I. Logistical Information

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(d) Priority Areas for Myanmar are as follows:
(1) Curriculum and materials development
(2) Assessment, accreditation and quality assurance
(3) Networking and partnership
(4) Monitoring and evaluation
(5) Capacity building and training
II. Background

Alternative learning in Myanmar generally means parallel learning, which provides opportunities of learning for those who cannot learn through formal education. Under the broad definition of alternative learning systems, a wide range of education services have been provided in Myanmar for different target groups by various departments and agencies including private training institutions. For inclusive education in remote, border and mountainous areas mobile school, monastic schools and education for the orphans and Non-formal Primary education are encouraged and implemented. Monastic education follows the official primary curriculum under the supervision of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. It was not possible for the Ministry of Education (MOE) to bring all service providers together to review all systems of alternative learning under current circumstances. Therefore, the technical team was able to conduct only the review process for the two-year Non Formal Primary Education Programme, which the Ministry, in collaboration with UN Agencies and NGOs, has been implementing in the country.

The NFPE programme was originally formulated, and implemented by MOE in collaboration with UNESCO under UNDP's Human Development Initiative (HDI) Project in 1998. The initiative was implemented in 11 project townships with an aim to provide basic literacy and numeracy skills to out-of-school children aged 10 to 14 who never enrolled the school before, or dropped out before completing the five-year formal primary education, and to enable some of them who would like to go back to formal schooling. Based on successful implementation of the programme in the HDI project townships, MOE has expanded the programme into 59 townships, providing second chance education for approximately 4,000 children in selected communities.

As the service coverage was low due to limited funding for the NFPE programme, UNICEF started its partnership with the MOE to expand and improve the NFPE programme in 2008. The original NFPE curriculum and instructional materials were revised in 2009 to be in line with the current formal primary school curriculum and to be relevant to the learners' needs. The programme is currently being implemented in 134 NFPE centres of 20 townships with 3,594 children mostly from poor urban and peri-urban families by 289 NFPE facilitators.

Currently the Ministry of Education is solely implementing the programme and UNICEF is the key partner for providing both technical and financial assistance for improvement and expansion of the programme. However, the programme also has been building partnership with local authorities and the civil society to support the
Recently, the NGOs and private well-wishers have provided operating costs for the NFPE programme in some selected communities. This new partnership with civil society may ensure sustainability in the existing communities, and also expansion of the programme in new communities.

The current NFPE programme aims to offer second chance education to out-of-school children (10-14) who missed the opportunity of completing primary education. Although the program aims to facilitate the out-of-school children to come back to formal schooling, many of them could not do so even after completing the NFPE programme due to various reasons such as economic burden in the family and the cost of schooling. It seems logical to develop a Non Formal Secondary Education programme so that not only NFPE graduates but also those formal primary school graduates who cannot afford to go to formal secondary school may continue their education to complete at least lower secondary level. This consideration was also made during the Education for All Mid Decade Assessment and it was recommended to initiate the Non Formal Middle School Education programme.

III. Priority Areas

A. Policy Support Frameworks

Myanmar together with the international community has committed to achieving Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as well as the EFA Goals, and driving its utmost efforts for provision of education opportunities for its people. This commitment of fulfilling the rights to free and compulsory education by its citizens has been reflected in the new constitution adopted in 2008. Besides, existing laws such as 1973 Basic Education Law also affirms the right to education by all citizens in Myanmar. One of the objectives of Basic Education stated in the law is “to enable every citizen of the Union of Myanmar to become a physical or mental worker well-equipped with Basic Education, good health and moral character”. The Myanmar Child Law promulgated in 1993 also states that every child shall have opportunities of acquiring education.

There is a general provision in the law about the right to education in Myanmar. Therefore various education plans and programmes being implemented by the Ministry have specific references to the Non Formal Primary Education for out-of-school children. The current Long Term Education Development Plan being implemented by the MOE has indicated the expansion of equivalency programme contributing to the completion and improvement of quality basic education by all citizens. Similarly, the Education for All National Action Plan adopted in 2003 also highlighted the need to expand NFPE programme so that universal access to basic education could be achieved. NFPE (EP) is regarded as an important undertaking for achieving Myanmar EFA goals, ensuring that significant progress is made for all school-age children to have access to, and complete free and compulsory Basic Education of good quality by 2015.
B. Curriculum and Material Development

The original curriculum and related materials were developed by the national experts from Myanmar Education Research Bureau (MERB), Institute of Education and Department of Educational Planning and Training (DEPT) for the HDI-project under the guidance of BRAC curriculum experts from India. It was intended to complete the course in 960 class-hours over two academic years: 2 hours per day (normally 4 to 6 p.m.) 6 days in a week for 40 weeks in an academic year. That is, only 480 class-contact hours (of learning) for an NFPE trainee in a year.

