

# Situation Analysis of the Monastic Education System in Myanmar

*Final Report*

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Front cover images: Kanthaya Monastery (left), Shwe Yin Aye Monastery (right)

Credit: Burnet Institute and MEDG

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**Myanmar Education Consortium (MEC)** works with partners to improve education for marginalised children in Myanmar - those who are not fully served by the government system - whether due to access, language, poverty or exclusion, for instance due to disability. MEC supports complementary basic education services - community-based, faith-based and ethnic education systems - through funding to partners to deliver services and organisational support to build effective organisations. The program promotes inclusive, evidence-based policy dialogue through networking and knowledge sharing. MEC is managed by Save the Children and supported by the

Governments of Australia, UK and Denmark with a program budget of AUD 29m for the current period of 2013 – 2016.

MEC is developing a revised strategy for the period to the end of 2018. This study was commissioned to provide an evidence base and recommendations on potential strategic programming priorities to MEC. The research was done in June and July 2015 and therefore the report is out of date in some respects. The views presented in this report are those of the consultants and do not necessarily represent those of the MEC.

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# Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide an evidence base for Myanmar Education Consortium's (MEC) decision on how they can best support the monastic education system in Myanmar. The monastic education system refers to the basic education schools managed and operated by monks or nuns within monasteries or nunneries<sup>1</sup>.

Monastic education is critical in ensuring learning opportunities for those children in Myanmar who are not fully served by the government system; it currently provides education to over 275,000 children and targets marginalised children often from migrant families, conflict areas or remote communities. Supporting monastic education therefore aligns with MEC's goal of increasing the number of children in Myanmar having access to and completing quality basic education.

The report analyses the monastic education system identifying what works well and could be scaled and what limitations need to be overcome. The report looks at both the policy level and the practicalities of delivering monastic education. In the final section a series of the system strengthening recommendations are proposed, each aligned with MEC's principles of sustainability, scalability and prioritising hard to reach children.

## Methodology

MEC hired a national and an international consultant to provide a situational analysis of the monastic education system to inform their strategic planning process in August 2015. As per the terms of reference this analysis looks specifically at how monastic schools provide

basic education services for school-aged children; early childhood education and adult education services are not within the scope of this review.

The methodology undertaken by the consultants included four consecutive phases:

1. Mapping of stakeholders and designing the research framework and logistics
2. Literature review of relevant background documents and previous evaluations<sup>2</sup>. The two documents referred to most often in this report are a Baseline Study conducted in 2014<sup>3</sup> and an evaluation of MEC's previous monastic education programme<sup>4</sup>
3. Interviews with monastic school staff, policy makers, service providers and donors; classroom observations
4. Analysis of findings and preparation of evidence based recommendations.

The interviews and classroom observations were conducted over 13 days in three different locations. The first 16 interviews were conducted in Yangon where the majority of service providers and donors are located. The next seven were conducted in Mandalay, which has the highest concentration of monastic schools and is where a number of other key stakeholders are also located. The final four

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2. Please refer to the Bibliography for full list of documents reviewed.

3. The Burnet Institute, Myanmar and the Monastic Education Development Group (MEDG) carried out a baseline assessment of monastic schools between July-November 2014; this included collecting qualitative and quantitative data from 127 monastic schools randomly selected in eight states and regions. This is referred to in the report as the *Baseline Study*.

4. MEDG hired an independent consultant to conduct an evaluation of their MEC funded programme. The evaluation was conducted in 10 schools of Kachin, Rakhine, Thanintharyi, Mandalay, Sagaing, Bago, and Ayarwaddy from February 2015 to March 2015. This is referred to in the report as the *Evaluation Study*.

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1. Nunnery schools were officially recognised as being part of the monastic education system by the National Sangha in 1997.

interviews were conducted in Taunggyi, Hopone and Kyauktalone Gyi townships in Shan State, which included meetings with rural schools and with ethnic education groups. The authors would like to thank all those who participated for their time and thoughtful answers.

There are two areas that need to be considered in terms of scope and limitations:

1. There is insufficient data on the monastic education system to be able to draw many quantifiable conclusions. The Ministry of Religious Affairs did provide the consultants with the most recent data available (2014-15) but this was limited in its scope (covering only student and teacher numbers and locations) and contained several discrepancies<sup>5</sup>.
2. In the time-frame available it was not possible to identify and connect with the most remote schools. Monastic schools are autonomous and therefore unless they have already engaged in a network or dialogue they are difficult to contact. This is indicative of some of the challenges in scaling and coordinating services to reach the most remote schools<sup>6</sup>.



One of the monastic schools visited by consultants  
Credit: Daw Ohnmar Tin

5. Under the current national education reform, a nation-wide Education Management Information System (EMIS) is being developed. It is not yet clear whether this will include monastic school data. If it is integrated it will improve access to data but will impose reporting requirements on all monastic schools.

6. The *Baseline Study*, which was a three-month research project experienced similar difficulties in including hard to reach schools. From the original randomly selected list of 127 schools, 31 substitutions (24%) of schools were made. The reasons for substitution included: schools not being accessible due to the monsoon season, security reasons, schools no longer operating, or principals declining to participate.

*This report was commissioned to provide the contextual understanding and initial recommendations to help structure discussions in MEC's strategic meeting in August 2015.*

# Abbreviations

<b>BIM</b>	Burnet Institute, Myanmar
<b>CCA</b>	Child-Centred Approach
<b>CESR</b>	Comprehensive Education Sector Review
<b>EPIC</b>	Education Practical Implementation Committee
<b>IGA</b>	Income Generating Activities
<b>MEDG</b>	Monastic Education Development Group
<b>MESC</b>	Monastic Education Supervisory Committee
<b>MIMU</b>	Myanmar Information Management Unit
<b>MoE</b>	Ministry of Education
<b>MoRA</b>	Ministry of Religious Affairs
<b>NEL</b>	National Education Law
<b>NESP</b>	National Education Strategic Plan
<b>PCF</b>	Pastalozzi Children Foundation
<b>PDO</b>	Phaung Daw Oo Monastic School
<b>PTA</b>	Parent Teacher Association
<b>RWCT</b>	Reading, Writing and Critical Thinking
<b>SC</b>	School Committee
<b>SIP</b>	School Improvement Committee
<b>TEO</b>	Township Education Officer
<b>TVET</b>	Technical and Vocational Education and Training



One of the monastic schools visited by consultants  
Credit: Daw Ohnmar Tin





Administration training at Shwe Yin Aye Monastery. Credit: Burnet Institute and MEDG

## I. Executive summary

Monastic education was the first education system in Myanmar and despite its chequered and politically sensitive history, it is still in demand today and currently provides education for 3% of school-aged children. Monastic schools provide the national curriculum for free to children who cannot access the government education system.

The monastic education system is governed by three entities, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the Ministry of Education and the National Sangha. The separate roles are well documented, but a lack of accountability creates confusion over who is actually responsible for implementation. In recent years, the significant improvements have been led directly by the head monks. Head monks are nominally autonomous in operating schools and this translates

into both benefits and challenges for the monastic education system as a whole: the key benefit is the freedom from bureaucratic constraints allowing them to operate flexibly and inclusively; the key challenge is the lack of accountability, coordination and quality assurance. It is critical to remain aware of this sensitive dynamic in considering how to strengthen the system.

One of the biggest challenges identified is insufficient funding as monastic education, on the whole, is a free service. Monastic donations are limited and do not constitute a regular cash flow and despite recent government support there is not enough to compete with government salary structures. The funding deficit therefore means not only being under-resourced, but also raises the issue of teacher retention.

Being free of charge and free of bureaucratic constraints allows monastic schools to provide access to education regardless of socio-economic status, age, access to paperwork and ethnicity. This is recognised as a key strength of the system. The only issues related to access are the policy barriers around upgrading monastic education to include middle and high schools and the problem of overcrowding.

Quality of education, and assurance around that quality needs improving in order to retain equivalent status with the government system. There has been a notable increase in the number of teacher training opportunities available that has positively influenced those teachers trained, but the findings of this report also identified some issues.

The most critical is again the retention of trained teachers for, as soon as a teacher is trained to be competent enough to take the government test, they drop out to become a better-paid government daily wage teacher. The need to improve and scale teacher training therefore should to be done in parallel with improving access to funding.

Accountability at all levels of the system is weak. This stems from the autonomous nature of the system but translates into evident challenges. Two notable issues are that donors often do not feel confident in how funds are being spent and a lack of evidence base to support policy dialogue (which would require centralised reporting to develop).

There are a number of players working to strengthen the system. The majority of these are service providers focused on teacher training. Of all the potential providers, the Monastic Education Development Group (MEDG) is the best positioned to provide scalable and sustainable support, although

the young organisation is in need of capacity development support.

Overall the needs identified can be summarised as:

- Improved accountability
- Improved self sustainability
- Improved quality
- Improved policy negotiation skills
- Improved coordination (at national, school level and between providers).

## 2. Background

The purpose of this section is to provide the reader with a contextual understanding of the monastic education system. It looks briefly at the history of monastic education and describes the beneficiaries in terms of the typical socio-economic background of the students and the outreach of monastic services.

Buddhist monasteries have been providing education since the 11th century, when King Anawrahta (1044-1287) first established Theravada Buddhism in what is now Lower Myanmar<sup>7</sup>. The focus of education was on learning Buddhist teachings, but this relied on the students being able to read the script. At the time, the monastic system, known as the Sangha, was the sole provider of education; the word for school in Myanmar language is the word for monastery (kyaung). The Sangha and the state co-existed in a cooperative, if somewhat delicately competitive, relationship, with the state recognising the important social and political role of monastic education<sup>8</sup>.

Under British colonisation (1824 to 1942/8), however the British introduced a competing education system and monastic education had to assume a subordinate role<sup>9</sup>. Since then monastic education has remained comparatively subordinated. In 1964, under the Socialist Era, all private education, which included monastic schools, were officially banned; they were allowed to re-open in 1992.

7. Maung Han Tha, *Monastic School Education, State, Religion and Sasana*, Compiled and reproduced by Aung Thein Nyunt, Deputy Director General, Department of Promotion and Propagation of Sasana.

8. Cheesman, N. (2003) *School, State and Sangha in Burma, Comparative Education*, Volume 39 No. 1 2003, Carfax Publishing p.45.

9. Between 1942-45, Myanmar was under Japanese, not British rule. Britain then ruled again from 1945 until 1948 when Myanmar won independence.

Since 1992, all registered monastic schools provide the national curriculum as prescribed by the Ministry of Education. Until recently however, monastic schools did not receive any government support. Under the current education reforms, monastic education is increasingly being recognised as a complementary system and now receives some government funding. The position of monastic schools though remains politically sensitive. They are still viewed as a competitive, parallel system by some and there is a tension due to the perception that monastic schools promotes Bamarisation. This perception is based on the fact that monastic schools are seen as receiving privileges over other faith-based schools and the misunderstanding that all monastic schools share the same attitude as the Ma Ba Tha, the fundamentalist Buddhist sect.

Despite the chequered and politically sensitive history, monastic schools now provide the national curriculum to 278,273 students in 1512 schools in all 14 states and regions in Myanmar<sup>10</sup>. Based on the recent 2014 census population data, monastic schools are educating 3% of the school-aged population (5-16 years) in Myanmar (the majority of these being primary aged). Over the last 80 years, the number has fluctuated significantly. In 1932 there were 928 schools. By 1958 this had risen significantly to 5,545. After monastic schools officially reopened in 1992, the number of schools rose quickly and by 1996 there were 1,507, only five fewer than the official number today. The number of students enrolled, however, was only 30% of today's enrolment figures. According to analysis by MIMU, between 2009-2013 there was a 12.6%

10. Department of Promotion and Propagation of Sasana, Ministry of Religious Affairs (2014-15) *Data on Monastic Education System*.

increase in the number of registered monastic schools and a 15% increase in the number of students<sup>11</sup>. These figures demonstrate demand for the services provided by the monastic system.

Today, a monastic school is best described as a basic education school located in, and managed by, a monastery or nunnery. The term refers to both village-based day schools, catering to the needs of the local community and residential schools (parahitas), which also provide food and boarding to support children from further afield. On the whole, monasteries provide their services for free<sup>12</sup>.

