the benefitting children, particularly the most vulnerable?

interactions with others and helping them to focus and stabilize their lives towards a productive future¹⁶³.

4.5. Sustainability

4.5.1. (5.01) To what extent are the positive effects or impacts of NFMSE sustainable?

4.5.1.1. General Findings

Evidence: Moderate

Partners who participated in NFMSE, UNESCO, UNICEF and HWF have expressed interest in continuing the Programme. Interested partners also include Save the Children, Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO), World Bank, MLRC and World Education.

The impact of the NFMSE is likely to be sustainable if children can capitalize on the middle school education, they have received either through: enhanced opportunities of employment or education; improved capacity to manage their own lives and decrease the likelihood of negative effects such as drug dependencies or crime. As indicated in section 5.5.1¹⁶⁴, students have experienced positive changes to their lives which may prove sustainable.

NFMSE's sustainability will likely be dependent on the following factors:

1. The capacity for NFMSE to be a viable alternative for vulnerable children who otherwise cannot attend formal middle school.
2. Capacity to extend partnerships use funding to expand the Programme to cover more townships.

4.5.1.2. NFMSE as a viable alternative to formal Middle School

This evaluation concludes that NFMSE does play an important role in targeting students who otherwise would not be able to participate in middle school education. The likely benefits of the Programme to these children has been established through the evaluation. However, NFMSE must distinguish itself clearly from formal middle school in terms of its target population. NFMSE's curriculum is contextualized to benefit vulnerable children. The following are important in distinguishing and validating NFMSE as an alternative to middle school education in Myanmar:

1. Developing robust standards for the identification of children eligible for NFMSE
2. Continuing efforts to align the academic portion of NFMSE curriculum with that of formal middle school.

¹⁶³ Reported by 21 facilitators

¹⁶⁴ (4.02) To what extent is NFMSE resulting in learning gains beyond academic achievement (i.e., vocational training, other skills)?

3. Approving the award received through NFMSE for transition to high school or vocational colleges.
4. Enabling credit transfer into the formal education system

4.5.1.3. Capacity to extend partnerships and expand NFMSE

NFMSE must demonstrate capacity to extend partnerships and use funding to expand the Programme. Presently the Programme only covers 8 townships which are geographically distributed across Myanmar. The Programme is a three-year programme and if a child is forced to drop out due to relocation then there are no alternatives to obtaining re-entry, unless the child is settled in one of the 8 townships.

Expansion will be dependent on several key factors:

1. Capacity for DAE to adapt a management role and coordinate a partnership model of funding and implementation.
2. Capacity for MLRC to expand coordination and technical support
3. Ability to attract funding for NFMSE.

"I hope this Programme will be sustainable in the future. Now most families know about our Programme and they are very interested. Children can complete and join a high technology vocational centre. It would be good to expand it to other townships."

Dala Township Monitor

The capacity issues relating to DAE and MLRC is dealt with elsewhere in this evaluation. The ability of NFMSE to attract funding will be reliant on promotion of the Programme and its benefits. Development partners should promote the Programme at forums and events throughout Asia and in Myanmar using the clear messages delivered in this evaluation.

Funding avenues to expand the Programme are presently uncertain. The DAE will shortly receive a World Bank Loan which could be partially used to expand the pilot programme¹⁶⁵. The World Bank intends to use some of the funds to scale up NFPE to 8000 students in 80 townships which offers a geographic coverage for continuation of NFMSE.

Existing partners including UNESCO, UNICEF and HWF have expressed interest in continuing and expanding the Programme. Interested partners also include MLRC, Save the Children, Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO), World Bank and World Education.

Partnering more closely with the DBE to deliver NFMSE through basic education schools using basic education teachers may offer an opportunity to expand the Programme more quickly. The changes to the basic education curriculum to add basic vocational and quality of life improvement and social and community development subjects will help align the two programmes more closely and facilitate cooperation. This would also strengthen use of the TEO, thus affording a township level office through which to implement NFMSE.

¹⁶⁵ The World Bank is still finalizing the Project Appraisal Document (PAD). The pad will have a budget of approximately 20-25M USD and disbursement will be linked to achievement indicators.

