



PROJECT UPDATES

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

National Action Plan consultations underway

A consultation workshop for the development of the National Action Plan (NAP) on Child Labour was conducted on 9 September 2016 at Hotel Golden Land, Nyi Pyi Taw facilitated by ILO consultant Birgitte Poulsen, a child labour and NAP expert.

Initial consultations with stakeholders in Myanmar were carried out as part of a scoping exercise to determine the key priorities for the forthcoming NAP and discuss and decide on the consultation and drafting process to be carried out in order to produce an achievable and sustainable National Action Plan (NAP) on elimination of child labour in Myanmar, relevant to the context.

Findings from bilateral consultations with the Government, Workers and Employers Organizations, the civil society, International Organizations and the Private Sector were shared during the workshop.

The participants agreed that the NAP must be based on strategies that tackle the root causes of child labour in Myanmar and take into consideration the nature and extent of child labour in the country. Hence the key overall strategies recommended for the NAP includes:

- Protection of young workers and ensuring their continued access to education and training;

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A child walks briskly to school in Ward 93, Dagon Seikkan Township. He is seen here carrying the umbrella, bag and school materials provided by MyPEC.
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Survey findings published

ILO Press Release: The International Labour Organization (ILO) welcomes the Republic of the Union of Myanmar's publication of the first comprehensive survey of the labour force, including data on women's participation, child labour and youth employment issues.

The Labour Force, Child Labour and School-to-Work Transition Survey (LFS-CL-STWTS)

has been led by the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population, jointly with the Central Statistical Organisation, with financial and technical support from the ILO.

The survey was conducted from 1 to 31 March 2015, covering a sample of 23,425 households in 1,468 enumeration areas drawn from the 2014 population census sampling frame.

Local participation key to project success—ILO



Village development committee members in Poe Laung identify their roles and focal persons for the interventions.
© ILO Photo / Jodelen Mitra

Ward and village development committees were reactivated by ILO in the pilot areas Dagon Seikkan, Yangon and Labutta, Ayeyarwady for its child labour project. In Ye Township, Mon State where there are no such formal committees, similar coordination groups were set up.

Orientation about child labour and the project was done from 03-28 October with a planning workshop about the roles of the groups in the project implementation. Focal persons for interventions were also nominated by the partners.

The facilitators of the workshops, Hnin Wuit Yee and Jodelen Mitra of My-PEC emphasized the importance of participation of the community leaders and other key stakeholders in the success of the implementation and sustainability of the efforts.

The groups have since then been active in providing support to the project implementation.

About 9 per cent of the children or over 1.1 million are child labourers. Of which, 0.6 and 0.5 million respectively are boys and girls.