As of 2013-14, government primary schools officially do not charge a 'school fee'<sup>13</sup>. There are however many supplementary costs in government education which, according to one interviewee, can amount to 500 MMK a day (10,500 MMK a month<sup>14</sup>); an amount significant enough to exclude many from school<sup>15</sup>. In the government system there is also the additional cost of quasi-compulsory private tuition<sup>16</sup>. As monastic schools do not

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11. Myanmar Information Management Unit (MIMU) is a service provided by the UN Resident and Humanitarian Country team to improve the capacity for analysis and decision making through strengthening the coordination, collection, processing, analysis and dissemination of information.

12. Some monastic schools do charge either a small fee or look to parents to contribute when needed. Of the 127 schools assessed in the *Baseline Study*, 18% of funding came from parents (*Baseline Study*, p.28)

13. Myanmar is a signatory to the Education for All commitment. As part of this commitment, primary school fees have been abolished and the Ministry of Education are looking to legislate and are drafting a Free and Compulsory Education Law.

14. Interview with School In Charge, Htee Ta Zaung Monastic School, Min Te Eii Tin Quarter, Aung Nyay Thar Zan Township, Mandalay.

15. Household consumption expenditure per capita in Myanmar, 2013 was \$639.

16. Nearly all students in government schools also attend some form of private tuition. Teachers, looking to supplement their income charge for these extra classes and have made attendance in these classes synonymous with pass rate.

charge for services they are seen as catering to the poor.

The students enrolled in monastic schools typically therefore come from a low socio-economic background. All interviewees answered that poverty was the key reason children enrolled in monastic school. There is no systematic collection of demographic data on students but the following provides an indication of student type:

- High proportion of ethnic minorities – monastic schools do not discriminate against ethnicities nor religion and many of the parahitas educate children from a range of different backgrounds
- Majority lay students: only about 10% of enrolled students are novice monks or nuns<sup>17</sup>
- Mix of ages enrolled in lower grades as there are no age restrictions for late learners
- Marginal gender disparity favouring boys (52:48); in the case of novice monks and nuns however the disparity is much higher (70:30)<sup>18</sup>
- Many come from low-income families (agricultural workers, migrant workers, small-scale vendors).

Monastic schools operate throughout the country but there is a higher concentration in certain states and regions<sup>19</sup>; Mandalay has the most with 21% of the monastic schools (319 schools), followed by Yangon and Sagaing both with 13% (203 and 197 schools respectively).

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17. Ministry of Religious Affairs (2013-14) *Data on Monastic Education System*.

18. Ministry of Religious Affairs (2013-14) *Data on Monastic Education System*. For some reason the recent 2014-15 data from MoRA was not disaggregated by gender.

19. MIMU's 2012-13 map of the number of monastic schools per state and region: [http://www.themimu.info/sites/themimu.info/files/documents/SectorMap\\_Edu\\_MIMU962v02\\_Monastic%20Education%20%282012-13%29\\_12Mar13\\_A3.zip](http://www.themimu.info/sites/themimu.info/files/documents/SectorMap_Edu_MIMU962v02_Monastic%20Education%20%282012-13%29_12Mar13_A3.zip)

Kayah has the least with only 1% (8 schools<sup>20</sup>); Kachin and Chin states are also low. As yet there is no comprehensive mapping of state or non-state schools in Myanmar<sup>21</sup>.

According to stakeholder interviews, monastic schools are often in villages where there is no government provision. Data on the location of monastic schools in Rakhine for example, shows that two thirds are in villages with no government schools<sup>22</sup>. Lack of government schools is often due to the remoteness of a location or due to conflict. In the ethnic states and self-administered zones, the monastic education system seems to work alongside the ethnic education systems. However, as monastic schools are nominally autonomous there is minimal direct interaction. In Mon however, the Mon National Education System (MNEC) use monasteries as a teaching venue; 17% of MNEC schools are based in monasteries; these are not though monastic schools.



Lunch time at one of the monastic schools visited by consultants. Credit: Daw Ohnmar Tin

20. Ministry of Religious Affairs (2014-15) *Data on Monastic Education System*.

21. The need to map supply and demand is recognised as a critical component of the national education reform and a school-mapping programme has been proposed as part of the Strategic Planning process underway. The importance of school mapping was highlighted in the interview with Dr. Win Aung, one of the Senior Consultants at CESR.

22. *Evaluation Study*, p.20.

*This report was commissioned to provide the contextual understanding and initial recommendations to help structure discussions in MEC's strategic meeting in August 2015.*

## 3. Key findings

The purpose of this section is to present the findings of the research and provide an analysis of the monastic education system. The first part of the section looks at the institutional and legislative framework and provides a high-level policy analysis. The second part looks at the practicalities of delivering monastic education and provides an analysis of national and school level governance and management, financing, access, quality and accountability.

### 3.1. Institutional and legislative framework

The institutional framework for monastic education is best understood as being tripartite. It includes two government ministries (the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Education) and the National Sangha Mahar Nayaka Association.

The role of the **Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA)** is best described as administrative. They manage the registration of monastic schools, deal with management problems (such as land ownership disputes) and provide the administrative framework in terms of defining the rules and regulations. They are also the official communication channel between the monastic system and government. Within MoRA, monastic education is the responsibility of Domestic Religious Affairs under the Department of Promotion and Propagation of Sasana<sup>23</sup>.

The role of the **Ministry of Education (MoE)** is in prescribing the curriculum and assessments. All registered monastic schools

23. There are three departments under Ministry of Religious Affairs: Department of Religious Affairs; Department of Promotion Propagation of Sasana; Department of International Theravada Buddhist Missionary University.

deliver the national curriculum. Students enrolled in these schools are eligible to sit the national assessments and student numbers are recorded by the MoE and included in the national figures on enrolment. It is not yet clear whether the new governance body proposed, the National Education Commission, will include a representative for the monastic school sector.

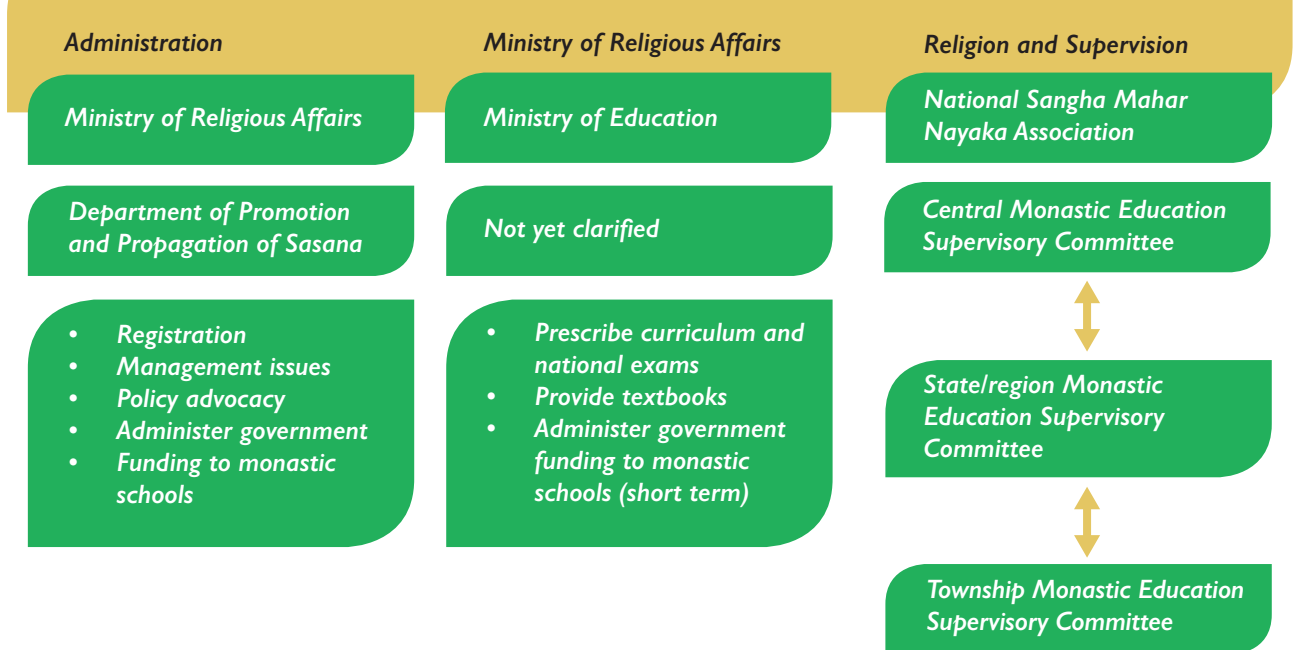
**The National Sangha Mahar Nayaka Association** is the supervisory body for monastic education. The structure of the Sangha reflects Myanmar's sub-national administration levels and there is a Monastic Education Supervisory Committee (MESC) at central, state and regional and township levels<sup>24</sup>. There is no district-level committee, as unlike the MoE's sub-national structure, the monastic system does not require this extra level of administration. The committees are composed of a range of members including representatives from MoRA and MoE. MoRA does not have structure at township level, so they assign an officer from the Immigration and Manpower Department as township level Religious Affairs Officer on the MESC.

According to the interview with the MoRA, the distinction between roles is very clear. The relationship between the two ministries was defined on 2 January 1992 when both agreed and issued the official letter **4 – Pyinnya 2 (e) 91 (1357)**. The roles and responsibilities of the MESC are detailed in MoRA's Rules and Regulations for Monastic Schools.

Despite the clearly documented roles and responsibilities, the impression given in

24. The Central Supervisory Committee for Monastic Education was established on 7 June 1995, State and Region Supervisory Committees on 3 and 4 July 1995, and township level on 29 and 30 Nov 1999.

## TRIPARTITE GOVERNANCE OF MONASTIC EDUCATION SYSTEM



interviews was of confusion around who is accountable and a perception that the entities do not function as effectively as intended. The need for clarity and accountability is also seen in the current policy level reform discussions where re-stating roles has been a priority.

One of the common issues raised is the lack of communication and coordination between the three entities. For example, the Monastic Education Development Group (MEDG) raised concerns about the lack of communication between ministries over a new school grant programme for 2015.

The funding is coming via the MoE but the orientation training for the programme describes how monastic schools would report to MoRA. MEDG is concerned that MoRA is not properly informed of their role and yet MoE has made the assumption that MoRA will provide the support needed.

### School registration

All monastic schools reportedly register with

MoRA. The process to register is relatively simple and free of charge but it can take up to one year to receive official status. The basic criteria is laid out in MoRA's book on Rules and Regulations, which is available through the township level supervisory committees<sup>25</sup>.

The registration criteria, as per the Rules and Regulations book are:

- The building must be a permanent residence; no rented premises are allowed
- There must be sufficient buildings and facilities
- There must be a sufficient number of qualified teachers (although no minimum qualification is specified)
- The minimum school size is 40 students (in rural areas this minimum is reduced to 20 students)
- The school should be able to sustain operations
- Only primary and post-primary level are

25. In 1994, the rules and regulations were promulgated in the third National Sangha Mahar Nayaka Association meeting.

allowed to register<sup>26</sup> (only those middle schools set up before or during 1998-1999 academic year are recognised).

There is no accurate data on what percentage of monastic schools register, as the only data available is from registered schools. The perception at both ministry and school level though is that the majority of schools register. The major incentive to register is to receive government subsidies; there are no ramifications of not registering (other than missing out on funding).

The registration criteria are just one part of MoRA's Rules and Regulations. In total there are eight chapters:

1. Name and definition
2. Objectives of monastic education
3. Supervisory committees
4. Roles and responsibility of Head Monks/ Nuns
5. Roles and responsibilities of teachers
6. Admission to monastic schools
7. Roles and responsibilities of students
8. Amendment of rules and regulations.

## Education reform

The legislative framework is currently being reformed. Monastic schools are now legally recognised as a complementary education system and are included in the list of school types in the new National Education Law (NEL)<sup>27</sup>. This is reiterated in the draft regulations on Basic Education. There is still confusion about how to categorise monastic education as, although it now receives some government funding, which other faith-based schools<sup>28</sup> do not receive, it still operates

26. In order to upgrade the education offer to include post-primary, a school has to re-register to receive the additional benefits.

27. *National Education Law* (2015), Chapter 6.

28. Dr. Thein Lwin, the founder of the National Network

outside of government management and quality assurance structures. This lack of central control is seen as one of the major factors limiting further government support of monastic education.

The new legislation is part of the national education reform, led by the MoE. The reform process started in October 2012 with the Comprehensive Education Sector Review (CESR). CESR was designed as a three-phase process and it is now in the final phase, which is designing and costing a five-year plan: The National Education Strategic Plan (NESP).