4.6. Impact on the development of and Compliance with the AE Subsector Policy Framework

The extent to which NFMSE has influenced the development of the draft AE Subsector Policy Framework is difficult to attribute. The NFMSE and reference to its characteristics are included throughout the sub-sector standards. There is no strong evidence that the NFMSE has influenced the development of the AE sub-sector framework. The framework was reported to have been designed based on analysis of best practice and localization to the context of Myanmar and the NFMSE has been designed similarly.

The framework is designed to help ensure that learners have access to education outside the formal school and they can apply this learning to better their lives. The framework recognizes and to some extent supports the diverse approach needed under AE to provide for the different needs of out-of-school children at different levels of education.

The credit transfer system is not facilitated or referenced in the AE Subsector Policy Framework document. Refer Annex 17 for a review of the AE Policy Sub-Sector Framework.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

This evaluation concluded that NFMSE was successfully piloted in 8 townships. The townships were managed under a partnership model which included DAE township (Dala), UNICEF in 3 townships (Myitkyina, Loikaw, Sittwe), UNESCO [with support from the Government of Japan and the Korean National Commission for UNESCO] in 2 townships (Hlaingthayar, Kyaikhto), local education donors in 1 township (Hinthada) and Help Without Frontiers in 1 township (Myawaddy- Maesot). The NFMSE programme has been provided at 14 centers in 8 townships covering around 200 out-of-school children. It is presently being implemented in its final semester.

NFMSE has proved that alternative middle school education (equivalency) can be achieved in Myanmar. Retention, completion and transition rates were high and dropout rates throughout the Programme were acceptable given the vulnerable circumstances of the students¹⁶⁶. A total of 176 (GPI 0.71) children attending S6 and that previous semester completion rates indicate that almost all students will pass. 84% of the target was achieved. It has demonstrated an alternative strategy viable for vulnerable, out-of-school children of age 13+ has been developed and delivered via a flexible delivery mechanism.

NFMSE faces unique challenges which are not apparent in formal middle school. These include:

- 1) Small communities and with mobile families: the townships in which NFMSE operated are small communities and many of the families in these communities are transient. NFMSE therefore has the challenge of providing services with a smaller intake of pupils over a broader geographic area.
- 2) Defining its target population: many children attending NFMSE were younger at intake than the minimum age of 13. This is not necessarily a negative as it enables younger children who may not be able to attend secondary school a chance to gain middle school equivalency. However the MoE has expressed strong concern that NFMSE should not become a parallel programme with the formal system. It will be important for NFMSE to define clear criteria for participation such as household income, disability, or vulnerable in other ways.
- 3) Disability: although the learning environment is often conducive to inclusive learning, there is no specific training or provision for NFPE to effectively support disabled children.
- 4) Facilitator retention: the poor facilitator retention was likely a result of low remuneration in the form of wages and pension. This leads to higher training costs and management overheads and lowers the quality of teaching provided. Ensuring facilitator retention will be important for maintaining quality.

5.1. Relevance

NFMSE was found to be relevant to the education goals, priorities and policies of the MoE and the needs of out-of school children in Myanmar.

The activities and outputs of the NFMSE are consistent with the goals and objectives of the NESP. NFMSE meets the objectives of the Transformational Shift for Alternative Education which is: ***Learners can access***

¹⁶⁶ The overall % dropout throughout the cycle S1 to S6 was 31.7% (refer Annex 6).

and graduate from quality-assured certified and nationally credentialed alternative education programmes to achieve their learning and career aspirations¹⁶⁷. NFMSE achieves this by demonstrating a workable model for middle school equivalency education in the selected townships. The goal of the NESP is articulated in chapter 10 which defines the objectives of AE. NFMSE has been designed to address all objectives established for NFMSE in Myanmar. NFMSE also supports the national education priorities and policies..

NFMSE fulfils an important role in addressing the significant problem of middle school out-of-school children in Myanmar by providing a flexible and practical based learning programme for vulnerable children who have missed out on middle school education. The flexible operating hours, emphasis on life skills and vocation subjects and support given to vulnerable children ensure NFMSE fulfils a role which is not being met through the formal system. This provides an opportunity for children to re-enter the formal or vocational systems or gain practical skills to help succeed in the workplace.

