



# PROJECT UPDATES

## Myanmar Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (My-PEC)




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A girl participant during the WDACL in Mon

### World Day Against Child Labour (WDACL) 2015

Almost 1500 children, parents, civil society organization members, community members and leaders, government, workers, employers and development agencies participated in this year's WDACL in Kayin State on 11 June and Yangon and Mon State on the 12th.

The global theme of the event is "No to child labour, Yes to quality education." Talks, arts contests, musical and play performances were among the highlights of the events.

The events were supported by TWG-CL and organized in partnership with MOLES, Karen Women Empowerment Group, Mon National Education Committee, Mon Women Organization and Women Empowerment Program. 



Yangon

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Kayin State

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Mon State

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## What have we achieved?

The first year of My-PEC was foundation setting with a two-pronged approach of working with the national level **Technical Working Group on Child Labour (TWG-CL)** and starting engagement with the **communities**.

As of June 2015:

- 5** organizations initiate CL activities with support from the project
- 6** national level activities to raise public awareness on CL
- 21** government, Workers and Employers Organizations and civil society organizations received training on international CL standards
- 25** TWG-CL member organizations participating in capacity-building activities
- 30** community-level awareness raising activities supported by the project
- 76** officials from sub-national line ministries and other local staff participating in capacity-building activities
- 77** organizations participating in advocacy activities 

### TWG-CL develops TOR, operational guidelines

TWG-CL is composed of stakeholders from the government, workers, employers and civil society. It is chaired by the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security (MOLES).


Its members jointly drafted the Terms of Reference and Operational Guidelines on 4 September 2014 and 29 January 2015, respectively.

Both documents, approved in January 2015, are essential for effectiveness and coherence of the child labour eradication efforts in the country with the TWG-CL giving guidance and support to the implementation of the




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MOLES officials discuss roles of the Ministry during a group work

Myanmar-ratified ILO Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour. TWG-CL has identified the development of the hazardous work list as a key priority for 2015. 

### Journalists trained on child labour, child rights

Following the development of a Practical Guide for Journalists on Fighting Child Labour and Promoting Children's Rights, 44 journalists were trained in Ayeyarwady, Mon, Kayin and Yangon within May-June 2015.

The training included child labour definitions, legislations, international standards and tips on writing using ethical protocols on child labour and other thematic issues on the Worst Forms of Child Labour. 

### Upcoming releases

My-PEC aims to increase the knowledge-base on child labour in Myanmar for use in evidence-based policy and program development

Rapid Assessment in Hlaing Thar Yar Industrial Zone

Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices on Child Labour

Agriculture Sub-Sector Survey

A Legal Review of National Laws and Regulations Related to Child Labour in Myanmar in Light of International Laws and Standards



## Feature story

### Child labour and lack of quality education in rural communities

By Victor Fleury

For the second year celebration of World Day against Child Labour in Myanmar, which had the theme “No to Child Labour, Yes to quality Education”, the International Labour Organization (ILO)/ Myanmar Programme for Elimination of Child Labour (My-PEC) organized events around the country. While a ceremony was held in Yangon, with governmental, employers and workers organizations, civil society representatives, and international partners. My-PEC also implemented awareness raising activities in Mon and Kayin states, targeting one of the most concerning and vulnerable areas for child labour: the rural communities.



On 11<sup>th</sup> June, more than 200 people celebrated the World Day against Child Labour in a basic education school in the Village of Taung Kalay, Hpa’an Township, in Kayin State. Among the participants coming from 10 different neighbouring villages are children with their smiling faces, and also male and female adults from different backgrounds: teachers, parents,



business owners, local authorities, police officers, among others. Arts competition for schoolchildren, theatre play, singing performances from local artists and a workshop for adults were organized to raise awareness on child labour and quality education in this community. “Child labour is a major issue in Kayin State. Many children work in restaurant, tea shops, factories, or farms. Other migrate to Thailand with their family to find a job” said Naw Cynthia Win, 29, Area Manager from Karen Women Empowerment Group (KWEG).