The NESP is currently split into eight sub-sector reports, each looking at a different segment of the education system (pre-school through to tertiary). There is not a separate sub-sector report on monastic education but it is included within the Basic Education one in the section on 'Access, Quality and Inclusion'<sup>29</sup>. This section outlines a new strategy (process and guidelines) on partnership building, including partnerships with the monastic system and ethnic minority groups.

The level of engagement with monastic schools in the reform process is not clear. According to MEDG, they offered to host a consultation and draft a report but neither materialised. This could be because of the scale and complexity of the undertaking of NESP rather than a commentary on how monastic education is considered.

In order to focus on a number of priority reforms, in October 2013, the government

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Education Reform (NNER) highlighted the policy-level distinction between monastic schools and other faith-based schools where primary-level monastic schools are legal but no other faith-based schools are. The NNER propose changing this in their Policy.

29. The NESP is currently undergoing its consultation process. The reports should be publicly available in both English and Myanmar by September 2015.



also established a group of 17 working groups, collectively called the Education Practical Implementation Committee (EPIC). EPIC included a monastic education working group, who proposed two critical recommendations in the EPIC Basic Education Task Force policy. The two recommendations were that:

1. The administration procedures of the Monastic-schools will be undertaken by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, while the Ministry of Education will undertake the upgrading school level, providing teachers, enhancing the quality of the schools, distribution of the text books for more learning opportunities of the students.
2. Equity will be established among all the students learning at basic education schools, monastic schools, religion-based schools, mobile schools and private schools. Assessment on the completion of Basic Education will equally be applied to monastic schools and private schools as they are in basic education schools.

### Draft monastic school policy

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The first monastic school policy is currently being drafted. The process is being led by the MEDG (please refer to part 2.2 for further information on the MEDG) and builds on a series of resolutions agreed by head monks in May 2015<sup>30</sup>. The policy will outline the specific regulations around how to provide monastic education and importantly argues for monastic schools to be able to upgrade to middle and high school. Officially monastic schools can only provide primary (grades 1-5) and post primary education (grades 6-8). There are though a small number of middle schools and an even smaller number of high schools<sup>31</sup>; 106 middle

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30. The resolutions were agreed by the head monks and nuns, in the presence of the Minister of Religious Affairs at a conference in Naung Taung in May 2015.

31. Phaung Daw Oo is one of the two permitted high schools. After registering the primary school in 1993, they were permitted to open a middle school in 1994. In 2000

schools with 26,066 students and two high schools with 5,480 students. These schools were either established pre-1999 when the registration rules were changed or have been established through verbal agreement with MoRA. Other secondary monastic schools have found a workaround and have affiliated with a government school. This means the students themselves are recognised by the government because they are enrolled in a local government school but attend lessons in a school that is not registered.

During the discussion with one of the senior consultants in CESR, he made it clear that, at central MoE level, there is a strong view not to let monastic schools upgrade. The reason given is concerns over the lack of quality control and governance. There are already moves to stop affiliated schools.

## 3.2 Delivery of monastic education

### Governance and management of monastic education

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**National Level:** Unlike the centralised nature of the government education system, monastic schools have always operated in relative autonomy and therefore national level governance and management is minimal. At national level there is the tripartite governance structure of MoRA, MoE and the National Sangha; of these three, the National Mahar Sangha Nayaka Association purportedly has the most active role in ‘supervising’ the schools through its sub-national supervisory committee structure. However, the perception from the stakeholders interviewed is that they do not provide systematic governance or management.

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they were allowed to open an affiliated high school. From our understanding of the interview, gaining permission was very much to do with personal relationships with senior government.

## MEDG: KEY STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<p><b>Commitment of staff</b> The majority of the staff are alumni of PDO and therefore have a good understanding of the system and a passion to support monastic education.</p>	<p><b>Activities have scaled beyond the capacity of the current organisation</b> MEDG is under-resourced for its current ambition and this affects its quality of delivery. It needs organisational development support to scale capacity.</p>
<p><b>Unique position</b> MEDG is composed of 11 of the MESC state and region chairs and is based out of a monastic school (PDO). It therefore has a powerful position, understanding and representing both community-level needs and national-level politics. This is essential in being able to strengthen the monastic education system as a whole.</p>	<p><b>Ambitions of MEDG are not representative of the average monastic school and can overlook priority areas</b> One of the key criticisms raised in the interviews was that MEDG needs to be more aware that PDO is very well-resourced in comparison to other monastic schools and when prioritising activities they need to be more aware of the realities faced by the majority of schools. This would mean a change in emphasis and a more iterative approach to implementing change programmes.</p>
<p><b>Advocacy</b> MEDG, notably through the chair, Sayadaw U Nayaka have successfully lobbied for monastic schools at policy level. The inclusion of monastic schools in the MoE school grant policy is a clear example.</p>	<p><b>Lack of clarity about role of MEDG</b> Interviewees were often confused about the role of MEDG compared to MESC and also the difference between MEDG and PDO.</p>
<p><b>Reputation</b> Through its social and political standing and its achievements to date, MEDG has a good reputation. The EFA 2015 review specifically references the work achieved by MEDG. MEDG is seen as a credible accreditation body for the Yaung Zin modules. Their success is also seen in the amount of international funding they have received from donors including MEC and EU.</p>	<p><b>Perceived as being Bamar rather than representative of all ethnicities</b> MEDG is predominantly Bamar and based in Mandalay. As the majority of MEDG staff are PDO alumni and PDO is predominantly Bamar, there is little ethnic representation in the staffing. This adds to the overall political concerns that monastic education provides mainly for the Burmese Bamar.</p>
<p><b>Project management team</b> The project management team have proved themselves to be capable of designing and managing large-scale projects and of having the right attitude to learn and meet a challenge. They have benefited from working with Burnet Institute for the last two years and have adopted many sound policies and processes to support delivery and management.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">—</p>

The more active governance structures seem to be more organic and have been led by head monks. There are two key examples that demonstrate the effectiveness of lower-level institutional governance and management: MEDG and the Monastic Education Conferences.

### **Monastic Education Development**

**Group (MEDG):** Recognising a need to work collectively to improve quality of monastic education, a new group called the Monastic Education Development Group (MEDG) was established in 2011<sup>32</sup>. The group was initiated by the chairs of the state and regional MESC and was accredited by MoRA in 2014; 11 elected head monks including the head monk of Phaung Daw Oo (PDO), the Venerable Sayadaw U Nayaka, currently lead it<sup>33</sup>. MEDG's mandate is to oversee quality development of monastic schools including support to teacher training, systems development and improvement to the school environment. Their role is both as a national level coordination body and implementation provider.

MEDG has a huge amount of potential to offer the monastic education system and in the last four years has realised many significant achievements. There is much strength within MEDG that should be recognised but there are however some concerns over their current capacity and attitudes, some of these relate to Phaung Daw Oo (PDO). PDO is the largest monastic school. It is based in Mandalay and MEDG's head office is based in the school compound. The table below maps out the

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32. One of the impetuses for setting up MEDG was an EU funded educational programme called the Monastic Education Enhancement Programme (MEEP), which highlighted the need and feasibility of improving quality teaching.

33. Eight monks were elected in 2011 when MEDG was established (all 14 states and divisions were invited and 32 people in total attended), three monks were nominated later in September 2014 because they were identified as potential new leaders (located in southern Shan, Yangon and Magway) There are now three from Yangon but two are seen as not very active.

organisation's key strengths and weaknesses.

**Monastic Education Conferences:** The first conference was held in 2014 and the second in May 2015. The conference was funded through a local donor and managed by a group of head monks. They engaged with MoRA and MoE but MoE declined the invitation to attend<sup>34</sup>. Both conferences were hosted in a large monastic school called Naung Taung Monastic School in Ho Pone, Shan State. One of the key outputs of the second conference was a series of eight resolutions for the monastic education system, which are now the basis of the draft monastic school policy:

1. Quality Assurance for monastic education
2. Implementation of integration of Myanmar educational activities and international practices
3. Find ways and means for sustainability of monastic education
4. Inclusion of environmental, moral and civic education in the curriculum
5. Making effort for establishment of monastic teacher education college and monastic education universities
6. Implement the 24 points of the 9th chapter of the Monastic Education Policy, which was agreed and adopted in this second monastic education seminar
7. Experience sharing among monastic schools
8. Making effort to upgrade monastic schools from primary level to middle school level to high school level.

**School level:** At the school level, monastic schools are governed and managed by the head monk or nun<sup>35</sup>. Traditionally they have

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34. 2015 attendees included: 1150 head monks and nuns; 510 monastic schoolteachers, Minister of MoRA, Shan State Government Prime Minister and Ministers, Pa 'O National Leader, Chairperson and members of Pa 'O Self Administrated Zone.

35. A head monk is also referred to as an abbot, principal monk or Sayadaw and a head nun as principal nun or Sayalay.

worked autonomously with little to no central management or accountability. It is the head monk or nun who makes the decision to set up a new school and as seen in the previous section, MoRAs regulations are light touch. In terms of reporting, monastic schools only have to submit their student numbers to MoE and to MoRA<sup>36</sup>; there is no requirement to submit performance data.

Because they do not work within the constraints of a central framework, the personality of the individual head monk or nun becomes a critical variable. Where the head monk or nun is passionate and driven, the school has the opportunity to thrive; where the head monk or nun lacks interest it is hard to influence change. In the monastic schools observed, there were consistently driven and engaged head monks and nuns; this again is indicative of why we were able to connect with these schools. One of the best examples of an influential head monk is Venerable Sayadaw U Nayaka, the head monk of PDO. This can be seen, not only in the size of PDO, which now exceeds 6,500 students and has children from across the country, but also in the impact he has had on training others in leadership. In talking to the MEDG team about their administration training programme, they explained how they had to continue holding workshops centrally as one of the most effective components was the session held by the Sayadaw; when this session was omitted, the effectiveness of the training decreased.

The high level of autonomy also creates problems. The lack of accountability structure means no quality assurance and therefore risks quality disparities between schools and undermines the perception of equivalence. It can also result in strained relationships as

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36. The reason for them having to submit student numbers is predominantly to calculate number of salaries to subsidise rather than monitoring.

head monks and nuns become sensitive to any compromises of their autonomy and can be easily offended. MEDG is still trying to rebuild relationships with the head monks and nuns of the schools that were not selected as San Pya (model schools) in the Monastic Education Conferences programme. The final issue to raise is that autonomy also affects knowledge sharing, as there is minimal day-to-day collaboration. The main feedback from the Monastic Education Conferences was the value of being able to find out who was doing, what, and where.

School administration is seen as weak, which means there is no data to inform decisions or processes to improve efficiency and transparency. The need to improve administration skills was mentioned repeatedly both for meeting donor criteria and in building an evidence base for advocacy. The head monk or nun is responsible for admin. In the larger monastic schools there is sometimes an assistant head monk to share the administration duties and in some schools there are reportedly administrative staff or teachers allocated to complete administration tasks<sup>37</sup>. In the smaller schools there is often no administrative function.

Currently, MEDG is the only organisation that offers administrative training. To date they have trained about 600 staff in 300 schools. According to the Evaluation Study, both the MoE and MoRA township level officers recognised improved capability in reporting and data management skills of student and teacher lists and deemed it equal to the capabilities of the government schools<sup>38</sup>. There are however still many remaining challenges and schools that have no capacity.

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37. *Baseline Study*, p.23.

38. *Evaluation Study*, p.22.

## Financing of monastic education

Monastic schools have two main sources of funding: Donations and government subsidies.

**Donations:** Like the monastic system in general, the monastic education system depends on donations (Ah Hlu). There is no data on how much this amounts to or what percentage of this is spent on education as it differs in each instance. Some of the larger monastic schools run specific ‘funds’ so donors can specify what they are donating towards e.g. education fund (teachers and learning resources) or infrastructure fund (buildings and facilities). Donations are received from individual well-wishers, charitable organisations and businesses.

The biggest proportions of donations are received from the local community and are a combination of money and gifts in kind (e.g. food and clothes). Some of the larger schools, who have a wide network and good reputation, often receive money from individual and community donors from throughout the country. The Shan and Pa 'O are seen as being particularly generous donors. Overall though, there is a concern that the amount of donations is falling.

