

Issues Paper

Teacher Compensation for Non-Government Teachers



Purpose	This paper has been commissioned on behalf of the Rural Indigenous Sustainable Education (RISE) network with the support of ADRA Myanmar and the European Union (EU) as an action of the CASE+ project. The paper highlights the significant inequity between compensation payments of government and non-government teachers in the country. The paper draws specific attention to the challenge of paying Indigenous teachers an equitable salary and how this impacts the sustainability of Indigenous providers of education operations in rural, remote and conflict affected areas. It aims to stimulate discussion between development partners and Indigenous providers of education on how to coordinate a more equitable payment system for Indigenous teachers in Myanmar in this Interim period.
Content	The paper includes background and rationale to the teacher compensation issue alongside a description of the Indigenous teaching profession in Myanmar. It presents an analysis of the current compensation payments made to government and non-government teachers working in areas where Indigenous providers of education operate and describes the current challenges faced. It concludes with a set of preliminary actions proposed by RISE to move the discussions forward.
Publicised	21 Feb 2020

1. Rationale

Significant progress is being made to meet the Myanmar government’s ambition to leave no child behind. As the government reviews its progress in the first phase of the Myanmar National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) 2016 – 2021, there are visible signs of progress and the quality agenda is certainly on the map. Yet hidden from the preview of most spectators, Indigenous provision; the backbone of education services in rural, remote and conflict affected areas of Myanmar is struggling to pay its teachers a basic wage. Despite the generous commitment by development partners to the Indigenous education sector, a financial model and long-term plan that ensures no one donor or development partner is left responsible to pay Indigenous teacher salaries on their own, does not exist with any sophistication. It is imperative that steps are taken during this Interim period to ensure Indigenous teachers receive a basic salary when the delicate process of forming a partnership with the Ministry of Education (MOE) and Indigenous providers of education is just beginning to establish.

In recent years, the interest and investment by Development Partners in the capacity development of Indigenous providers of education has increased and diversified. This is helping to strengthen the quality of their education services and their capacity to meaningfully engage with the MOE on issues pertinent to Indigenous children’s education rights, including the recognition of Indigenous education systems, non-government teacher accreditation, the recognition of children’s learning and

government transfer systems and mother tongue language in education policy. While Indigenous providers of education are certainly committed to system strengthening and increased policy engagement with the MOE, the annual pressure to focus on fundraising for teacher stipends compromises and undermines these efforts.

It is within this context, that this Issues Paper on non-government teacher compensation is presented. It is hoped that a solution for this Interim period will pave way for a more sustained and equitable financial model with the Myanmar government in the future.

2. Commitments unmet

The Myanmar governments' education reform priorities and the nationwide ceasefire agreement have offered so much promise to the Indigenous peoples residing in ethnic Areas and Regions of Myanmar. To date, progress has been stymied by a lack of constructive political dialogue. It has led to an erosion in confidence and a growing drain on social services in rural, remote and conflict affected areas.

Whilst the NESP did not include an Indigenous perspective, it did acknowledge the presence of and value of Indigenous education systems. The Ministry of Education (MOE) stated that *'an important factor in the successful implementation of the basic education reform is the extent to which they are mainstreamed in other organisations involved in basic education provision, such as...schools managed by ethnic education systems.'* To this end, current planning by the MOE with the support of the World Bank and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) has begun through the Inclusive Access and Quality Education (IAQE) project. The project aims to drive forward the NESP commitment to establish a partnership mechanism between the MOE and Indigenous providers of education. However, work in this area has only just began and small pilot partnerships between the MOE and Indigenous providers of education are anticipated by the end of 2019. It is widely accepted that it will take time for partnership agreements between the MOE and Indigenous providers of education to materialise and for a government budget support mechanism to Indigenous education services to be developed.

Support to sustain social service provision by Indigenous providers is an important agenda for political dialogue in the current peace process. The 2015 Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) acknowledges education provision by Indigenous providers of education. The NCA interim arrangements state that Ethnic Armed Groups (EAGs) have responsibility for development and security in their respective areas. The arrangements allow for international aid to support development and capacity-building in these areas, and state that the government and EAGs will coordinate social service delivery, including education, health and socio-economic development, until a full peace accord is achieved. However, to date, social services have not featured within the political dialogue and the government's efforts to expand education services in conflict-affected ethnic areas has often been done without conflict-sensitive consultation and dialogue, sometimes exacerbating long-standing tensions over the status of Indigenous education systems and damaging confidence in ceasefires and the peace process. The unfolding encroachment of government services in autonomous and mixed controlled regions continues to compromise Indigenous education services and diminish confidence in the peace process.