Since the objectives of the NFPE programme were to give basic literacy (reading, writing and numeracy skills) to the out-of-school children and to enable them rejoining formal middle-school education (Standard 5), NFPE taught four subjects covering all topics of formal primary education (Grade 1 to 5) within 2 year time. The subjects taught were:

- (1) Myanmar Language
- (2) English Language
- (3) Mathematics and
- (4) General Studies (general science, social science and life skills)

The course content of first year aimed at attaining basic literacy and acquiring necessary knowledge and academic skills given in lower primary grades (Grade 1 to 3), while the course content of second year aimed at attaining functional literacy with life skills and acquiring necessary knowledge and skills given in upper primary grades (Grade 4 to 5), that is, to enable trainees to continue study at Grade 6 (first year of middle school or lower secondary).

The evaluation study on NFPE programme of HDI Project provided some concerns over the curriculum such as the challenge to recruit adequately proficient facilitators for English language teaching, the limited annual class-contact hours compared to five-year formal schooling, the gap between the course content of level 1 and 2, and several aspects of the science, arts and life skills being compressed into the subject General Studies. These issues were supposed to be considered in reviewing the curriculum and materials for improvement in the future.

As indicated before, the current curriculum is a modified version of the HDI NFPE curriculum. The NFPE technical team under the guidance of the National EFA Coordinator has reviewed and revised the previous curriculum and related materials based on the considerations of the followings:

- Recommendations from the learners’ need assessment (Rapid Appraisal) exercise;
The technical team consists of the following personnel:

- Retired educationists;
- Responsible officials from the Curriculum Unit of the Department of Educational Planning and Training;
- NFE Specialists from the Department of Myanmar Educational Research; and
- Officials from the No 1 Department of Basic Education.

The revised NFPE curriculum was developed based on the most essential basic learning competencies of the formal primary education curriculum. The changes are basically on the selection, sequencing and modification of course content as well as the pedagogical methodologies to be applied, moving away from content-focused towards competency-based for skill development. The expected learning outcomes are also clearly defined for each content area for all two levels. The revised NFPE curriculum encourages daily life application through learning activities and an integrative workbook.

Additional learning tasks such as development of livelihood skills for income generation and activities for community services have also been incorporated into the curriculum as demanded by the parents and communities. Opportunities are given to the learners for choosing relevant topics and drawing own plan for learning Income Generation activities/livelihood skills and participation in local community services. Consequently, total learning hours have been increased from 480 to 500 for each level due to the increasing amount of the content of the revised curriculum.

As in the previous model, there are two levels in the current Non-Formal Primary Education (NFPE). Level 1 is equivalent to lower primary level and Level 2 is equivalent to upper primary level. Subjects taught and the respective teaching hours for both levels in one academic year are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr.</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th># of Expected Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Teaching Hours</th>
<th>% of Teaching Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Level-1</td>
<td>Level-2</td>
<td>192 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>72 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>120 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>96 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>General Studies</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>20 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>IGP/ Community Services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>500 hours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: There are 500 hours (42 weeks/250 days) in one academic year for each level.
However, the issues identified during the evaluation of the programme under HDI Project did not seem to be adequately considered. Therefore, the current duration of the programme as well as the content areas remain the same.

The technical team is also responsible for developing accompanying learning materials such as student-books, workbooks, picture and reading cards, facilitators’ guides and audio-materials for English Language and Myanmar poems. Together with the review and revision of original NFPE curriculum, the instructional materials were also revised and additional materials were developed to supplement.

For the students, separate textbooks are used for different subjects together with an integrative workbook. The integrative workbook is to enable learners to apply the knowledge learned from the NFPE contents into real life, integrating all knowledge and skills learned from different content areas into a single assigned task. Besides, picture cards, and reading cards are also used to enhance scope of learning for General Studies.

There is a manual to guide the NFPE facilitators on how to implement the curriculum. There is also a separate manual for the facilitators on how to conduct learning activities to link NFPE with development of livelihood skills for income generation and participation in community services.

There are still a number of issues around the curriculum and materials for the NFPE programme. Teaching English Language as part of NFPE is extremely a challenge; however, since the programme is an equivalency programme, the team has considered that core subject areas covered must be the same as formal primary education. The question for the team is how to equip the NFPE facilitators with necessary language skills. One solution for the time-being is providing audio-materials to enhance English Language learning. There is also a need to redesign student materials to be more attractive for learners. If supplementary reading materials could be developed, children will have more opportunities to strengthen children’s literacy skills, which are critical for further learning as well as for future life.