Charitable organisations often provide gifts in kind. This may reflect concerns over the lack of accountability structures in place. The two main areas of support are infrastructure (school buildings) and teacher training. In walking around the larger monastic schools (San Mya Thidar Nunnery School and Htee Ta Zaung Monastic School), there was an assortment of plaques on the brick walls citing the names of the donors. Studer Trust, an NGO that has supported monastic schools since 2005, started out constructing school buildings and as of last year expanded to provide teacher training. One of the challenges raised in the interviews was the difficulty in accessing international funding. The schools felt they did not know

how to mobilise international donors, or how to comply with donor criteria and financial controls. According to one interview, only 1% of monastic schools currently receive agency funding<sup>39</sup>.

There is also a considerable amount of monastic school support from businesses. Parami Energy has funded the two Monastic Education Conferences in Naung Taung<sup>40</sup>. Shine Hope and Htoo Foundation, who were both interviewed for this review, are examples of businesses who donate a portion of their profits to monastic education. It is not clear whether international businesses with no connection to Buddhist belief would support monastic schools. There is not yet data on corporate giving trends to draw conclusions but the impression given by the interviewees was that Buddhist belief was a significant motivation behind most donations. In addition to this is the question about accountability structures, and whether the lack of accountability prohibits giving.

### List of donors mentioned by interviewees

(CCFT)
Terre Des Hommes (TDH) <i>Germany</i>
European Union (EU)
Global Family for the Love and Peace
Htoo Foundation
??? (KCF) <i>Hong Kong</i>
MEC (DfID and DFAT)
Mose <i>Italy</i>
New Education Highway (NEH)
NLD
Open Society Institute (OSI)
Pyoe Pin
Shine Hope
Studer Trust

39. Interview with Lakkata Charia.

40. <http://parami.com>.

Swiss Aid
Terre Des Hommes (TDH)
USAID

**Government subsidies:** Since 2013-14 the government has started providing some financial support to registered monastic schools. Initially, this support provided funding to subsidise teacher salaries. The funding formula is based on the number of enrolled students (hence the reason for reporting student numbers). Within each school, the government subsidises the cost of one teacher for the first 20 students; they then subsidise further salaries for every additional 40 students. For example in a school of 100 students three teacher salaries would be subsidised. For primary school, the government provides 36,000 MMK per month to contribute towards the salary and for post-primary 45,000 MMK. There are no subsidies for teachers in monastic middle or high school. The money is transferred from central level to the township supervisory committee every month and from there each school must come and collect the money. Most of the monastic schools interviewed were able to supplement the subsidy by 10-20,000 MMK.

As of 2015-16, the government will also include registered monastic schools in their school grant programme<sup>41</sup>. Monastic schools are the first non-state schools to be included in this programme. The MoE initiated the programme last year with support from World Bank and Australian Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade<sup>42</sup>. It provides grant funding to schools to

41. Save the Children has been contracted to run a qualitative assessment of the programme. The evaluation report following Year 1 is listed in the bibliography. The evaluation will continue next year and will include monastic schools.

42. World Bank have provided a \$80million loan over four years and DFAT \$20million grant to support the MoE's programme; the MoE has committed 100 billion MMK. The overall programme includes both school grants and student stipends for the most marginalised students in certain townships. Monastic schools are only part of the grant programme as

cover day-to-day operational expenses. The funding formula is again based on the number of enrolled students. For primary and middle school they use a threshold formula where the amount is determined by the size of school. The minimum amount is \$400, the highest \$1800. For high school, because of the extreme spectrum in sizes, they have a base amount of \$500 plus \$3.5 for every student. The money is provided in two instalments: The first in June and the second in October/November. All schools are being trained on the new procedures and provided with comprehensive guidelines. MEDG has been actively involved in training the monastic schools around Mandalay.

One of the conditions for receiving the school grant is to comply with transparency mechanisms. One of these is forming a school grant committee composed of civil society organisations, parents, teachers and head monks; the committee have to approve every expense. All expenses also have to be published on a school wall and all committee members need to be made aware of the complaints mechanism, which is via the Township Education Officer (TEO). The guidelines encourage schools to open bank accounts but this is hard for the smaller and more remote schools. Either way, the head monk or nun is not allowed to hold the money.

The other condition is that each school submits a school improvement plan (SIP). For monastic schools the SIP is based purely on the grant money as there is no other regular funding source. The grant can be split between 12 budget codes (e.g. travel, books, office equipment, minor maintenance, labour charges). It should not include any maintenance over \$200 and cannot include salaries.

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the majority of students enrolled in monastic schools are assumed to be marginalised and are already receiving free education.

The grant process is seen as complex and even the government trainers lacked clarity on how it should work; MEDG had to give a repeat orientation once they had clarified the process centrally themselves. MEDG suggest that MoE have a school grant representative for monastic schools, as currently there is no reference point for information or queries. They have requested a meeting with World Bank to discuss this. The other concern is the accountability role expected of MoRA. The guidelines specify how monastic schools will report back to MoRA but according to the interview with MEDG, MoRA themselves seem unaware.

Despite recent support from government, the issue of funding is still critical. The most notable spending deficit is teacher salaries, which are significantly lower than government schoolteachers. Increasingly, monastic schools are asking parents to contribute towards fees. According to the Baseline Study, almost a quarter of the schools had started asking for fees<sup>43</sup>. Without a steady cash flow, monastic schools cannot plan for improvements nor provide job security.

One of the areas being explored is how schools can initiate effective 'income generating activities' (IGAs). Many monasteries have already established small IGAs such as water purification and brick making<sup>44</sup>. Shine Hope, one of the corporate donors, originally gave money to subsidise salaries. Recognising that they were creating dependencies and in light of the recent government salary subsidies, the profits donated are now used to conduct sewing training and provide technical support to introduce a micro credit system. PDO has also started a small micro credit facility which

43. *Baseline Study*, p.28.

44. According to the *Baseline Study*, 30% of the schools have embarked on an IGA *Baseline Study* p.29.

charges interest to generate funds for school operating costs<sup>45</sup>.

At the 2nd Monastic Education Conference (May 2015) there was a workshop specifically to discuss ideas on how to sustain monastic schools. Part of the impetus for this workshop came from a Mandalay-based businessman who wants to support a nation-wide monastic school social enterprise. The premise is that working as a collective they would have better market access for their product.

### Accessibility of monastic education

Theoretically, monastic schools are demand driven in that where a head monk or nun recognises a need, they can establish a new school. Although the data is not sufficiently comprehensive to provide accurate mapping of locations, monastic schools are recognised as reaching areas that the government system cannot yet reach. One interviewee described the monastic education system as 'filling the gaps' of the government system<sup>46</sup>. When asked the reason for why children attend monastic schools all interviewees stated poverty. Poverty in itself is a complicated answer with many inter-related components, but the underlying factor is that poverty poses a barrier to education due to lack of funds to afford the hidden costs or distance to the nearest government schools.

It is easier to establish a monastic school in hard to reach areas as the basic structure already exists. Monastic schools exist in the remotest of villages, in conflict areas and in the border regions. They operate in self-administration zones and work alongside ethnic minority education systems, although because they operate autonomously they do

45. The credit size is from 1.5million-2million MMK and interest rate is 3% per month; potential to earn 45,000 MMK a month which can be used as teacher salary.

46. Interview with the Pestalozzi Children's Foundation (PCF).

not interact per se. Although the question was raised in interviews, there was no information about whether monastic schools operated with IDP camps. The parahitas, the schools offering boarding facilities, provide opportunities for children from throughout the country to escape troubled areas.

Of the monastic schools interviewed none had a waiting list but this appeared to be because they accept all applicants. This level of inclusivity is seen as one of the key strengths of monastic education. Not only does it overcome discrimination of ethnicity, nationality and religion etc, but it also overcomes bureaucratic discrimination too. The head teacher of one of the monastic schools in Mandalay described how their enrolment was high despite the proximity of two government schools. One of the reasons was that the school was located near the Ayarwaddy where there were lots of migrant families; many of these families have no official papers (birth certificate or transfer certificate) so the children could not enrol in government school. A monastic school does not require these papers. This bureaucratic flexibility also allows older children who formerly missed out on education, to enrol in school. One area of access that is not clear is inclusion of children with disabilities. The Baseline Study showed students with disabilities made up less than 1% of the total student population.

There was no evidence of either disabled students or any facilities for disabled students in any of the school observations. The only issue raised about accessibility and inclusion policies is the problem of over crowding and delivering at over capacity at the expense of quality. 6% of the schools in the Baseline Study had to offer two school shifts to accommodate numbers<sup>47</sup>. None of the interviewees thought that the new legislation on free and

compulsory education would affect enrolment rates, as there would still be hidden costs and a deficit of government schools.

**Learning pathways:** As described in the section on policy, monastic education is nominally primary and post-primary education with over 90% of students being in Grade 1 to Grade 8. The intended 'learning pathway' for monastic school students is to transfer from monastic primary into government middle school. The transfer process is relatively simple. The head monk issues a Transfer Certificate (TC) once a student has passed Grade 5. This then has to be endorsed by the TEO before the middle school head teacher accepts it. Theoretically, the certificates should be recognised by all government schools. There are however reports that as the endorsement is at the discretion of the TEO, it can depend on the relationship between the head monk and the TEO. In some middle schools they also ask the students to sit a placement test before confirming their place. There is no recognised transfer certificate for middle and high school so any student continuing to monastic middle school can only continue their education in the monastic system. If a monk or nun wants to complete middle and high school in a government school they have to re-enter lay life.

There is no data on student transitions to government schools but it is assumed a large number drop out after primary and post primary. This would be representative of the typical monastic student demographic as the opportunity cost of remaining in school after primary is too high. It is not clear what proportion of these drop-outs have access to technical and vocational education and training (TVET). Most 'formal' TVET enrolment requires a middle school certificate and therefore the majority of drop-outs would be ineligible. 'Non-formal' TVET generally has no pre-requisites

47. *Baseline Study*, p.21.



and therefore could be an opportunity for further learning. Many of the monastic schools and training providers interviewed referred to the importance of incorporating livelihood skills into the curriculum to prepare children for work-life.

Although monastic education is officially seen as an equivalent, complementary system, there were suggestions that monastic school alumni are discriminated against at university level and are not considered for top courses. There are also difficulties in the matriculation process, which created barriers to access for monastic students. The new National Education Law is meant to address these barriers as the matriculation assessment and university entrance process has been re-designed.

### Quality of monastic education

Performance data is not systematically collected from monastic schools, which makes it hard to comment accurately on quality. It is now recognised as a system providing complementary education but the lack of minimum standards raises questions about its ability to provide equivalent quality. The one study available that does provide comparative data on monastic and government quality however did measure the learning achievements in monastic schools as being equivalent to government schools<sup>48</sup>; the data did also show that neither were particularly high quality. The monastic schools interviewed for this report had good pass rates, although it must be noted that due to the issues in connecting with remote schools, all schools interviewed had benefited from some level of teacher training<sup>49</sup>.

48. UNICEF (2012) *Measuring Myanmar Language and Mathematics Learning Competencies: Situation Analysis, Myanmar*.

49. The Grade 5 exam results are complicated as there were two exams. The first was in March, but the failure rate was so high because neither teachers nor students were prepared for the exam format, students were allowed to re-take the exam in May.

Completion rates are also used as an indicator of quality. Again, this is not systematically collected but according to the Baseline Study 'the proportion of students remaining in school five years after enrolment (five-year survival rate) was low at 50%'<sup>50</sup>.

This section on quality looks at the different variables and inputs that affect quality of education.

**Curriculum:** As per the MoRA rules and regulations<sup>51</sup>, all registered monastic schools have to provide the national curriculum. There does though appear to be more flexibility than in government schools, arguably because there is no obligation to submit performance data. Some monasteries interviewed reflected on how they chose to focus more on competencies rather than content and sometimes struggled to complete the full curriculum; other monasteries also struggled but recognised this was due to losing class hours to religious holiday days<sup>52</sup>. The nunnery school interviewed explained how their teaching staff provided extra tuition, free of charge, to make up for these lost days.

There is also a growing trend to incorporate more holistic learning into the curriculum. This includes practical livelihood-enabling skill sets and softer skills such as self-awareness<sup>53</sup>.

One of the challenges raised was how well monastic schoolteachers would be able to adapt to curricula reforms without receiving further training. This concern seems valid

50. *Baseline Study*, p.24.

51. *MoRA Rules and Regulations*, Chapter 5, Paragraph 32 (e).

52. Interview with Pestalozzi Children Foundation made reference to a 2012 evaluation of a school called Shwe Kyaung who only managed to complete 1/3 of the curriculum.