The reality is that the government education system does not penetrate rural, remote and conflict-affected areas of Myanmar, or areas under the control of EAGs. Education provision by Indigenous providers of education constitutes a significant portion of education service provision in conflict-affected townships and rural remote parts of the country. According to 2014 Census data, almost half

(1,305,906) of all out-of-school children reside in ethnic minority states and regions and the recent (2018) Myanmar out-of-school children study found significant disparities in enrolment, retention and completion rates across all levels of education between rural and urban areas. For instance, while the national survival rate to the last grade of primary education is 89.4%, this falls to 68.2% for children in rural areas (for children in urban areas it is 95.5%), with rural children 11 times more likely to drop out before the last grade of primary school than their urban peers. This trend is consistent with RISE 2018 baseline data, which found that almost a quarter (23%) of children in RISE operational areas are out of school.

3. The need for more teachers in remote areas

Teachers are said to be the backbone of any education system and the quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers. Unfortunately, this has not meant that all teachers receive a fair salary. Indigenous teachers are typically recruited from the local community and speak the local Indigenous language of the children they teach. They fill a critical gap in the provision of education in rural, remote and conflict-affected areas of Myanmar. Whilst alternatively trained, they are supporting the Myanmar government's commitment to education for all. Despite this, they are unrecognised.

This is notwithstanding the tremendous need for teachers in the country. Myanmar faces significant teacher shortages, and it is estimated that 33,361 new teachers are needed to fill teacher shortages in basic education schools nationwide. In order to address teacher shortages, the MOE intends to appoint over 30,000 new teachers over a three-year period (2018/19 – 2020/21). A significant portion of new teachers are being employed through the government's daily wage teacher (DWT) program. DWTs receive about a month of training before being deployed and tend to be placed in rural remote schools. According to a World Bank study on teacher pay and compensation (2018), DWTs represent nearly one-quarter of all teachers employed in Myanmar and most teachers deployed to remote schools only stay as long as it takes to get a promotion elsewhere in the system and there is a shortage of bilingual teachers who can teach in areas with ethnic populations, suggesting that teacher supply is not meeting the demand. This same study found that while regional allowances for hardship areas is one incentive provided by the government to keep staff in challenging areas, it is yet to be seen how effective it is in retaining teachers and further measures, such as improved placement by targeting and programs to recruit local candidates from hardship areas as teachers, are likely to be needed.

The NESP recognises the challenge in deploying qualified teachers to all schools, especially schools in remote rural areas and acknowledges that a strengthened teacher recruitment system must include recognition of prior learning so that teachers who are educated in different educational contexts can have their qualifications recognised. To this end, a teacher licensing or accreditation system is proposed. However, the development of a teacher licensing system will only take place in the final years of the current NESP and rolled out in a subsequent plan.

4. Background to RISE

The Rural Indigenous Sustainable Education (RISE) network includes the following Indigenous providers of education: Karen Teachers Working Group (KTWG, Karen), Centre for Rural Education and Development (CRED, Shan), Lahu Development Network (LDN, Lahu), Shanan Education Networking Group (SENG, Kachin), (Ta'ang Student and Youth Union (TSYU, Ta'ang), Eastern Naga Development Organization (ENDO, Naga), Bawinu Foundation (BF, Chin), Zomi Development Foundation (ZDF, Zomi), Supporting Essential Education (SEE, Kayan), Community Development

Network (CDN, Pa-oh), Seh Thet Education Development Foundation (STEDF, Karenni) and Karen Women's Organisation (KWO, Karen).

The networks shared mission is to promote the interests of Indigenous peoples and children in Myanmar and their right to provide and access a culturally appropriate quality education in their mother tongue. RISE objectives are to:

- Promote Indigenous knowledge, language and culture;
- Ensure access to quality, culturally appropriate education for Indigenous peoples;
- Engage community members and families concerning education issues in their communities; and
- Advocate for the rights of Indigenous peoples in particular in respect to Indigenous knowledge, and wisdom, language, cultural heritage and education rights.

In 2018, the RISE network collectively served 302,430 Indigenous children in 3,723 schools staffed by 19,752 teachers throughout rural, remote and conflict-affected areas across 9 States and Regions (Kachin, Kayin, Mon, Shan, Chin, Kayah, Tanintharyi, Bago and Sagaing) of Myanmar.

5. The current situation

Indigenous providers of education struggle to secure adequate funding to pay their teachers. Funding levels for teacher stipends fluctuate and in resource scarce times it is the teachers and local communities who suffer. Teachers are often required to accept a lower stipend and local communities must provide additional in-kind support, such as accommodation, food and local travel, to retain teachers within their communities.

