

# YOUNG WORKERS IN CONSTRUCTION





Construction is a dangerous occupation in Myanmar and much of the work is too dangerous for anyone under 18 years. However, there are some tasks youth who are 14 years old or older might be able to do safely, depending on the type of construction site. There are some general rules:

## **1. Decide which work is youth-appropriate and which is not**

Examples:

- OK: Tasks which offer safe opportunities to learn new skills
- OK: Simple tasks; providing lunches and tea; keeping the site neat
- OK: Bringing tools and materials using a wheelbarrow or trolley (no heavy loads)
- Not OK: Tasks which require a respirator (toxic chemicals) or safety goggles(welding)
- Not OK: Tasks which involve pushing, pulling, lifting loads that are over 20% of body weight
- Not OK: Tasks on a site with open excavations, heavy equipment, or dusty air
- Not OK: Tasks which require youth to operate dangerous equipment
- Not OK: Tasks which require youth to work at heights without fall protection.

## **2. Ensure a safe work environment**

- Frequently check that all tools and equipment are in good condition
- Ensure that all products and materials are safely stored
- Provide equipment to move all materials (wood, stone, cement) and ensure that children and young persons are not asked to transport heavy loads
- Make sure that there are guard rails on excavations, stairways, scaffolding, floor openings and wall openings
- Keep the construction site cleaned up so there is nothing to trip over or fall on
- Limit access to the construction site to authorized persons
- Post a policy against harassment where everyone can see it; enforce that policy.

## **3. Provide training and supervision**

- Youth must be trained to do every task that's part of their work, such as how to lift things correctly or how to use the tools and equipment safely.
- Youth must be shown what might be harmful, and closely supervised
- Youth must never be allowed to do work that is "not OK" for those under 18.

## **4. Know and keep to the law**

- Myanmar has laws to protect young workers. The Factories Act (as amended) covers sites with 5 or more workers where any manufacturing is carried out, either with or without power equipment (Section 2, sub-section "m"). The law forbids adolescents and children from:

- being engaged in work that poses a danger to the child's health, interferes with the child's education, or is exploitive. (Section 75)
- lifting, carrying or moving any load heavy enough to cause injury. (Section 36)
- working long hours (over 4 hours per day) or at night (Section 79)
- working without a certificate of fitness from the doctor (Section 77)
- Myanmar is also subject to ILO Convention No. 182 on hazardous work which says:
- No one under 18 years is allowed to do any kind of work which could damage their health, safety, well-being or morals.

### **Safety . . . the top dangers for young people in construction are:**

1. FALLING – falling into a hole or off of a high place (wall, ladder, scaffold, roof)
2. STRUCK BY – being struck by a vehicle or having something fall on them (tools, lumber, rock)
3. HEAT -- Working long hours in the hot sun without water and rest periods
4. CAUGHT IN BETWEEN – Working in a trench or excavation that is not safely sloped or shored
5. ELECTROCUTION – working near overhead power lines or with ungrounded electric tools
6. HEAVY LOADS -- carrying materials that are too heavy for them.

### **Some other construction dangers for youth and what to do about them:**

<b>FALLS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Ladders</u> Tell youth to <u>always</u> check that the ladder is strong and stable before going up, and to hold on with both hands.</li> <li>• <u>Walkways</u> Keep all walking and working areas free of materials and debris, and keep ropes and hoses coiled up and properly stowed when not in use.</li> <li>• <u>Scaffolding</u> Do not let youth work on unguarded scaffolding.</li> <li>• <u>Clothing</u> Instruct youth to wear shoes, preferably with rubber soles that will not slip.</li> <li>• <u>Behaviour</u> Instruct youth not to run or carry items that are too heavy.</li> </ul>
<b>STRAIN</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Lifting</u> Teach young workers the safe way to lift things: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Squat to pick up the object and lift using your leg muscles not your back</li> <li>■ Hold the heavy item against your body</li> <li>■ Move your feet to turn, do not twist your body.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <u>Moving</u> Watch to see that youth use wheelbarrows to move materials, and that adult workers lift the heavy items. <i>(Young people's bones are still developing and can be easily injured.)</i></li> </ul>

<p><b>INJURIES</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <u>Vehicles</u> Do not allow youth to drive trucks, tractors or other vehicles. Keep them away from areas where heavy equipment is moving around.</li> <li>● <u>Powered equipment</u> Do not allow youth to work around or with motorized saws, drills, or hammers.</li> <li>● <u>Vibration, light, or noise risks</u> Keep young workers completely away from work areas where there is soldering, welding, powered grinders or sanders, and so much noise that workers need to shout to be heard.</li> <li>● <u>Electricity</u> Instruct young workers to tell you if they see electrical equipment or wiring that looks damaged or is wet. Warn them not to touch it. Remind them never to touch electrical power lines with anything.</li> <li>● <u>Cuts &amp; bruises</u> Make sure youth wear sturdy shoes and gloves when they are working on the site.</li> <li>● <u>Concussion</u> Put up barriers to prevent objects from falling over the edge of a roof or building onto those below.</li> </ul>
<p><b>CHEMICALS &amp; DUST</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <u>Burns</u> Do not allow youth to use or to work with glue, paint or solvent. Do not allow youth to work in enclosed spaces where dangerous chemicals have been used. If a respirator is required, the work is too dangerous for youth. (<i>Youth are especially susceptible to toxic chemicals</i>)</li> <li>● <u>Poisoning</u> Do not allow youth to work around asbestos, lead or petroleum products.</li> <li>● <u>Lung damage</u> Clean up sawdust and other dust regularly, using a wet mop.</li> </ul>
<p><b>ATTITUDES</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Be sure that adult workers do not use violent language around young workers or threaten them.</li> <li>● Show no tolerance toward instances of abuse or harassment or sexual misconduct. Act immediately.</li> </ul>
<p><b>WORKING CONDITIONS</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <u>Rehydration</u> Provide clean cool water and urge workers to drink a lot when it is hot.</li> <li>● <u>Sun protection</u> Provide a space and time for workers to take rest breaks out of the sun or heat.</li> <li>● <u>Contracts</u> Ensure that all young workers have a contract that lays out their tasks, hours, and pay.</li> <li>● <u>Medical care</u> Have a well-provisioned first aid kit on site and provide transport and funds for care if a young worker is injured.</li> </ul>

**If you need help or more information, contact:**





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