53. For example, CPME provides a self awareness training and a series of modules to build practical skills in organic farming, charcoal making, mud house building, hydro power process, bio-gas knowledge, soap and shampoo making and handicrafts.

after a high proportion of monastic students failed the new Grade 5 exam in the first round, reportedly because the teachers were not informed in how to prepare them.

**Assessment:** All enrolled students are eligible and have to take the government recognised assessments. For the chapter end tests, as in government schools, the teachers prepare the questions and mark the papers. For the year-end exams the questions are prepared and marked by exam centres but the students can sit the exam in their respective monastic schools. For the national exams (Grade 5, Grade 9), the students have to physically sit in a registered exam centre. PDO (Mandalay) and Naung Taung (Shan) are examples of two monastic schools that have successfully registered with the MoE to be exam centres.

**Pedagogy:** Monastic education, like government education, has a legacy approach of rote teaching. The teacher stands at the front of the class with the children sitting in rows repeatedly chanting verbatim what is being said. Like the government system, the monastic system is also looking to reform their pedagogy and adopt a more ‘child-centred approach’ and focus on critical thinking.

The monastic school teacher-training programmes focus on reforming the pedagogical skills (the approach to teaching). There are a number of approaches used but the two main philosophies employed by the training organisations are ‘child centred approach’ (CCA) and ‘reading, writing and critical thinking’ (RWCT)<sup>54</sup>.

- CCA is an approach that focuses on allowing the individual learner more freedom to experience learning rather than commit phrases to memory and gives them the

54. Both of these philosophies reflect the global trend of adapting education systems to produce the skills needed in the 21st century. In very simple terms these focus on critical thinking, creativity, communication and collaboration.

ability to use their own individual approach.

- RWCT help students think reflectively, take ownership for their personal learning, understand the logic of arguments, listen attentively, debate confidently and become independent, life-long learners.

Many of the monastic schoolteachers interviewed spoke about how these pedagogies were closely aligned to the eight principles of Buddhist teaching and learning. Five of the principles directly reflect these learning philosophies. These are highlighted in the list below:

1.	Thu nay ya	Learn what teacher taught
2.	Sei-nay-ya	Reflect on what you have learnt
3.	Popsay-ya	Ask questions to make sure your understanding is correct, and for more information and knowledge
4.	Bar-thay-ya	Learn more from peers through discussion
5.	Visaryay-ya	Explore more deeply, do research by yourself with great effort
6.	Li-kay-ya	Keep note and record to ensure you learn and remember well
7.	Theik-khay-ya	Go on action – learning with efforts
8.	Dar-yay-ya	Learn by heart and reproduce what you have learnt so that you make sure your memory is refreshed

The teachers interviewed also spoke about a number of challenges faced when implementing the new pedagogies in the classroom:

- **Lesson planning is hard:** Inadequate time to prepare
- **Resource intensive:** Inadequate space

(overcrowding and lack of infrastructure) and materials, especially for recommended components such as learning corners

- **Needs whole school approach:** If rote-learning is still used in schools, the noise from some classrooms is too loud to hold class discussions in others.

According to the Baseline Study, only 16% performed well in terms of applying CCA in their classrooms. Building on teachers' feedback, some providers are reviewing their training content. For example Pestalozzi Children's Foundation (PCF) now provides extra time on lesson planning.

**Teachers:** There are about 7,500 monastic schoolteachers<sup>55</sup>. The average student teacher ratio is 39:1<sup>56</sup> which is above the recommended maximum of 30. Some classes are reportedly over 100 per class<sup>57</sup> but in remote villages this can drop to below 10 if the overall school size is small (the minimum number of children enrolled for a school to register is normally 40 but reduced to 20 in remote areas).

These teachers are not necessarily qualified teachers and earn considerably less than a government schoolteacher. Whereas a government teacher can now earn 150,000 MMK per month<sup>58</sup> a monastic teacher is lucky to receive 40,000 MMK and in some cases the teachers (in addition to the monks) just volunteer their time<sup>59</sup>.

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55. The different data tables provided by MoRA had amounted to different totals so this is an average. The breakdown by levels stated: 5233 in primary, 1053 in post primary, 651 in middle, 137 in high schools.

56. Ministry of Religious Affairs (2014-15), *Data on Monastic Education System* [inclusive of primary, post primary, middle and high school]

57. Interview with PCF referenced a school called Aung May Oo in Sagaing, which has more than 80 students per class. PDO has now set a limit of 45:1.

58. Teacher salaries were increased in 2013-14 which was the main reason behind the increase in education expenditure.

59. According to the *Baseline Study*, 14% of the teachers were

There are no minimum standards to become a monastic teacher and many of the schools interviewed had minimal recruitment criteria; the two most common being above 18 years old and a 'love of children'. According to the data from MoRA, all teachers had either reached or passed Grade 10 and 45% had graduated with a degree<sup>60</sup>. However, according to the interviewees, it seems that Grade 8 students also work as teachers. This was especially noted for the more remote villages where access to education is hard, and access to high school near impossible. Few of the teachers with a degree have qualified in education. According to the interviewees<sup>61</sup>, any teacher eligible for government positions understandably transfer to benefit from the larger salary and job security. All interviewees cited teacher retention as a critical challenge within the system. In 2013-14, the government started a scheme of employing daily wage teachers. These teachers do not need to be qualified teachers but need to be graduates and to pass an interview and a written test; teachers who have received some form of training therefore are more likely to succeed. This has meant a number of teachers who have received training have transferred to the government system. According to the interview with Han Thar, the turnover rate differs in different regions. In Bago (West), the turnover rate is comparatively lower. The reason is that in this area, most monastic teachers are well-off or have a secondary income so are not as tempted and prefer to stay in their native place.

In terms of motivation for working in the monastic school system, the opportunity to remain in their community seems to be a key

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unpaid; of this 14%, 28% were monks and therefore cannot receive a salary (*Baseline Study*, p.31).

60. In the *Baseline Study*, 60% of the teachers had a university degree (*Baseline Study*, p.31).

61. There is no data on teacher transfers but the fact that few monastic teachers have a degree in education is indicative of this statement.

## SUMMARY OF THE TEACHER TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE

PROVIDER	TEACHERS TRAINED	CONTENT	CERTIFICATION	DURATION	OUTREACH
Coalition for the Promotion of Myanmar Education (CPME)	310	Self-awareness, RWCT, livelihood training	–	10 weeks: two for self-awareness, six for RWCT, two for livelihood skills training	Ayarwaddy, Kachin, Kayin, Mandalay, Mon, Rakhine, Sagaing, Shan, Taninthayi, Yangon
Socially Engaged Monastic Schools (SEMS)	–	Self-awareness, RWCT, livelihood training	–	10 weeks: two for self-awareness, six for RWCT, two for livelihood skills training	–
Han Thar	–	Yaung Zin teacher competency	–	30 days	–
MEDG	1,000	Yaung Zin teacher competency modules	Joint accreditation: MEDG and Yaung Zin	30 days: three x 10 mentoring days	–
Htoo Foundation	960	–	–	–	Kachin, Yangon
Studer Trust	100	Yaung Zin teacher competency modules, English language, ICT	–	10 weeks (one week break mid-way)	Ayeryarwaddy Mandalay, Magway, Rakhine Sagaing
Pestalozzi Children's Fund	–	CCA	–	30 days	Mandalay
Community Development Training Centre (CDTC), Mon State	–	CCA, Yaung Zin teacher competency modules (2013)  Training stopped 2014 due to budget termination	–	30 days	Mon

\*Not extensive but these are the programmes the authors are aware of

factor. Teachers within the government system have no control over which state or region they are placed in. Teachers in the monastic system generally teach within their own community, amongst their own people and importantly in the same language. The majority of the teachers interviewed were alumni of the school they now work in. The interviewees also consistently mentioned the teachers' passion for supporting 'needy' children.

Although most monastic schoolteachers receive some sort of salary, there are also many volunteers. Often these volunteers are 'paid' in food and lodging so they have minimal outgoing expenses to cover. One of the monastic schools interviewed did not pay the teachers a monthly salary but used the government salary subsidy to invest in their teachers' professional development. They are currently paying for 16 of the staff to study a distance learning degree in Education.

Like in the government education system, the majority of monastic school teachers are female<sup>62</sup>. Based on school observations, teachers tended to be either very young (c.22 years old) or relatively old (c.45+); there were few teachers in the middle.

The head monk acts as the head teacher. Again there are no pre-requisites to become the 'head teacher' and they do not necessarily come from an education background. There is no evident career progression for monastic schoolteachers and there is no evident hierarchy within the staffing structure other than a possible assistant head monk or nun.

**Teacher training:** In the last seven years there has been an increasing number of teacher training opportunities made available to monastic schoolteachers. So far these have

62. In the *Baseline Study*, 82% of teachers trained by MEDG are female (*Baseline Study*, p.31).

all provided in-service training to practicing teachers. As mentioned, the training primarily focuses on pedagogical skills although often supplemented with additional subjects such as livelihood skills, ICT or English language.

One of the most significant achievements in non-state sector teacher training is the development and adoption of a set of eight core competency-based teacher training modules. These modules were developed by an organisation called Yaung Zin in 2012. Their objective was to *'improve the development of teachers and students in the non-state education sector where many teachers are untrained or under-trained in their roles of teaching and facilitating learning'*<sup>63</sup>. They now form the basis of many of the teacher training programmes.

The teacher training has been well received by the teachers and is perceived as a good system strengthening tool. There are though a number of issues to note for future improvements:

- It currently only covers primary school level. There were some examples of head monks sending their middle school teachers to primary-level training. PDO is looking at the option of establishing a non-state teacher education college in Mandalay to meet the increasing training needs<sup>64</sup>
- Subject knowledge needs to be included alongside pedagogy
- Formative assessment needs to be strengthened
- Lesson planning needs extra training time, as this is a weak spot in implementation. The Studer Trust make their trainees practice lesson planning during their mid-course break

63. Yaung Zin objective.

64. A 450 acre plot of land has been donated to PDO to build an international style campus. PDO has already started a pilot university programme.

- Training needs to be more realistic about availability of resources
- Scheduling needs to be sensitive in not over-burdening already under-resourced schools
- Teachers need more structured and regular on-going support and mentoring. Ideas include use of social media and the importance of a whole-school approach to enable peer-support and where head monks and nuns receive training, not only to ensure their buy-in<sup>65</sup> but also so they can provide constructive support
- The certification process needs to be simplified. Only 19% of the teachers trained in the Yaung Zin modules through the MEC programme received their certificate<sup>66</sup>
- There is much discussion about whether there are more cost-effective delivery mechanisms as the current models are too expensive for scaling effectively to all schools
- The different providers need to coordinate what and where they deliver as there are currently numerous overlaps, which means an unfair focus on certain schools and confusion over use of different terminology describing similar approaches. For example one school had received training from Htoo Foundation, CPME, MEDG and SEMs<sup>67</sup>.

### Language of instruction and cultural

**considerations:** The medium of instruction (Moi) is Bamar. It is not clear whether this is simply a practical decision to align with the Moi of National Curriculum and textbooks<sup>68</sup>. Other than the practical constraints, monastic schools do appear to have some level of flexibility in which language was used and benefit from having local teachers.

65. Lall, M (2010) *Child Centred Learning and teacher approaches in Myanmar*, London, p.4.

66. Evaluation Study, p.14.

67. San Mya Thidar Post Primary Nunnery School, Mingalardon Township.

68. As per the 2008 Constitution, Bamar is the official medium of instruction.

Language and mother tongue was not raised as an issue by the monastic schools interviewed. When quizzed, it was evident the teachers recognised it as a limitation, especially in the parahitas where there is a significant diversity of languages. Each school had adopted their own strategies. In the school in the Pa 'O area, they assigned an older student of the same mother tongue to help interpret for a new younger child; some other schools who had one dominant ethnicity taught in mother tongue for the first few grades. It will be interesting to see if government schools look to the monastic system to learn lessons on how to implement the new language reforms.

The majority of teacher training is also delivered in Bamar.

**Resources:** Monastic schools in general are not well resourced. As of 2014-15, the government started providing free textbooks and exercise books. One of the interviewees however reported problems of incomplete deliveries<sup>69</sup>. Other than this, the schools either make their own Teaching and Learning Materials (TLMs) or depend on donations from the local community or from larger donors or organisations. For example, Yin Thway provides some basic TLMs for the younger students.

The interviewees reflected on the difficulties in effectively delivering CCA without access to resources. There were also comments about the need to improve teachers' access to supplementary information other than textbooks.