The design of the Programme, its activities and outputs, were aligned with its objectives. Resource persons, facilitators monitors and head teachers have equipped with academic training to provide equivalency middle school education to out-of-school children. 180 students were facilitated with 6 semesters of training in NFMSE curriculum. Support for students in the form of stipends, materials and equipment was provided by development partners. Facilitators were given 10 days training each semester and supported in each township. These directly contributed towards objective 1 concerning enrolment and delivery of curriculum to NFMSE learners and 3 concerning provision of facilitators. However insufficient resources were likely applied to achieve objective 2 concerning the developing the National Accreditation Quality Assurance Guidelines and AE Sub-Sector Policy Framework informed by the lessons & experience from this programme. It is important that the requirements of NFMSE are included in the AE Sub-Sector Policy Framework. The credit allocation and transfer system needs to be referenced in the framework. The partnership model developed under NFMSE should be also be included in the framework and in the partnership strategy being developed by DAE.

The theoretical linkages to formal middle school and vocational education are strong. The capacity for students to undertake vocational subjects and core formal middle school subjects should in principal ensure that students are prepared for transition to either upper secondary school or vocational education. **However, the MoE is yet to issue a policy statement concerning the qualifications obtained at the conclusion of NFMSE and until such is issued students may encounter barriers to transition.** NFMSE must be seen as catering to students who cannot attend formal education. **Ensuring proper selection criteria will be critical to promoting NFMSE as a solution for out-of-school children in Myanmar.**

The needs of boys and girls as being explicitly distinct are not stated in any project documentation and interviews and the national workshop did not highlight any needs specific to either boys or girls. The NFMSE neither favors nor biases against either boys or girls. The curriculum, materials, timetable and committee and Programme intakes were founded on the principal of equality and inclusiveness and teachers were trained to treat both girls and boys equally and to encourage the participation of both. The timetable was structured so as to address the needs of boys and girls equally, and the course materials were inclusive. Committees encouraged representation of both men and women.

¹⁶⁷ NESP 10.2: AE Transformational Shifts

5.2. Effectiveness

NFMSE was found to be effective in ensuring vulnerable children receive an opportunity to complete the middle school equivalency programme. NFMSE achieved its objectives but questions remain as to its capacity to meet the need of a wide range of vulnerable children and concerning the longer-term outcome for vulnerable children having participated in the programme.

NFMSE has proved that alternative middle school education (equivalency) can be achieved. Retention, completion and transition rates were high and dropout rates, whilst high, were acceptable given the vulnerable circumstances of the students,¹⁶⁸. MLRC reported that 176 (GPI 0.71) children attending S6 and that previous semester completion rates indicate that almost all students will pass. 84% of the target was achieved. It has demonstrated an alternative strategy viable for vulnerable, out-of-school children of age 13+ has been developed and delivered via a flexible delivery mechanism.

NFMSE has increased access for vulnerable children in the selected townships. However, the predominant type of vulnerable child targeted by the Programme were those who were older and from poor households where work was a necessity. Challenges are likely to emerge if the Programme expands to include other types of vulnerable children, such as those who cannot speak, read or write Burmese or children with disabilities. The Programme has made efforts to include vulnerable children. These include both formal and informal provision of stipends, textbooks, transport allowances, food and field trips. Attribution of retention and participation to these efforts is difficult to establish.

Townships were not able to provide accurate data on out-of-school children and methods for tracking out-of-school children in Myanmar are weak. It is therefore difficult to determine how effective the Programme is in identifying and including all types of vulnerable children. The geographic limitations also inhibited the Programme's capacity to support children from transient or mobile families. Due to the limited number of centers, such children would have to remain in the same area to be able to participate in NFMSE. There is scope to improve national tracking of out-of-school children and in particular vulnerable children. Improved data will help confirm improvements to access and participation of these children. The large number of out-of-school children estimated to exist in Myanmar¹⁶⁹ indicate there is significant potential to reach more children, but NFMSE must prove scalable and children must be properly identified and assisted in order for it to be effective.