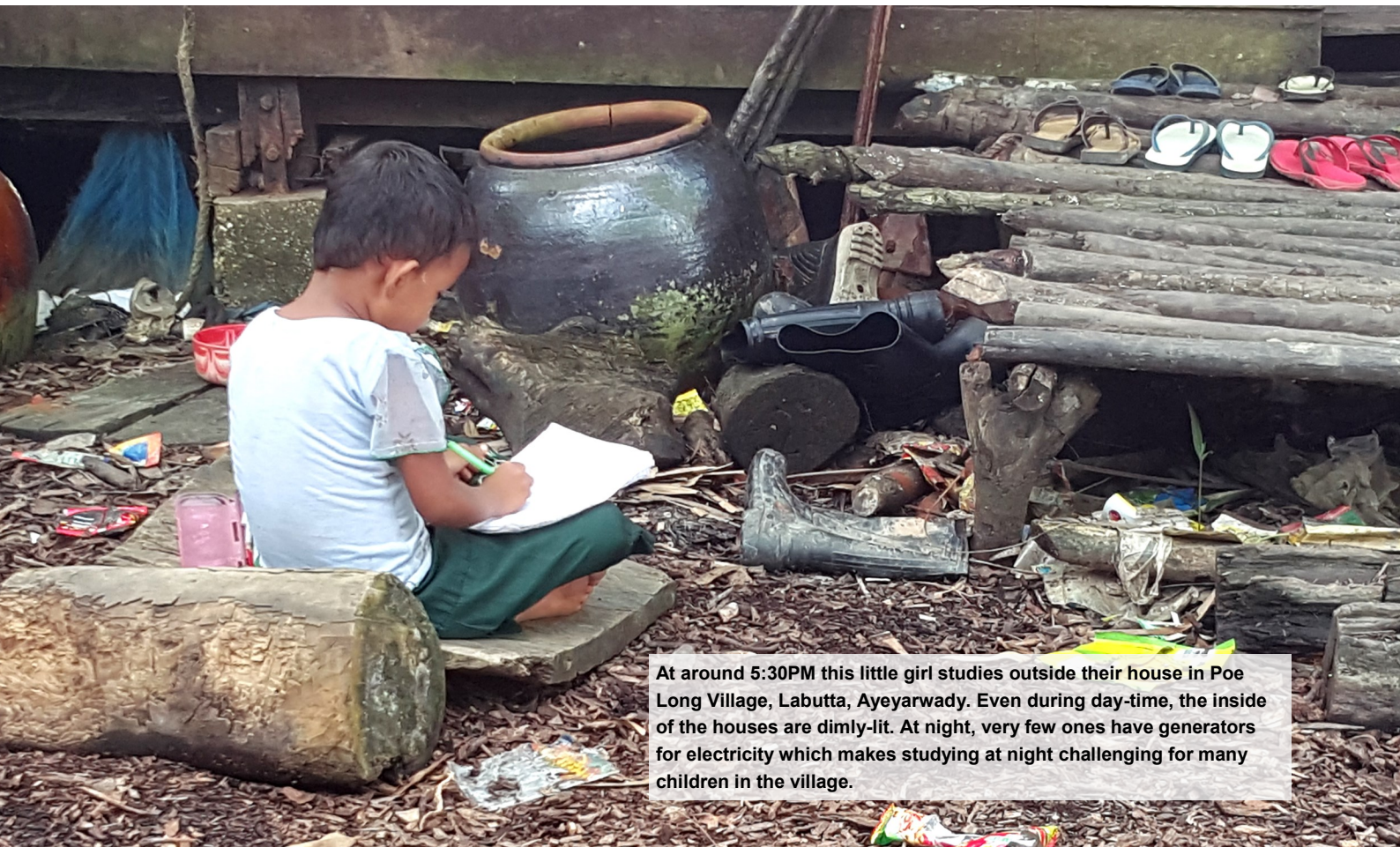
Of all those engaged in hazardous child labour, 75 per cent are in the age group 15-17 years, a third of this in the age group 12-14 years.

“We hope the survey will help the Government in developing inclusive and people-centred policies and programmes that contribute to sustainable development and decent work for all,” said Mr. Rory Mungoven, ILO Liaison Officer.



Education and child labour in different realities

Written and photographed by Jodelen Mitra



At around 5:30PM this little girl studies outside their house in Poe Long Village, Labutta, Ayeyarwady. Even during day-time, the inside of the houses are dimly-lit. At night, very few ones have generators for electricity which makes studying at night challenging for many children in the village.

It was raining that afternoon of October 4, typical for monsoon season. At around 3pm, schoolchildren were hurrying home. They carried white sling bags and green umbrellas with imprinted messages on child labour and education. It takes around half an hour for some of the children to walk between school and their homes which on some days could be dangerous when roads are slippery and snakes slither their way along the farmlands. However, as one child quipped with a big smile, it doesn't matter because she likes going to school where her friends are.

Indeed school is where most children would want to be on a normal weekday but for many child labourers, they don't get to choose.

THE PROBLEM

Out of the 642 households in Labutta surveyed in 2015 for the ILO My-PEC baseline survey, half of all the children were child labourers engaged in catching crabs, fishing or fish processing. One in every three child labourers

work for more than 60 hours per week, with one in every four of them working both day and night. This excessive working hours impede children's ability to attend and perform well in school. It is no surprise that more than half of all the child labourers do not attend school in Poe Long and 10% of those who are able to attend miss 6 days or more per month. Enrolment of child labour falls sharply after 4th Standard.