**School facilities:** Monastic school facilities are often very basic. Most of the interviewees mentioned poor infrastructure as a critical challenge. This refers to inadequate number of classrooms, unreliable electricity supplies,

69. San Mya Thidar Post Primary Nunnery School, Mingalardon Township.

inappropriately low levels of sanitation facilities and undesirably limited and unsecured play areas. According to the Baseline Study, 70% of schools conduct several classes from within the same room<sup>70</sup>. Even in the better-supported schools observed, the majority of classrooms had no walls, which is particularly problematic in the monsoon season. There was often no perimeter fencing which poses a child protection issue and the majority of the latrines viewable were 'out of order'.

In terms of geographic disparities, in the urban areas over-crowding and limited space seems to be the biggest problem; in rural areas it is a lack of basic structures.

### Assurance of monastic education

There is no systematic monitoring of monastic schools. From a government level, the only reporting requirement is that a school submits the list of students to add to the national figures on enrolment rates. There is confusion about who should monitor what; MoRA has no experience, MoE technically has no responsibility and the MESCs are not clear whether they should have a monitoring role. According to the interview with CESR, the dynamic and seeming hierarchical relationship between the head monks and nuns and the township education officers makes township level monitoring ineffective. The only time a TEO is actively involved in monastic schools is during exam period and this is to check on process rather than quality standards. Furthermore, there are no minimum quality standards to monitor against. Some head monks and nuns carry out class observations but often they have no educational experience, which undermines the effectiveness of the exercise.

The interviewees raised two critical implications about the lack of monitoring. The

<sup>70</sup>. *Baseline Study*, p.37.

first was that it not only undermined quality assurance, but having no appraisals or feedback limited teacher improvement. The second was that in having no data on student performance it was hard to provide an evidence base to drive policy-level dialogue.

There are no systematic transparency mechanisms to assure use of funds at school level. MEDG is beginning to address this through their administration training and the new MoE school grant programme should help build school-level transparency. The concern is that the lack of transparency prevents donors from giving to monastic education.

The lack of accountability is also seen in the varied levels of community and parental involvement in schools. The level and style of community engagement differs in each community. The key variable seems to be the dynamic specifically between the head monk and the village. Some head monks prefer to work autonomously and resist any outsider involvement.

Han Thar has attempted to create clusters of monastic schools to garner peer-to-peer learning and support. This has been difficult to implement though due to their desire to work autonomously. One of the criteria for the school grant programme is to have an active and well-functioning school committee; MEDG, who delivered some of the school grant orientation training, identified this as a potential bottleneck as head monks had raised concerns about this level of forced engagement.

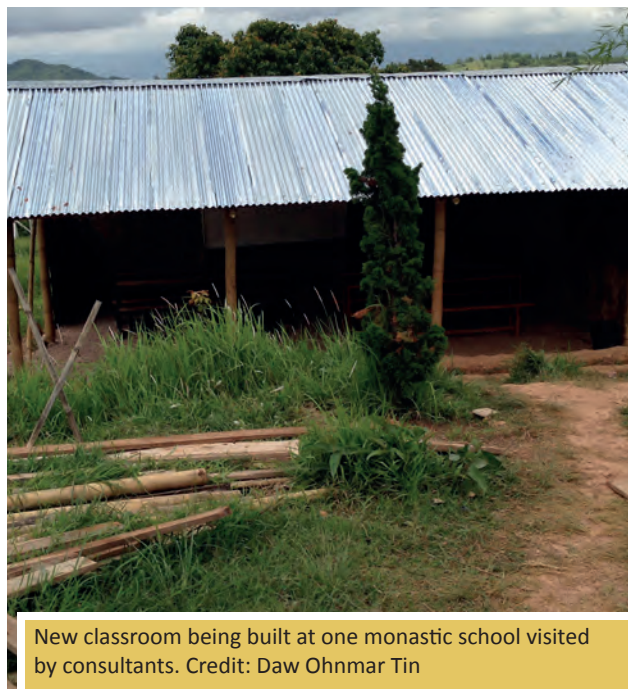
The most common forms of community engagement that do exist are Parent Teacher Associations (PTA) and School Committees (SC). These bodies also exist in government schools. The main activities include fundraising and school maintenance. According to the

Evaluation Study, few schools had both a PTA and a SC<sup>71</sup>. What was in evidence however, was the monastery-based volunteer committees (Kyaung Ah Kyo Taw Saung). This committee is not education-specific but was identified as both the PTA and SC. According to the Baseline Study, 68% of schools had some sort of community body but meetings were seen to be irregular and level of activity varied<sup>72</sup>.

Few monastic schools have child protection policies in place. The notable violations from basic observations of the schools are issues such as over-crowding and lack of security fences. Recently this has been raised as an issue above and beyond the risk to children, as it is often a criteria for international donors. There have also been stories of abuses and, without an accountability framework in place, the risks are high.

There are a couple of organisations working to help improve child protection:

- Colourful Girls works on child protection issues, leadership skills and specifically activities against Violence Against Women (VAM). In the nunnery schools, project staff would visit three times a week and run workshops and project activities.
- MEDG now have a child protection policy for their staff. Since February 2015, they have also started a project with People in Need (PIN) to inform monastic schools of the importance of child protection policies. Child protection policy however is a complicated process so it is taking time.



New classroom being built at one monastic school visited by consultants. Credit: Daw Ohnmar Tin

71. *Evaluation Study*, p.31.

72. *Baseline Study*, p.60.



## 4. Profile of key players in the monastic education sector

The purpose of this section is to provide an understanding of the key stakeholders within the monastic education system.

The table below categorises the different players and provides a brief commentary on their role in the sector:

PLAYERS AND THEIR ROLE IN THE SECTOR		
<b>MINISTRY LEVEL</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ministry of Religious Affairs</li> <li>Ministry of Education</li> <li>Ministry of Border Areas</li> <li>Ministry of Social Welfare and Relief and Resettlement</li> <li>Ministry of Home Affairs</li> </ul>	<p><b>Main role: Policy (and funding)</b> Schools register with MoRA but comply with certain MoE regulations such as curriculum. There is also some government funding channelled through these two ministries.</p> <p>The other three ministries are members of the Monastic Education Supervisory Committees (MESCs).</p>
<b>MONASTIC GROUPS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Mahar Sangha Nayaka/ National Sangha Association</li> <li>Central Monastic Education Supervisory Committee</li> <li>State/Region Monastic Education Supervisory Committees</li> <li>Township level Monastic Education Supervisory Committees</li> <li>Monastic Education Development Group (MEDG) [also provides school improvement services]</li> </ul>	<p><b>Main role: Coordination and Religion</b> The Sangha has existed in some form for 960 years and upholds the Buddhist teachings.</p> <p>The MESCs are mandated to supervise Buddhist teaching and academic education in schools.</p> <p>MEDG is the national coordination body for improving quality of education in monastic schools.</p>
<b>DONORS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Corporate donors (e.g. Shine Hope, Htoo Foundation, Parami Energy)</li> <li>International donors/agencies (e.g. EU, OSI, Swiss Aid, World Bank)</li> <li>National donors/agencies (e.g. Pyoe Pin, NLD)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Main role: Funding</b> The majority of funding for day-to-day costs comes from community donations but these larger-scale donors often provide project funding.</p> <p>N.B. World Bank is not actually a donor but is included here because they provide funding through loans. There is no funding for monastic education from UN. Their education programmes focus on the government system</p>

<b>NGOS AND CHARITIES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School improvement services:</li> <li>• Support (e.g. Young Zin)</li> <li>• Training (e.g. Studer Trust, HanThar, CPME, SEMS, PCF)</li> <li>• School building (e.g. Studer Trust)</li> <li>• TVET (e.g. YMCA, Yadana Metta)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Main role: Support services</b> Teacher training and school buildings are the two main services provided. A noticeable trend is that training organisations are now expanding their training to cover more holistic skills such as livelihood training.</p> <p>In addition to specific monastic school support there are also a number of organisations providing services that are also relevant to monastic school development e.g. TVET providers.</p>
<b>NETWORKS AND WORKING GROUPS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Network for Education Reform (NNER)</li> <li>• Ethnic Education Groups (e.g. MNEC, Pa’O Education Department)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Main role: Outreach</b> Advocacy and ethnic education groups can work alongside the monastic education system as there is a shared goal of making quality education more accessible.</p>
<b>MONASTIC SCHOOLS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proactive monastic schools (e.g. Phaung Daw Oo, Mandalay, Naung Taung, Shan)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Main role: School improvement</b> There are a couple of large monastic schools that not only deliver education but are proactively working to improve quality. The two listed are the two the authors are most familiar with but there are likely to be many others.</p>

In terms of identifying a potential implementation partner there are a number of factors to consider:

**How to reach scale?**

- What is the partners’ outreach? How many children will benefit?

**How to ensure sustainability?**

- What happens post MEC funding?
- Is there a risk of creating dependencies?

**How to prioritise hard to reach children?**

- Who understands where the demand is?
- Who has the right networks to reach them?

**What type of support will be most effective?**

- Is it most important to meet the funding gap?

- Can MEC use its network to provide technical support?
- Can MEC use its status to advocate effectively for monastic schools at policy level?

As seen in this report, there are a number of very effective organisations and schools working in the sector. The decision on who to partner with though needs to be considered post the decision on which area to support. It is most likely that the right implementation partner will be an active, local NGO.

**The following are high level profiles of the potential organisations.**

### Coalition for the Promotion of Myanmar Education (CPME)

<b>Vision:</b>	To strengthen Buddhist monastic schools and their local communities in Myanmar
<b>Relevant services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher training provider</li> <li>• Local NGO</li> </ul>
<b>Start date:</b>	2009
<b>Current projects in monastic schools:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher training</li> <li>• Abbot exposure</li> <li>• Management training</li> </ul>
<b>Other projects:</b>	–
<b>State/region:</b>	Ayarwaddy, Kachin, Kayin, Mandalay, Mon, Rakhine, Sagaing, Shan, Tanintharyi, Yangon
<b>Funding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)</li> <li>• Open Society Institute (OSI)</li> <li>• CCFT</li> <li>• Pyoe Pin</li> </ul>

### Han Thar

<b>Vision:</b>	To participate in the emergence of a strong civil society through emerging alternative education initiatives
<b>Relevant services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher training provider</li> <li>• Local NGO</li> </ul>
<b>Start date:</b>	2006
<b>Current projects in monastic schools:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher training</li> <li>• Support school networking through school cluster formation</li> <li>• Provision of teaching learning materials</li> <li>• Develop school management and information system (SMIS training)</li> <li>• Support 230 monastic schools</li> </ul>

<b>Other projects:</b>	–
<b>State/region:</b>	Ayarwaddy, Bago (West), Mandalay, Nay Pyi Taw, Rakhine Sagaing, Yangon
<b>Funding</b>	–

### Htoo Foundation

<b>Vision:</b>	–
<b>Relevant services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Donor</li> <li>• Charitable arm of the Htoo Group of Companies</li> </ul>
<b>Start date:</b>	2008
<b>Current projects in monastic schools:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subsidised salaries</li> <li>• Teacher training</li> </ul>
<b>Other projects:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• University scholarships</li> <li>• Free boarding school in Putao</li> </ul>
<b>State/region:</b>	Kachin, Yangon
<b>Funding</b>	Htoo Group of Companies

### Lokkata Charia

<b>Vision:</b>	Social development activities and awareness training on social development for youth in rural areas
<b>Relevant services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social development</li> <li>• Monastic organisation</li> </ul>
<b>Start date:</b>	2003
<b>Current projects in monastic schools:</b>	School buildings
<b>Other projects:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School furniture, text books and uniforms</li> <li>• Social development awareness training</li> <li>• Infrastructure in rural areas</li> <li>• Youth training</li> </ul>

<b>State/ region:</b>	Ayarwaddy, Karen, Magway
<b>Funding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Terre Des Hommes</li> <li>• SwissAid</li> </ul>

### Monastic Education Development Group (MEDG)

<b>Vision:</b>	To nurture healthy, creative, responsible citizens
<b>Relevant services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education improvement</li> <li>• Registered with Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA)</li> </ul>
<b>Start date:</b>	2011
<b>Current projects in monastic schools:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Principal and leadership development</li> <li>• Teacher professional development</li> <li>• Grant programme</li> <li>• Parents and community engagement programme</li> </ul>
<b>Other projects:</b>	–
<b>State/ region:</b>	Ayarwaddy, Kachin, Mandalay Rakhine, Sagaing, Shan, Taninthayi Yangon
<b>Funding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MEC</li> <li>• EU</li> <li>• Local donors</li> <li>• International donors</li> </ul>