The NFMSE model is flexible and can be expanded with additional support. Under the current model for NFMSE, the capacity to reach more children will be contingent obtaining additional the funding both at the national and local levels. The partnership model would facilitate the Programme to expand access and reach children in more townships. It will be important to promote the benefits the Programme has towards vulnerable children to encourage additional partners to help support the Programme e. It will also be important to ensure communities, and the parents of vulnerable children, are aware of the Programme and understand its benefits to ensure there is adequate demand for the Programme.

Materials designed and used contributed towards effective delivery as evidenced through classroom observation and student completion and pass rates. Materials for some subjects such as ICT are expensive

¹⁶⁸ The overall % dropout throughout the cycle S1 to S6 was 31.7% (refer Annex 6).

¹⁶⁹ MoE estimate 456,947 children aged between 10 and 13 as being OOS (DBE 2015)

and limited under the Programme which impacts the quality of teaching delivery. Enhancing local public private partnerships and mobilizing community funding are means of increasing resourcing to NFMSE.

Teaching quality was likely slightly below that of formal middle school owing to a number of factors including high facilitator turnover. It is likely that higher staff remuneration and better employment packages would help reduce this.

The credit transfers, in principle, are appropriate and effective for vulnerable children who are more likely to drop out then re-enter the school system. However, they are cumbersome to implement. The information on each child's credit scores is only stored at the township level which limits the capacity of children to transfer credits to other townships. Credits are also not transferable to the formal education system. If credits are recognized by formal middle schools it may facilitate students to transfer back to the formal system.

The township management committees can be effective means of mobilizing resources, providing local advocacy, and helping to locate out-of-school children and ensuring cooperation and coordination of local stakeholders. Township management committees should be monitored centrally and have the active involvement of the Town Education Officer (TEO) to be most effective.

Expansion of the Programme and reaching more children will be contingent on funding and awareness. The Programme has the potential to reach more children but awareness in the local communities and township level government agencies must be enhanced.

5.3. Efficiency

NFMSE was moderately efficient in achieving its outputs and has demonstrated an effective partnership model applicable effective in increasing access to middle school equivalency education for vulnerable children. However, there are some areas where cost gains may be achieved if the programme is scaled and if compromises are made in some areas such as ICT.

NFMSE has demonstrated flexible delivery mechanisms through its partnership model. Partnerships with religious institutions, NGO and government organizations have demonstrated effectively delivery of NFMSE in diverse environments such as monasteries, basic education institutions and across diverse geographic areas. The Programme has demonstrated flexibility in the delivery of education services. Different levels of support were provided to children in different locations depending on perceived needs and modalities of local support.

There are aspects of non-formal service delivery which were not demonstrated which include public private partnerships and utilization of local TVET colleges. MLRC may also have limited capacity to adapt to expansion of the Programme and DAE has limited experience in managing the Programme. The partnership model also has constraints in increasing management and coordination issues and reducing the capacity to share resources effectively. There are presently limitations on the central capacity to coordinate and manage the Programme

Information on cost effectiveness of alternative modes of education is sparse and unit costs are very dependent on local conditions and challenges. **The evaluation concludes that NFMSE was moderately effective in utilization of resources compared to other approaches both alternative and formal.** Given the limitations of the pilot in terms of size and geographic spread. Unit costs per child per year (\$433USD) were higher than but comparative to costs estimated to deliver middle school education in other developing

countries (\$377 USD). The smaller class sizes and requirement for multiple facilitators to teach the diverse subjects were contributing factors. High partner administrative costs also contributed.

There is scope to reduce unit costs per student. Utilizing Basic Education facilities and teachers to deliver courses would likely help share costs. Public private partnerships may help provide materials for vocational subjects and ICT. Management and monitoring costs of partners could be reduced and streamlined over larger scale deployment of NFMSE.

In terms of cost effectiveness, the cost of not educating these children must be weighed against the impact on Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the longer term and on the impact on the individual children and their families. The cost effectiveness will be dependent on the longer-term impact for the individual students as a result of participating in NFMSE. The evidence suggests that children are already benefiting and will benefit in the long run. The cost per beneficiary is calculated using enrolment rates, as the focus is on the opportunity to learn. This means that high dropout rates will increase the unit costs per completer. If partners were can offer more targeted support to students to increase retention, then this would improve the Programme's impact and cost efficiency. If other recommendations concerning opportunities for cost reduction are implemented then the cost efficiency will improve.