In this rural area of Myanmar, a majority of children drop out after primary school, mainly because the parents cannot afford to send their children to middle school. The adults also highlighted during this event that even if the Government is providing free education, they need a better quality education system. “Our education system is just focused on ‘learning by heart’. But after a while, you forget it all. We have to change to an education system better adapted to the needs of the children, where pupils understand easily what they are learning, and where they can express themselves freely” added Naw Cynthia Win. According to the teachers, parents don’t believe that school could provide a better future for their children. This is how lack of quality education has impacted the mind set of the parents in negative way. “To get quality education, we need more teachers, better trained. We also need more adapted educative materials,” said Naw Htee Mu, 57, teacher in a primary school, in the village of Yathawon.

#### Poverty, lack of quality of education and child labour

Even if one of the biggest root causes of child labour is poverty, the lack of quality education is thus another issue that has a direct influence on the high rate of child labourers in Myanmar. “Preliminary findings of our studies in Myanmar show that majority of the parents of child labourers, and the child labourers themselves, do not appreciate the value of education. But why? Maybe because they see that many who get higher education are not able to get decent job that is in commensurate to the level of education. Or maybe because the immediate need of the family is food for now and not education for future food,” mentioned Jodelen Mitra, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer for the ILO/My-PEC project.

Another issue linked to quality education in Myanmar; a country with more than 130 ethnic groups, is the lack of teaching in the local ethnic languages. Many kids in this region speak only Karen. Nan Kyi Wai San, 9, a grade 5 pupil in the primary



school of Hla Ka Myin, is one of them. With the sensitization session on Child Labour that was carried out in Karen language, she expressed that “Today I have learnt a lot about Child labour. I know other kids of my age, working in teashop, farms, or collecting garbage. When I will meet their parents later, I will tell them that it is important that children have a chance to go to school.”

Sitting not far from Nan Kyi Wai San, Daw Khin Than Win, 45, had been talking with other parents on the same topic. “My two first children dropped out after primary school. The first one became a domestic worker, when she turned 13 years old. The second one, left the village to work in a Teashop. I would really want to put my last daughter to middle school, but I am not sure that we could afford it,” she said, noticeably moved by this issue.



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### “My parents were too poor to send me to school, I want a better future for my children!”

The following day, 80 children, teachers and parents celebrated World Day against Child Labour in the Mon National Education Committee primary school, located in a small rural village, Thanbyuzayat Township, in Mon state, at less than 2 hours driving from Taung Kalay. The participants congregated in a traditional wooden house on stilts, with no access to electricity and running water. They attended the awareness raising activities in Mon language and the children participated to a drawing competition on Child Labour. “It is really good to celebrate the World Day against Child Labour in the communities affected by this issue. Today, some participants, out of their curiosity and interest on the child labour issue, stopped working in their rubber plantation for few hours and participated in the event. Organizing the event in their locality allows them to participate easily. If it were organized in big town or far away, they would not be easily able to participate, even if they are interested,” said Mi Thang Sorn Poine, Assistant Program Coordinator for the Mon Women’s Organization.

Women organizations are one of the key actors to fight child labour on the grassroots level. “Most parents would opt to send their son, and not their daughter, to school. We need to do more awareness raising activities on this issue. If we want to fight child labour, you need first to know exactly what it is; and why do you have to combat it,” noted Mi Thang Sorn Poine.

### Difficult access to schools

In this remote village, there are only two primary schools and public transportation are not available to go to the middle school. “Here in Mon, after primary school, the majority of children will go to work. We cannot afford school fees,” said Daw Khin Yee, 65, who has five grandchildren. Nai Chan Mon, 35, is facing the same problem for his son Mehm Kao Mon, 9, who is finishing his primary school. “Next year, my son will go to middle school. I am happy that a truck driver friend will send my son to school every day. My parents were too poor to send me to school, I want a better future for my children!” he said.

Unfortunately, Mehm Kao Mon will be one of the only pupils of his class that will be able to go to middle school. Mi Rottana Mon will have to go to work with her mother. “Recently, my mother told me, that I would not go to middle school. My father passed away last year, and we are too poor now,” said sadly this 9 year-old girl, who consistently earned the highest score among her classmates for number of years.

The Myanmar Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour is a four-year project that aims to develop a comprehensive, inclusive and efficient multi-stakeholder response to reduce child labour in Myanmar. Funding for this project was provided by the United States Department of Labor. The information contained in this newsletter reflect only some of the activities and outputs that the project has delivered since its official start. For more information please email [yangon@ilo.org](mailto:yangon@ilo.org) or call +95 1 566538.

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