### Mon National Education Committee (MNEC)

<b>Vision:</b>	All children will complete at least primary level education, while physically strong and healthy with an attitude to live with other nationalities in the country peacefully and developing holistically who can contribute for the development of ever learning society
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<b>Relevant services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ethnic education department</li> <li>• Education Department of Mon New State Party</li> </ul>
<b>Start date:</b>	1972
<b>Current projects in monastic schools:</b>	They do not run projects but 17% of their schools are based with monasteries
<b>Other projects:</b>	Mon National Schools and Mixed schools Teacher training
<b>State/ region:</b>	Mon
<b>Funding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WEC</li> <li>• CSI</li> <li>• TDH</li> <li>• BK.Kee</li> <li>• Shalom</li> <li>• Contributions of parents and communities</li> </ul>

### National Network of Education Reform (NNER)

<b>Vision:</b>	–
<b>Relevant services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education network</li> <li>• Coalition including opposition political parties, members of teachers' unions, civil society organisations, non-governmental organisations, Buddhist monks and ethnic education groups</li> </ul>
<b>Start date:</b>	2012
<b>Current projects in monastic schools:</b>	–
<b>Other projects:</b>	Advocacy for policy reform Seminars on different aspects of education- decentralisation and mother tongue being two of the key topics

State/ region:	Nationwide
Funding	–

State/ region:	Nationwide
Funding	DfID

### Pestalozzi Children Foundation (PCF)

Vision:	–
Relevant services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher training provider</li> <li>• Works with four faith-based partners: three Christian groups (KBC, KMSS and PMSKBA) and PDO. Coming to the end of a 10-year programme</li> </ul>
Start date:	2004
Current projects in monastic schools:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Train the teacher trainer programme (Yaung Zin modules)</li> <li>• Empower programme (supplementary skills)</li> </ul>
Other projects:	–
State/ region:	Ayarwaddy, Kachin, Mandalay
Funding	Swiss government

### Rakhine Thahara Association

Vision:	The welfare of others without one's own profit
Relevant services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education NGO</li> <li>• Registered as a civil society association under the Ministry of Home Affairs</li> </ul>
Start date:	1961
Current projects in monastic schools:	Teacher training
Other projects:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emergency relief and recovery work</li> <li>• University scholarships</li> <li>• Primary school stipends</li> </ul>
State/ region:	Rakhine
Funding	Pyoe Pin

### Pyoe Pin

Vision:	To support local organisations and individuals to work cooperatively to address the needs and aspirations of Myanmar people
Relevant services	Civil society
Start date:	–
Current projects in monastic schools:	Funding Yaung Zin and RTA
Other projects:	Issue based projects in areas of service provision, environment, economy and rule of law

### Socially Engaged Monastic Schools (SEMS)

Vision:	To transform monastery-based schools
Relevant services	Teacher training provider
Start date:	2011
Current projects in monastic schools:	Teacher training
Other projects:	–
State/ region:	–

<b>Funding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)</li> <li>Open Society Institute (OSI)</li> <li>CCFT</li> <li>Pyoe Pin</li> </ul>
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<b>Other projects:</b>	–
<b>State/region:</b>	Lower Myanmar (190 monastic schools), Upper Myanmar (196 monastic schools), Taunggyi (11 monastic schools), Myitkyina (22 monastic schools)
<b>Funding</b>	Shine Hope

### Shan Literature and Cultural Association (SLCA)

<b>Vision:</b>	All Shan nationalities participate actively in preservation and promotion of Shan literature and cultural activities
<b>Relevant services</b>	Ethnic education association
<b>Start date:</b>	1952
<b>Current projects in monastic schools:</b>	Rural development programme promoting monastic education
<b>Other projects:</b>	Shan literacy summer programme
<b>State/region:</b>	Shan State (East, South and North)
<b>Funding</b>	Local donors and community contributions

### Studer Trust

<b>Vision:</b>	–
<b>Relevant services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teacher training provider</li> <li>Charitable trust that supports educational projects in Myanmar and China</li> </ul>
<b>Start date:</b>	2005
<b>Current projects in monastic schools:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School building</li> <li>(27 schools supported)</li> <li>Teacher training centre in Mandalay (4 cohorts of 26/27 teachers)</li> </ul>
<b>Other projects:</b>	School buildings for government schools
<b>State/region:</b>	Ayarwaddy, Magway, Mandalay, Rakhine, Sagaing
<b>Funding</b>	Donors from Switzerland and Hong Kong

### Shine Hope Company

<b>Vision:</b>	–
<b>Relevant services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Donor</li> <li>Charitable arm of successful traditional medicine company</li> <li>Founder: Dr Khin Khin Yee</li> </ul>
<b>Start date:</b>	1996 (2003 for monastic school support)
<b>Current projects in monastic schools:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>IGA support</li> <li>Supported 2700 teachers in 419 schools</li> <li>Previously: subsidised teacher salaries (40,000 MMK), school building, nutrition and WASH programmes, uniform provision</li> </ul>

### Yadana Mahar

<b>Vision:</b>	To fulfil the survival and development rights of children
<b>Relevant services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Education network</li> <li>Mediation/linking between donors and beneficiaries</li> <li>Founder: U Kyaw Than Tun and 7 staff</li> </ul>
<b>Start date:</b>	2008

<b>Current projects in monastic schools:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher training</li> <li>• Child rights and child protection awareness for parents and communities</li> <li>• Study on causes of out of school children</li> <li>• Vocational training for monastic teachers (sewing)</li> <li>• Basic literacy and functional literacy for out-of-school children programme</li> </ul>
<b>Other projects:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Children on the Move”</li> <li>• “NGO Child Rights Working Groups”, including 30 organisations, among them about 10 groups focused on monastic education</li> </ul>
<b>State/region:</b>	Mon (Belugyun), Chin (Teedim, Kan Pet Let), Rakhine (Sittwe, Myauk Oo, Taunggope), Shan (Theinni, Naung Cho, Phekon, Nyaung Shwe), Yangon
<b>Funding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Save the Children</li> <li>• Terre Des Hommes Netherlands</li> <li>• USAID</li> </ul>

### Yadana Metta

<b>Vision:</b>	All mankind live a better standard of living and enjoy life in healthy and non-discriminated society
<b>Relevant services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Livelihood training</li> <li>• Registration in 2010 with Ministry of Home Affairs</li> </ul>
<b>Start date:</b>	2004
<b>Current projects in monastic schools:</b>	–
<b>Other projects:</b>	Health sector, Child Protection Sector, Livelihood Sector and Peace and Development Sector

<b>State/region:</b>	Yangon, Bago, Ayarwaddy, Shan, Kachin, Mandalay, Sagaing, Rakhine
<b>Funding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EU</li> <li>• KCF (Hong Kong)</li> <li>• Terre Des Hommes Netherlands</li> <li>• Plus local well wishers, private business company, staff contributions and board members donations</li> </ul>

### Yaung Zin

<b>Vision:</b>	Build the capacity of community appointed primary teachers to be professionally competent so they will be able to use their improved capacities for all-round development of primary school children in monastic and community schools
<b>Relevant services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher training (not a direct implementation agency but works in partnership with training providers)</li> </ul>
<b>Start date:</b>	2011
<b>Current projects in monastic schools:</b>	Core Competency Teacher Modules
<b>Other projects:</b>	Also work with community schools
<b>State/region:</b>	–
<b>Funding</b>	Pyoe Pin

Despite some of the challenges identified during MEC’s prior programme partnership and those identified in this report, MEDG should be considered as a potential partner. The potential MEDG has to offer in strengthening the system surpasses that of the other organisations in terms of their network, political standing, project management experience and reputation. See analysis of MEDG on p19.

## 5. Summary of the enablers and barriers to monastic education system

This final section, before the recommendations, summarises key factors that have contributed to strengthening the monastic education system and those factors that have limited it. It identifies what works well and needs to be either preserved or scaled and where the problems are that need to be solved.

### Key enablers

One interviewee used the word ‘space’ to describe the key strength of the monastic school system. Monastic schools have both the physical and bureaucratic space to deliver education.<sup>73</sup>

Monasteries provide a **physical ‘space’ for learning**. It is free of charge, available and carries a level of gravitas appropriate to learning. The facilities are not necessarily ideal but having access to a space is seen as better than not. Access to readily available space also allows monastic schools to be demand driven. Once the decision has been made to start a school there is an immediate opportunity to start delivering lessons.

Monasteries also provide the **bureaucratic ‘space’ to deliver education**. The autonomous status of monastic schools has benefited the system in that they can operate without the constraints of government. Under the military regime, organisations such as training providers had no opportunity to work within the government system, but they could support monastic education. Today, many organisations still choose to work within the

73. Dr. Thant Lwin Maung (Ko Tar), founder of SEMS used the word ‘space’ to describe the important role monastic education can play. He referred to a TED talk called ‘A place in space’ (TED X Seeds, 2013) which talks about this concept.

complementary education sector to avoid the bureaucracy. The successful adoption of the Yaung Zin modules is a good example of how organisations can operate effectively within the monastic system. The bureaucratic space also allows monasteries to be **flexible in enrolments**, which is a great strength in terms of access and inclusivity. This needs to be preserved.

A further enabler is the **strength of advocacy of the head monk**. This is seen both at community and national level. Two key examples illustrating recent successes include legal recognition of monastic school as a complementary system and the inclusion of monastic schools within the MoE school grant programme (currently the only non-state schools included). A complementary strength is **the monastic network**. Monasteries have both a social and political standing in Myanmar’s society and so their network spans both spheres.

There is a need to preserve monastic school autonomy going forward. There are already movements to mainstream monastic education, but the risk is that the more monastic schools are mainstreamed the **more bureaucracy restricts outreach, which is one of their key strengths**. The monastic system needs to respond to Myanmar’s transitioning environment but remain aware of its distinct position stemming from their status in community and religious traditions.

### Key barriers

The autonomous nature of monastic schools is an enabler, but can also be seen





Venerable U Nayaka from Phaung Daw Oo Monastic Education School (PDO) attending the Annual Education Conference, November 2015. Credit: Myanmar Education Consortium (Win Mrat Wai)

as a barrier. One of the current challenges within the monastic system is the **low level of accountability**. Each school is nominally independent and there is no systematic monitoring, quality assurance or financial controls. This makes the system hard to govern and in turn has been seen to deter potential funders as there is no accountability for the use of funds or guarantees around child protection for example. It will be critical not to undermine the benefits of monastic schools' autonomous status but there is a need for **improved administration mechanisms** in schools to provide more transparency and assurance.

A similar challenge is seen in the **weak institutional capacity**. The entities within the tripartite structure operate independently with little coordination with each other and they have their own unrelated agendas. The consequence of this is a confusion of roles, no accountability, inefficient management and lack

of leadership. There is a need to **build mutual trust** between the entities and overcome the political sensitivities.

The school level institutional capacity has had huge successes, notably the establishment of MEDG and the two Monastic Education Conferences. However, the head monks and nuns driving these do not always have the **experience or technical expertise** needed. This can be seen in the drafting of the monastic school policy. The draft demonstrates hard work and willing but lacks the technical expertise of policy drafting and simply lists a series of requirements. There is a need to strengthen the technical expertise of key advocates and support MEDG in its **organisational development** to meet its potential in driving sustainable improvements in the system.

The **lack of funding** is a critical barrier. The

recent government funding has contributed significantly, but monastic donations are ad hoc and many schools struggle to mobilise international funding. Lack of sufficient funding results in: uncompetitive salaries resulting in low teacher retention; inadequate infrastructure affecting the quality of teaching environment and violates child protection best practice; and insufficient learning resources. It also limits long-term planning, as without a steady cash flow the emphasis is on day-to-day survival rather than improvement or expansion plans. Again, there is a need for better transparency and assurance mechanisms as well as a need for **technical support on becoming more self-sustainable**.

The final barrier to mention is the **low level of teaching quality**. There are no minimum standards so monastic schoolteachers are predominantly unqualified and inexperienced. Poor teaching quality is often posited as the key reason behind poor student learning; a school is only as good as its teachers<sup>74</sup>. The lack of minimum standards also undermines the public’s perception that monastic education quality is equivalent to government school education. The investment of money and time into teacher training has been significant but one barrier affecting its on-going success is the lack of coordination between providers resulting in inefficient and unfair distribution of services. To improve teaching quality there needs to be both **more teacher training** and at the same time a **better incentive scheme** to prevent trained teachers transferring to government jobs.