5.4. Impact

NFMSE resulted in a positive impact on children and their families. Children experienced positive impact academically, socially and in life skills applicable to their circumstances. However the longer term impacts are uncertain and may be dependent on further government support for these children.

Children and parents expressed a desire for their children to transition into either High School or vocational education however financial barriers remain for many families and there is presently no High School Equivalency Programme. MLRC provided survey results indicating 43% (76) children want to attend High School and 33% (58) want to attend TVET institutions but the results are not yet evidenced. The success of the children will ultimately help benefit the families by enabling the children to succeed. A tracer study is required to assess final outcomes.

To help ensure a positive impact, the government must make a clear policy statement concerning the recognition of the NFMSE award and the options it makes available to children. Policy recognition can be facilitated through the Central Accreditation Committee (refer annex 10) however at present the unit has not formed.

Students have experienced learning significant gains beyond academic. The basic vocation subjects have helped equip them with practical skills which can be used in their work and home life such as agriculture, sewing and handcrafts. The Quality of Life Improvement and Social and Community Development skills have been beneficial in students' interactions with others and helping them to focus and stabilize their lives towards a productive future. Parents also benefitted from the stability the Programme has brought to their children.

Facilitators gained benefits from being trained under the Programme, however, low retention rates are likely to dilute the benefits to the Programme e if it is continued. The same is true of others who have participated in the Programme such as township monitors and heads of centers.

Negative changes or impacts cannot be analyzed due to lack of data. There were no negative consequences reported for individuals having participated in the Programme and no apparent or reported negative impacts on any individuals.

5.5. Sustainability

Sustainability of NFMSE under its current modalities is highly dependent on the partnerships which enabled the pilot to occur successfully. The government is undergoing a transition and DAE is a relatively new department. The DAE and MLRC both have capacity issues which will need to be addressed in order to sustain and expand the programme.

Partners who participated in NFMSE, UNESCO, UNICEF and HWF have expressed interest in continuing the Programme. Interested partners also include Save the Children, Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO), World Bank, MLRC and World Education. The DAE has a lead role in the formulation of the AE subsector policy framework and on determining and coordinating funding and budget for NFMSE. The DAE can play a lead role in establishing a recurrent budget for NFMSE and an effective partnership model under which partners can support implementation of NFMSE at the township level. Strengthening partnerships with DBE and TVET and utilizing their expertise and services will also increase the likelihood of sustainability and help reduce costs per student.

There are challenges to sustainability of the Programme. At present the NFMSE is highly dependent on development partner support. The MoE has also expressed concerns that it does not want NFMSE to enroll students who would otherwise have participated in formal middle school education. The opportunities to learn ICT and vocational subjects and to attend fewer hours are attractive to some families. Ensuring NFMSE has a distinct target population is important to ensuring its support from MoE. Closely related to this is increasing the capacity to understand the different target population groups and ensuring NFMSE needs their needs. At present monitoring systems concerning individual children are weak and data on out-of-school children is poor and needs to be strengthened.

Ensuring consistent funding will also be important when considering sustainability. The ability of NFMSE to attract funding will be reliant on promotion of the Programme and its benefits. Development partners should support the MoE and DAE in promoting the Programme at forums and events throughout Asia and in Myanmar using the clear messages delivered in this evaluation.

Sustainability of the impacts of the NFMSE on individual students is likely. The evidence suggests students have experienced significant learning and personal gains which will benefit them in the future in their lives, further study and careers.

5.6. Lessons learned:

4. NGOs operating at a local level can play a vital role in identifying target beneficiaries, selecting centers, recruiting, facilitating the training of teachers and supervisors, assisting in the management of centers, monitoring and evaluation, and financial management. NGO therefore require a strong commitment combined with a significant amount of experience and sound financial and project management. NGO can also play a role after completion of the training through continued support for the vulnerable children having participated in the program to either continue further study, facilitate integration into the workforce and offer ongoing livelihood support. The role of NGOs is critical in the successful implementation of NFE programs, for quantity and quality and therefore NGO selection should be

carefully considered, and NGO managed and communicated with throughout the programme. Selecting NGOs with a strong track record, local presence, commitment, and if possible, capacity to offer further support after the program will likely result in the greatest probability of long term success for children participating in the programme.