Indigenous providers of education strongly believe in an equitable stipend payment for their teachers. While interested in developing a more sophisticated teacher compensation system, which takes into account a teacher's level of training, their years of experience, their remote teaching context and the basic living wage, to date, limited funding means that Indigenous providers of education have struggled to provide even a basic stipend to their teachers.

This situation is compounded by the crude and limiting equation that is applied by Development Partners which simply divides the amount of funding allocated to teacher stipends by the number of teachers to determine the teacher stipend amount.

The fluctuations in funding for teacher stipends faced by the Karen Education and Cultural Department (KECD) and the Karen Teachers Working Group (KTWG) partnership, who are responsible for providing education assistance systematically and equally across all Karen schools, is a case in point. Between the 2013/14 – 2016/17 academic years, the KECD/KTWG provided an annual stipend of 7,500 THB (USD 238) to community teachers throughout the Karen education system. However, for the 2017/18 academic year, this fell to 4,600 THB (USD 146) due to funding constraints. For the 2018/19 academic year, teacher stipends will rise to 9,000 THB (USD 286) but it is unclear whether this will be sustained for 2019/20 or whether teacher stipends will again be reduced due to funding shortfalls.

Such fluctuations in teacher stipends are unsustainable and places immense pressure on Indigenous providers of education to fundraise each year to sustain teacher stipends, taking time and effort away from system strengthening and efforts to improve quality education provision.

6. What are teachers currently paid?

Current stipends for non-government teachers working within Indigenous education systems vary greatly and is dependent on funding availability and the ability of communities to raise funds to support teacher stipends and provide in-kind support. For the KTWG, who maintain the largest non-government teacher workforce and therefore require significant funding to pay teacher stipends, a lack of funding means that their teachers are paid only a meagre stipend.

Table 1: Indigenous teacher stipend payments

Provider	State/Region	No. of teachers	Monthly stipend amount	Community contributions
ENDO	Naga self-administration zone, Sagaing Region	200	100,000 MMK	Accommodation Food
TSYU	Shan State north and south	60	100,000 – 110,000 MMK	Accommodation Food
CRED	Shan State	250	100,000	
KTWG	Kayin, Mon, Bago, Tanintharyi	5,165	900 THB	Food
SEE	Shan and Kayah States	35	80,000 MMK 40,000 MMK for language teachers	Accommodation Food
LDN	Shan State east	30	60,000 MMK	Accommodation Food
ZDF	Chin State, Sagaing Region	6	100,000 MMK	Accommodation Food
BF	Chin State	200	50,000 MMK	
CDN	Shan State south, Kayah State	115	45,000 MMK	Accommodation Food

The frequency of stipend distribution varies from between bi-annual to quarterly payments depending on the local context. Distribution costs are high due to the costs associated with reaching teachers in rural, remote areas. To offset the costs of stipend distribution, Indigenous providers of education combine teacher stipend distribution with teacher training and school-based support during mobile teacher training (MTT) cycles and/or during summer vacation / training events that bring large numbers of teachers.

The discrepancy in teacher stipends demonstrates the current inequity in non-government teacher compensation and is in stark contrast to government teacher salaries and Myanmar's minimum wage policy. Myanmar's daily minimum wage is MMK 4,800 per day or about MMK 96,000 per month. DWTs in Myanmar are employed as daily contract teachers and paid the daily minimum wage as well as a regional allowance for working in hardship areas of MMK 5,000. Since 2013/14, the MOE has also employed ethnic language teachers to support the rollout of ethnic language and local curriculum in government schools. Ethnic language teachers are employed on a part-time bases and receive MMK 30,000 a month.

According to the World Bank study on teacher compensation and pay, the base salaries and regional allowances for teachers in 2015/16 is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Government teacher salary payments

Staff	Base Salary			Regional Allowance for hardship area From Feb 2016 onward			
	Minimum	Increment	Maximum	Fairly hard	Hard	Hardest	Up to Feb. 2016
Teachers							
Primary assistant teacher	150,000	2,000	160,000	70,000	76,000	82,000	64,000
Junior assistant teacher	165,000	2,000	175,000	67,000	73,000	79,000	61,000
Senior assistant teacher	180,000	2,000	190,000	64,000	70,000	76,000	58,000
Head Teachers							
Primary head	165,000	2,000	175,000	67,000	73,000	79,000	61,000
Junior head	250,000	4,000	270,000	76,000	82,000	88,000	70,000
Senior head	250,000	4,000	270,000	76,000	82,000	88,000	70,000

(Source: World Bank and Ministry of Planning and Finance, *Myanmar Pay, Compensation, and Human Resource Management Review*, 2018, p. 50.)