One of the monastic schools visited by consultants  
Credit: Daw Ohnmar Tin

74. McKinsey and Co. (2007), *How the world’s best performing school system come out on top*, London.

## 6. Strategic options for MEC in the monastic education sector (practical recommendations)

Informed by the research and analysis presented in this report, the following section proposes a series of recommendations for the MEC Steering Committee to consider for their strategic planning. Each recommendation is intended to address one of the key barriers (accountability, self-sustainability, quality, technical policy dialogue and coordination) while preserving the unique freedom monastic schools have in offering education to those who cannot access the government system. Two of the challenges identified in the research have not been included as recommendations because they are thought to be outside the scope of MEC's strengths.

These are the inadequate infrastructure of monastic schools and weak institutional capacity at national level. The first is too capital-intensive for MEC to have a scalable impact. The second, because of the dynamic of the monastic system as a whole, needs to come from within the system and MEC can only have an indirect role in influencing improvements.

In terms of making a decision about how to proceed, there are a number of questions to consider in terms of MEC's on-going strategy:

### **What level of capacity does MEC have to support technical assistance?**

- Is there an option for MEC to adopt a more specific role in supporting monastic education? This might entail providing resource to carry out supporting activities such as a school mapping exercise or it might make more strategic sense to invest

in building the capacity of another entity such as MEDG. This decision raises the question of sustainability and if the former, what would happen post MEC funding.

### **Is MEC in a good position to mediate between the national education reform and the monastic school system?**

- Would MEC consider hosting a consultation to look at the implications of the reforms and look realistically at how monastic schools can benefit from the changes (e.g. look at facilitating training of trainers workshops for curriculum changes?)
- What level within the Ministry of Education would need to be engaged to make this effective?
- Would this be more effective with an external mediator (e.g. MEC) or if it was led directly by the National Sangha, MEDG or indeed if a monastic school representative is appointed to be part of the National Education Commission as per the National Education Law?

### **How will MEC define success?**

- Monastic education is already reaching the hard-to-reach, but it is not clear where the even harder to reach are (the estimated number of children out of school is still 1,000,000)
- Is MEC's priority to support monastic schools is identifying and supporting these children, or is the priority the quality agenda and ensuring the children already accessing monastic schools are effectively learning and then scale from there?

The recommendations have been presented as individual components but many of these are complementary and could be seen together as a package programme. For example, to address the broad issue of teacher retention it will be important to look at how to support teacher training and self-sufficiency. It has not been possible to calculate meaningful budgets for each component but an indicative cost size (high or moderate) is provided for each one.

The following recommendations look at a mix of grant funding (deemed the most urgent from the stakeholder interviews), technical assistance (utilising MEC's national and international network) and advocacy.

### Improve accountability

*Recommendation 1: Provide technical support and funding to increase number of schools trained in administration*

Monastic schools need the right skill sets to be able to provide the assurance that is being increasingly demanded of them from different stakeholders. This includes being able to provide comprehensive data to forward plan and help influence policy-level decisions, manage finances transparently to assure donors of use of funds, implement policies such as child protection and engage more effectively with communities. Currently, only MEDG provides training in these types of administration skills and, to date, they have trained 300 monastic school staff.

MEC could work in partnership with MEDG to review the existing modules and scale the training to reach all monastic schools or work with another of the training providers to design new training modules. This would entail providing technical expertise and funds

to support the cost of design, review and implementation. In terms of technical support, MEC is in a good position to be able to share best practice processes and policies and help to prioritise and adapt what is most urgent as per school needs and for the broader policy and donor environment. MEC could also use their contacts to collaborate with World Bank to ensure the training aligns with the procedures each school will have to adopt in order to receive the school grants.

- **MEC support:** Technical expertise, funding, access to MEC networks
- **Cost:** High (direct implementation costs)

### Improve self-sustainability

*Recommendation 2: Provide technical support, funding and networking to increase number of schools able to run income-generating activities*

To retain trained teachers and invest in school improvements, monastic schools need to learn how to earn a sustainable income. This includes learning how to identify potential income-generation opportunities, how to produce and deliver a product or service and how to manage the activities in order to generate a sustainable income.

MEC could use its network to identify a number of non-formal TVET providers who could collaborate to deliver localised skills training. In addition to the practical skills training, there would be a need to provide basic business management training especially around identifying demand and understanding how to access the market.

The training could be aimed at the monastic school staff or could be used to encourage community involvement in the school. MEC

would need to partner with one with one or more of the existing teacher training providers who could coordinate the new training. MEC could cover the costs of coordinating the network and developing the modules and provide technical support where needed by bringing in experts to develop modules.

- **MEC support:** Access to MEC networks, funding
- **Cost:** High

### Improve quality

*Recommendation 3: Provide technical support and funding to develop minimum standards for teacher training*

A set of minimum standards for teacher training would provide a framework to help assure quality and improve coordination of training. Currently there is quality assurance of training, but minimal accreditation and a lack of consistency in use of terms lead to confusion. Developing and agreeing a set of minimum standards would need to be a consultative process involving training providers and schools (teachers and head monks).

The process would need to review existing provision, understand the practical and logistical constraints and prioritise areas. To facilitate the process it would be useful to have one lead organisation experienced in teacher training. This could potentially be Yaung Zin as, having developed the eight core competency modules, they have they right knowledge (this though depends on the outcome of their strategic planning process).

MEC could partner directly with either Yaung Zin or another lead organisation. MEC could provide technical expertise during the

consultation process and fund both the process and printing and distribution of the standards.

To ensure the minimum standards are upheld, there would need to be a quality assurance body. This could be the same partner or it could be an opportunity to engage with the township level MESC and invite them to inspect trainings. Providing this exposure and educating the officers in what quality education should look like, would then add value to their monitoring role.

- **MEC support:** Technical expertise, funding
- **Cost:** Moderate

*Recommendation 4: Provide technical support and funding to review and revise the Yaung Zin teacher competency training modules*

The Yaung Zin teacher core competency modules have had a huge influence on the quality of teacher training. After two years of being implemented they are in need of a review. There have been multiple lessons learned during the implementation of the modules and the feedback needs to be collated and integrated into an updated version.

This could include additional modules on subject matter, including livelihood skills. Depending on the policy decision around the upgrading of monastic schools to middle and high school there might also be an urgent need to develop middle and high school training modules.

Yaung Zin would be the most obvious partner. MEC could provide the funding needed to cover the costs and use its network to bring in technical experts for specific areas.

- **MEC support:** Technical expertise, funding
- **Costs:** Moderate

**Recommendation 5: Provide technical support and funding to establish minimum standards in all monastic schools**

In addition to the need for minimum standards in assuring quality of teacher training, there is also a need for minimum standards within schools. MEDG has already worked on some minimum standards but there is an opportunity to refine these and work with schools to ensure they are understood and feasible. As discussed, in imposing regulations there needs to be a balance between improving quality and constraining flexibility.

The minimum standards therefore need to be carefully prepared. The standards should include teaching, administration and management and health and hygiene. Once established and agreed as feasible these should be reflected in the monastic school policy and where schools are lacking this should feed into the school improvement plans that the school grant programme is mandating.

The second stage of developing minimum standards is again the need for a quality assurance body. This would be a long term role and as with the teacher training standards, could be an opportunity to build capacity of the township MESC monitoring team.

MEC could partner with MEDG who has been leading on standards development and has a relationship with the MESC. MEDG will need to coordinate with a number of schools to test feasibility. To do this, MEDG will need technical guidance and funding.

- **MEC support:** Technical expertise, funding
- **Costs:** Moderate

**Improve advocacy**

**Recommendation 6: Provide technical support, funding and advocacy support to develop and gain recognition of monastic education policy**

One of the key strengths of the monastic school system is their voice and success in advocacy. What is needed to strengthen their voice however is the technical component required to secure policy level change. This includes skills such as developing the evidence base for change, policy writing and policy dialogue skills. Part of this technical training could include a component to integrate the MESC better into the advocacy process.

MEC with its experience and status as advocate for complementary education and through their access to a network of experts could provide the technical training needed. MEC could lead on this project providing the resources needed to develop technical training workshops. To deliver the workshops they could work with MEDG and work with their established training schedule and network.

- **MEC support:** Potentially MEC staff, technical expertise, funding
- **Costs:** Moderate

**Improve coordination**

**Recommendation 7: Provide technical support and funding to strengthen monastic school network**

There are over 1,500 monastic schools but many are seemingly not yet part of the 'quality improvement' network because they are 'hard to reach'. There is a need to improve knowledge of where the schools are and to

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS AGAINST FINDINGS	
Need to strengthen accountability	R1: Provide technical support and funding to increase number of schools trained in administration
Need to improve level of funding through self-sustainability measures	R2: Provide technical support, funding and networking to increase number of schools able to run income-generating activities
Need to improve quality of education to meet expectations of being an equivalent, complementary system	R3: Provide technical support and funding to develop minimum standards for teacher training  R4: Provide technical support and funding to review and revise the Yaung Zin teacher competency training modules  R5: Provide technical support and funding to establish minimum standards in all monastic schools
Need to improve technical knowledge to strengthen advocacy	R6: Provide technical support, funding and advocacy support to develop and gain recognition of monastic education policy
Need to improve coordination between schools	R7: Provide technical support and funding to strengthen monastic school network  R8: Strengthen organisational capacity of MEDG to provide national coordination role
Holistic approach: Improve accountability, self-sustainability, quality, advocacy and coordination	R9: Establish a teacher training collective

look at how to include them within the support network.

MEC could look at two activities to strengthen the network. The first would be to **fund a mapping exercise of all monastic schools**. This would entail gathering all the existing information, filling in the information gaps and then mapping all locations. It would make sense to speak with the government level school-mapping project to ensure the mapping software is compatible and could be used

to identify where there are no schools. The second would be to use this information to **create a virtual network**. Initially this would not be able to be all-encompassing because of infrastructure and 3G constraints of online communities. Over time this would help address the problems of being ‘hard-to-reach’. The virtual network could be as simple as a Facebook page but the value would come in terms of the outreach and management of content. MEDG, with its mandate of national coordination body would be best placed as

a partner for both of these activities. They have the networks and the in-house technical expertise.

- **MEC support:** Government contacts, networks, funding
- **Costs:** Moderate

**Recommendation 8: Strengthen organisational capacity of MEDG to provide national coordination role<sup>75</sup>**

MEDG has the potential to play a critical role in strengthening the monastic education system. It holds a unique position but it needs support in strengthening its technical expertise and organisational capacity as it scales.

MEDG staff need to improve their skills in key areas such as outreach, marketing and fundraising etc, and there was also an identified need to broaden their outlook through exposure. Exposure could be gained through a programme of exposure visits to similar but more established organisations or seconding experience management personnel into MEDG to build capacity internally.

MEC could provide this capacity development support to MEDG. This could either be directly through MEC or MEC could work with organisations in their network to coordinate specific trainings (e.g. Save the Children, World Vision, Burnet).

It would be useful to have a specialist in organisational strengthening to look at the dynamics and to build the foundations to scale. It will be important to have clear targets against which skills should be prioritised and progress measured.

75. Aung Ko Ko, Project Manager (Education) at Burnet Institute, Myanmar who has led on the MEC programme with MEDG was interviewed to discuss his experience of working with MEDG.

- **MEC support:** potentially MEC staff, MEC network, technical expertise, funding
- **Costs:** Moderate

**Recommendation 9: Establish a teacher-training collective**

Building on components of all the above recommendations, is the suggestion to establish a teacher training collective that would improve accountability, self-sustainability, quality, advocacy and coordination.

The collective would include all training providers as members and would be chaired and coordinated by MEDG.

As a collective, activities undertaken could include those such as school mapping, existing services mapping, needs analysis, preparation of minimum standards for teacher training, knowledge and content sharing, development of virtual communities for networking and on-going mentoring. Working as a collective would strengthen their voice, improve efficient use of resources and could in turn improve access to international funding is perceived as more accountable and impactful.

MEC could provide the funding needed to support the activities and act as an independent mediator, initially to help set up the collective. There would also be need for technical support and access to MEC's network. This project could also build on the idea of MEC having a role in supporting monastic schools to receive training on the new curriculum.

- **MEC support:** Technical support, funding
- **Cost:** Moderate



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