5. There is a need for innovation to move away from replicating the same model to actually scaling the impact of programmes such as NFMSE. With multiple children facing multiple barriers, no single intervention can be expected to be a blanket solution and therefore NFMSE programmes need to have flexible approaches to supporting children and ensuring they complete the programme and afterwards transition to successful outcomes. Non-formal education programmes for school-aged children provide education for those who face specific barriers in accessing the formal, general provision. NFE programmes, therefore, cannot themselves expect to meet these multiple needs by being generalists. Flexible approaches dependent on the local context such as targeted support, flexible operating hours, and variations in vocational training, are likely needed to ensure NFE can meet the need of a broader range of children.
6. Programmes such as NFMSE which include vocational and life skills subjects can demonstrate many tangible and intangible benefits to vulnerable children including assisting them with their home and work life and preparing them for the workforce or transition to vocational education. However vocational training requires materials which are expensive and add to the costs of operating such subjects. A balance must be met between the provision of materials to support subject delivery, and the cost of providing these benefits. There is scope to reduce costs of Costs can potentially be reduced with a broader range of partnerships such as with industries in sectors relating to some subjects. At the same time it is essential to ensure that NFMSE has an acceptable commonality with the formal middle school education curriculum, especially for academic and communication subjects (e.g. Maths, Myanmar language, English language, the Sciences, Social Studies). This is to create better opportunities through official recognition so that graduates are acceptable and can pursue their high school education in formal schooling.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations are listed in the recommendations framework below. Each recommendation is assigned a responsibility, priority and timeframe. A narrative summary is presented in the executive summary to this report. The main recommendations are presented in the table below. Secondary and more specific recommendations are detailed in Annex 18.

Recommendations were validated through the quality review process outlined in section 3.7. Recommendations were validated through the peer review process which involved the document being reviewed by the UNICEF regional and country offices, DAE, MLRC and other stakeholders. The recommendations were discussed and validated at a final workshop conducted during May 2019. Final evaluation workshop participants are shown in Annex 3.

Table 7. Main Recommendations which will have the greatest Impact on NFMSE

SN	Recommendation	Relevance to Question	Responsibility	Priority	Timeframe
1	Credit transfer and Accreditation alignment with formal Middle school: Graduates from NFMSE must have nationally awarded certification if they are to easily transfer into other forms of education. The MoE should issue a policy statement authorizing the NFMSE accreditation as suitable for transition into vocational training and upper secondary education. The Central Accreditation Committee should form and assist in policy drafting and approval. The DAE should assist with the drafting of the policy. The policy should be encapsulated in the AE sub-sector policy framework and in the revised education law. The MoE should issue a policy statement concerning transfer of credits earned through the NFMSE to the formal education system to help facilitate students to transfer into the formal system. Partnering more closely with DBE and TVET at the sub-national level would help to enable standards at the township level and facilitate the implementation of the credit system.	1.03 2.07	DAE DAE, MLRC, DBE, DTJET	High	2019, 2020
2	Formal curriculum alignment with formal Middle School: The (formal) curriculum should be reviewed to ensure alignment with revisions to the Basic Education Curriculum being undertaken by DERPT. The review should be undertaken upon finalization of the revised Basic Education Curriculum. DERPT, DAE and MLRC should cooperate on the review. Consideration should be given to a revision of the curriculum with the possible consolidation of some subjects, such as Morality and Civics or Applied and Specialised Mathematics, to teaching Mathematics and English each semester (in all semesters). For subject revision, MLRC have relied on the Yangon University, Curriculum and training	1.03	DAE, MLRC, DBE	Medium	2020