Government teachers are compensated for working in the hardest to reach areas. The starting salary for a first-year teacher deployed to a school designated as ‘hardest’ is 132,000 a month.

The huge discrepancy in salary between government teachers and non-government teachers is causing significant issues, particularly in ‘mixed school’ settings. As government education is expanded into rural, remote and conflict-affected areas of Myanmar, government teachers are being deployed into community schools supported by Indigenous providers of education creating more ‘mixed schools.’ According to KECD and KTWG data, since the ceasefire between the Myanmar government and the KNU was signed in 2012, the number of government teachers in KSEAG supported schools has almost tripled from 1,574 to 4,718 between school years 2012-13 and 2015-16, leading to the creation of 379 new mixed schools. At the school level, this has led to significant challenges. In some instances, prejudice and discrimination against non-government teachers has caused the displacement of non-government teachers and government teacher absenteeism is reportedly high, causing interruptions to schooling (over 1,000 DWTs were reportedly absent for more than one month in the 2015/16 school year). The language barrier between government teachers and ethnic children and communities has also had a negative impact on student learning and parent/community engagement as government teachers rarely speak the same ethnic language as the children they teach.

The evolution to a cash-based economy in many rural, remote and conflict-affected areas is making it increasingly difficult for non-government teachers to survive on their meagre stipends. As the suppression of the local economy and restrictions on movement have improved in many ceasefire areas, so too has the demand for cash-based compensation for non-government teachers who have traditionally been able to survive on community contributions and a low stipend.

7. Impact of stipend discrepancy

Global evidence has shown that low teacher salaries impacts teacher motivation, retention and has a negative impact on student learning outcomes. Poorly paid teachers often turn to private tutoring or other part-time work to supplement their income, which negatively affects classroom instruction. The 2015 World Bank Myanmar Early Grade Literacy Assessment (EGRA) conducted in the Yangon region found that 18% of students were taught by a teacher who has another income-generating job, with teachers twice as likely in remote schools (42%) than in non-remote schools (15%) to have a second

job. Being taught by a teacher who had another job was one of the most significant variables impacting children's learning outcomes and correlated with lower EGRA scores. The 2018 RISE baseline teaching and learning assessment found that 30% of teachers had a second job, although it was unclear if this was paid or volunteer work. This was attributed to low teacher stipends and the need for teachers to take on extra duties in the community.

The current low compensation of non-government teachers is profoundly unjust. The inconsistency and inequity of non-government teacher compensation is undermining Indigenous education services and the efforts of Indigenous providers of education and Development Partners to strengthen Indigenous education systems and improve quality education provision within rural, remote and conflict-affected areas of the country.

8. What this calls for

The commitments within the NESP for the recognition and accreditation of non-government teachers will take time to achieve. In the meantime, it is important to support non-government teachers who are filling a critical gap within education provision in rural, remote and conflict-affected areas.

There is an urgent need for all stakeholders to work together to redress the inequity in Indigenous teacher compensation. The Myanmar government has committed through the NESP to creating partnerships with Indigenous providers of education that will include funding mechanisms to sustain Indigenous education services and the accreditation of non-government teachers in the longer-term. Efforts should therefore be directed at advocacy and engagement with the Myanmar government to achieve a long-term sustainable solution that enables Indigenous teachers to have a place in Myanmar's education future.

The Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies *Guidance Notes on Teacher Compensation in Fragile States, Situations of Displacement and Post-Crisis Recovery* (2009) draws attention to the need to 'build a sustainable teacher compensation system that can be adhered to as far as possible by all actors in a coordinated manner' and provides examples of where pooled funding has been used to support teacher compensation in post-conflict reconstruction contexts.

In this current interim period, the RISE Indigenous providers of education are calling on Development Partners to:

1. Enter into a more **open and transparent consultation** with Indigenous providers of education about how to **create a consistent and equitable funding model** for Indigenous teacher stipends;
2. Acknowledge the need to **apply a more sophisticated formula** for determining Indigenous teacher stipends and work with Indigenous providers of education to **develop a salary structure for Indigenous teacher compensation** that recognises the education, training, years of experience and localities where community teachers live and work and provides a living wage;
3. Take a more **coordinated approach and commit to funding Indigenous teacher stipends** until the NESP commitments are achieved. All Development Partners supporting Indigenous education should allocate an equal percentage of the budget to support teacher stipends and/or consider pooling funds; and

4. Recognise that the **annual pressure** placed on Indigenous providers of education to fundraise for teacher stipends **negatively impacts our relationships** with Development Partners and **undermines our efforts** to strengthen Indigenous education systems and improve education quality, **negatively impacting on Indigenous children's rights to a quality education.**