C. Modes of Delivery

Myanmar NFPE programme is delivered through face to face teaching by the NFPE facilitators at the NFPE centres established and managed by the NFPE committees. The centres and schedule of learning are supposed to be organized at the most appropriate place and the most convenient time for learners. In reality majority of the NFPE centres are located in formal school sites in order for the students to use the existing facilities while closed supervised and managed by the school heads. The NFPE facilitators have to collaborate with local authorities and parents for getting support and ensuring learners’ regular attendance, and closely work with centre
heads/school heads and supervisors for required facilities and professional guidelines. It appears that under current arrangement there is an extra burden imposed on the head of the formal schools as they have to facilitate and supervise day-to-day activities of NFPE centres after school hours.

It is also noted that the current mode of delivery is appropriate only for the children who can come to the centre on regular basis, and the service providers also need to organize appropriate venues and facilities. Therefore, it is more appropriate for children in urban and peri-urban setting. To reach learners from sparsely populated areas, remote areas and mobile families, there is a need to explore alternative modes of delivery such as deployment of mobile NFPE facilitators.

D. Capacity Building and Training

The NFPE facilitators are usually locally recruited from those who have passed at least the Matriculation Examination. In reality, of them are University Graduates. The recruitment is done by Township NFPE Management Committee. Based on the number of learners in the centre, the numbers of facilitators are decided (e.g. 1-34 learners: 2 facilitator, 35-50 learners:3 facilitators, 351-70 learners: 4 facilitators, above 71 learners: 5 facilitators. (At least 2 facilitators for two level/centre)

The technical team of the Ministry is responsible to organize training programme for those facilitators. Currently, the central team conducts 10-day training of trainers workshops for the newly recruited facilitators from the communities as the effectiveness and quality of training could be ensured. However, this model does not allow the team for large-scale expansion of the programme. There is a need to generate more qualified and competent trainers if the programme is going to be expanded.

There is also onsite professional development opportunities provided for the facilitators by the supervisors and the central technical team through monitoring and supportive supervision. Yet, both the facilitators and supervisors need to broaden their scope of knowledge and skills on more appropriate pedagogical principles and practices of non formal education.

E. Financing and Resource Mobilization

The current NFPE programme is being implemented mainly with the support of UNICEF, which includes basic learning materials for students, trainings for NFPE facilitators and remunerations for both facilitators and supervisors. It is critical for both MOE and UNICEF to start thinking of strategies to mobilize resources to finance the programme for sustainability when UNICEF support is phased out.

As indicated before, MOE has recently broadened its partnership with local authorities and civil society groups including the private sector. There is a partnership where UNICEF supports the cost of materials and capacity building, and the resources from NOGs and civil society are used to bear operational costs of the programme. This appears now as an interim arrangement, and more avenues should be created for greater involvement of NGOs in this field.
Mobilizing resources to fund the programme is currently coordinated by EFA Secretariat of MOE. However, there is no separate budget allocated for NFPE and most of NFE/NFPE related costs are subsumed under the budget of different departments for different programmes. Central level authorized body or a focal institution should be formed to implement EP, to initiate networks, to increase partnership with INGOs and private sector for uniformity, to avoid overlapping and duplications, and to assure quality of the services.

F. Networking and Partnership

EFA Secretariat is a focal institution to implement NFPE. There are not many partners involved in NFPE yet. The informal arrangement of the small network with the EFA secretariat includes Myanmar Literacy Resource Centre, AFXB, two private foundations and UNICEF. There is a consideration to explore possibility of linking with Community Learning Centres (CLC), which have been existed for more than a decade in the country. It is perceived that if NFPE could tap into the CLCs, the programme could be more sustainable.

It is also learned that the involvement of local stakeholders including communities and local schools are important to ensure regular participation of the children, arrangement of facilities, security and transportation for them, and support with any necessary but available equipment and materials from local communities. Two days orientation and management trainings have been provided to local communities including authorities and teachers to increase awareness and participation. However, data collection training should be provided to identify all non-enrollers and primary drop-outs, and to increase their full participation in EP.

G. Assessment, Accreditation and Quality Assurance

The NFPE Technical Team of MOE is responsible for accreditation and quality assurance of the programme. Myanmar has official quality assurance standards or guidelines. There are NFPE supervisors who are monitoring implementation and providing technical guidance to the NFPE facilitators.

For certification, individual students are assessed based on attendance, routine assessment against expected learning outcomes and achievement tests conducted after completing each level. The level end test is used to assess children’s achievement in four subjects. The learners who completed Level 2 are eligible to join the first grade of lower secondary level of formal education. Completion certificates are offered to the learners at each level. Currently, the Township Education Officers are responsible to certify those children who want to continue their education in any secondary schools.

An authorized body/institution should be formed to expand the programme. The body/institution will be an entry point for expanding partnership with NGOs/INGOs for implementation of NFPE programme.
H. Monitoring and Evaluation

Regular monitoring and evaluation is conducted by supervisors, township education officials, and central technical team. Information is used to revise curriculum and to redesign the training content and strategy. Feedback from field monitoring is provided to Township NFPE committee, community volunteers, school heads or teachers by monitoring team. Monitoring and evaluation is presented in EFA Annual Reports.