SN	Recommendation	Relevance to Question	Responsibility	Priority	Timeframe
	Department. There is a need to identify experts from each discipline however Yangon can provide experts only in formal education and so there is a need to strengthen linkages with vocational colleges for vocational subjects.				
3	Incentives to ensure facilitator retention should be provided. High facilitator turnover increases the costs of delivering NFMSE and lowers the quality of service provision. Facilitator remuneration should be made equivalent to the basic education system with proper compensation to help increase retention. Partnering with DBE at the township and centre level would enable DBE teachers to teach NFMSE in some regions.	2.05	DAE, DBE	High	2019
4	Systematic support to children from vulnerable backgrounds should be considered. Financial support to poorer households could encourage children to study in the formal sector or help increase retention in NFMSE. Myanmar has been piloting a Mother Child Cash Transfer Programme which supports children for the period of up to two years. This programme could potentially be extended to families on the condition these children study at middle school level.	2.12	DAE, World Bank	High	2019/2020
5	Strengthening DAE capacity to manage partnerships. NFMSE is highly dependent on partnerships for support and funding and its success will depend on expansion of those partnerships and the development of new partnerships. The DAE is presently working on a policy, strategy and guidelines to encouraging and managing Partnerships in AE ¹⁷⁰ . The policy and guidelines should include advice and means of developing local public private partnerships for enhancing resourcing to NFMSE, particularly in the area of vocational subjects such as agriculture, sewing, hand crafts, and textile factories to enable either boys or girls employed through such organisations to attend. For vocational subjects, partnerships between NFMSE with TVET colleges through DTVET could ensure resource persons	2.04	DAE, MLRC	High	2019

¹⁷⁰ Objectives include: DAE will be responsible for implementation of the AE Partnership Coordination Mechanism; DAE will provide strong leadership, quality assurance and oversight of AE Partnerships; DAE will establish a dedicated section responsible for implementing AE Partnerships responsible for all aspects of AE Partnerships ; AE Partnerships will be based on an officially signed AE Partnership Agreement (i.e. like a formal contract)

SN	Recommendation	Relevance to Question	Responsibility	Priority	Timeframe
	for vocational subjects and help share responsibility for capacity development and for course load. Such partnerships would may enable and encourage more children to attend. Likewise, it is essential that lessons learned from the NFMSE in operating partnerships at the township level and mobilising resources for NFMSE are incorporated into the proposed Partnership Coordination Mechanism. The future of the Programme is likely to be highly dependent on partner funding as well as mobilisation of community resources and public private partnerships. The partnership framework should also specify standards for partner monitoring and financial reporting. Consideration should be given to the DAE assigning a unit to manage and monitor the NFPE and NFMSE programmes at central level and local levels.				
6	Better understand the longer term outcomes of NFMSE on individuals: It is important to better understand the impact NFMSE will have on the lives of individuals. This will help inform future iterations of the programmes and other forms of support including post-programme support to children who have participated. Following the completion of the NFMSE pilot, a tracer study should be conducted to record the progress of students 6 months, 12 months and 3 years following completion. The tracer study should inform future programme recommendations/changes.	2.02	DAE	High	2019 onwards
7	Investigate unit cost reduction strategies: Reducing unit costs will enable NFMSE to reach more children. Larger class sizes would help reduce per student costs but would likely degrade the learning experience and jeopardize the support available to vulnerable children. Other recommendations are also likely to lead to cost reductions such as measures to increase facilitator retention. Cost reduction strategies should be reviewed and piloted in future iterations of NFMSE.	3.01	DAE	High	2019
8	Expand the capacity for NFMSE to reach different types of vulnerable children: Children with disabilities are not facilitated through the programme. The programme and subjects should be reviewed for children with disabilities inclusion and guidelines developed for children with disabilities inclusion and standards developed for NFMSE facilities, facilitators and subjects to help classify the centres for children with disabilities as disability friendly.	2.12	DAE, MoE, Child Protection	Medium	2020/2021

SN	Recommendation	Relevance to Question	Responsibility	Priority	Timeframe
	<p>In the broader scheme, the MoE should develop a means for properly identifying and tracking children with disabilities to help identify children with disabilities who may be able to benefit from programmes such as NFMSE. NFMSE also needs to work in conjunction with reforms to child protection to help address issues affecting truancy. At present, families and children do not automatically qualify for counselling however, in poorer families, drug use and violence may be more prevalent. The DBE needs to work in conjunction with DAE concerning NFMSE to ensure inclusivity and help address the problems of these children including those from different ethnic backgrounds as well as mobile students.</p>				