IV. Impacts and Achievements

Annual coverage of children by the NFPE programme is significantly increasing from 900 children in 2008 to 3,594 children in 2010. Although there appear to be more boys annually enrolled in level 1, there is no significant difference between boys and girls in level 2. The available data from monitoring reports for 2009 indicates that there is 74-84% retention in the programme, and 78% of children with minimum learning achievement. Approximately 21% of children who complete NFPE programme go back to lower secondary schools, and slightly more boys tend to continue their education.

Zaw Khine Moe is one of the vulnerable children from poor families, who dropped out early from the school as he needed to help family earn income. He usually earns some income by selling flowers as a roadside peddler. When the NFPE programme was launched in Mingan community of Sittwe township in Rakhin State, he was one of the first children who eagerly took this opportunity of second chance education. He joined NFPE programme in level 2 Class and completed the programme in 2008.

After completing the NFPE, he went back to formal education joining Grade 6 at Migan Basic Education Middle School. With the successful completion of NFPE, and knowing his enthusiasm to go back to school and learn more, the parents also agreed, and managed to send him back to the formal schools. In 2009-10 school-year, he attended Grade 7 and there he stood first among 74 students.

Zaw Khine Moe’s dream is to become an engineer and to pay back the gratitude to his parents when he grows up.
V. Core Challenges

Although some achievements are made there are still challenges to overcome. Challenges among others are as follows:

Students: As more than 50% of the children are working to earn daily income, some have to assist at home, and they could not give full attention as well as lack of study at home. In addition some parents give priority to income of children and they could not attend the classes regularly. High number (around 80%) of NFPE graduate students could not proceed to learn secondary education.

Facilitator: At centres where children those who have never been to school are present, facilitators could not give full attention as they have to use multi-grade teaching and have difficulties in handling rapid emotional changes of children.

Network: The Economic hardship; No separate department with sufficient budget and capacity to implement NFPE; Weak coordination and cooperation between partners; Limited competent personnel at all levels; Limited ownership and commitment at all levels; Poor reliable data for out-of-school children; Scarcity of reliable source of financial sustainability; Requirement of financial and technical inputs;

Key challenges in order to enhance access and quality for EP include: Limited data on out-of-school children; limited resources (men/money/materials); low interest of parents because of poverty and so attendance rates decreased; partner limitation;; sustainability of the whole NFPE programme (e.g. remunerations for the facilitators).

VI. Recommendations for Equivalency Programme Improvement

For the improvement of Equivalency Programme, it is recommended:

- Need to raise awareness of EP.
- To produce different kinds of IEC materials in order to promote awareness raising at every level.
- To enhance programme delivery, mobile NFPE facilitators should be introduced so as to reach learners from sparsely populated areas, remote areas and mobile families.
- To enhance capacity building and training for facilitators, 7 days pre-service training and 7 days in-service training at the central level should be provided.
- Need to provide opportunity to continue learning the 2-years program lower secondary education for those NFPE graduates who cannot join formal lower secondary education.
- NFPE should be linked with small loan/cash transfer activities for the parents/guardians to increase parents’ interest in the programme.
- To include data on non-enrollers, primary drop-outs, and out-of-school children in MOE routine data collection system;
- To regularize rules and regulations to involve NGOs/INGOs in EP;
Central level authorized body or a focal institution should be formed to implement EP including to accredit NFPE and increase access and quality for the out-of-school children, in order to initiate networks, to increase partnership with INGOs and private sector for uniformity, to be free from overlapping places and to assure quality.

Recommendations presented in monitoring reports should be followed up. MOE’s Regular Monitoring Inspection Team should also take responsibility to monitor and supervise the NFPE centers.

VII. Technical Assistance Needs

Despite the fact that the recognition of the role of Non Formal Education as a complementary means of educating people in the country, the technical capacity to fulfill the NFE commitments is limited. There is no separate non formal education department under the Ministry of Education, and the Department of Educational Research is currently the focal department to coordinate the NFE related activities, together with other responsibilities. There is a need to build the technical capacity on NFE in general and Equivalency Programme in particular for both MOE staff as well as relevant NGOs who are involved in various forms of NFE programmes. Particularly for the Equivalency Programmes, the technical assistance is much needed for the following:

- Design and development of Non Formal Middle School Education programme linked to pre vocational education;
- Development and updating of NFPE/NFMSE curriculum and materials;
- Development of alternative mode of deliveries for Equivalency Programmes.
NFPE Student Texts by Levels

Level 1

Level 2
Picture Cards and Reading Cards

Level 1 (Picture Card)

Level 1 (Reading Card)