This high incidence of child labour and drop-out rate is also similar in other pilot areas in Dagon Seikkan, Yangon and Ye Township.

Poverty is reported as the reason for going out to work by the majority, with their parents not having the financial capacity to send them to school. The incomes of child labourers are contributory to the households' well-being, this is repeatedly heard in interviews and consultations. Indeed, based on the baseline survey, when the incomes earned by child labourers are taken away, the extent of poverty

amongst households with child labourers increases from 50% to 78%, showing the economic value of the child's labour to the household.

The figures show a much dimmer reality in Ye Township in Mon State where out of the 8 villages covered by My-PEC (except Pananbon), only one middle school and one high school managed by the Mon National Education Committee are present. Only approximately 15% of the child labourers from these areas are in school. With the lack of school infrastructure beyond primary education, it is not

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surprising that there is very little educational attainment beyond 5th Standard.

Nationally, 1.1 million children are in child labour with more than half in hazardous work according to the 2015 LFS-CL-STWT survey. It also shows that extremely long work hours is the most common form of hazard. Child labour also increases as children move to higher age groups.

Child labour situations vary throughout the country depending on local contexts.



“The drop-out rate from primary to middle school is high and is even higher from middle school to high school. Children feel the need to support their families, so they work. Their attendance suffer until some eventually stop schooling. A lot of students migrate to other areas too, and teachers cannot conduct home visits to them.” - Daw Khin Htei May, Headmistress of No. 3 Basic Education High School, Ward 168, Dagon Seik-

implementation of occupational safety and health interventions that will target young workers, their employers, parents and local leaders. With government and workers organizations collaborating in the implementation, good models are hoped to emerge.

ILO’s priority is to give them alternatives to improve their lives. Education such as on life skills or skills development enable them to appreciate and choose better options for themselves.

With available choices, child labourers’ current realities have great potential of changing for the better.



The challenges and nature of child labour are different for urban and rural areas, too. Understanding dynamics like these are key to responding appropriately to the problem.

THE RESPONSES

The unaffordability of schooling requirements to poor families, lack of school infrastructures and dependence on children’s income as part of family subsistence are key issues that My-PEC are addressing to increase children’s participation to school as a means to reducing child labour and vice versa. This school year materials including uniforms, umbrellas, activity notebooks, pens and papers were distributed. Non-formal education interventions and livelihood skills trainings will be implemented to complement the limited formal schooling available. Importantly, livelihood interventions for parents and youths from beneficiary households will also be provided.

WHAT IS NORMAL... TO THEM?

For school breaks and holidays, in other settings where child labour is not prevalent, children would opt to spend their

reason: she wants to help her family earn during those times. She was glad to learn that she has the option to join skills training on garments during her school break from the ILO project interventions.

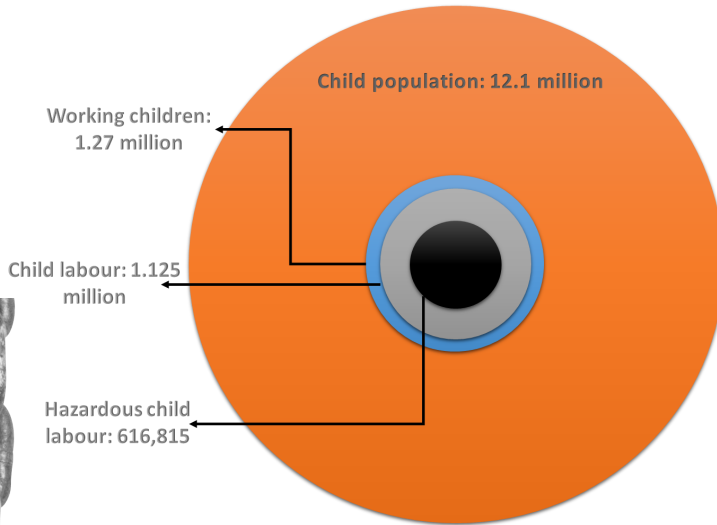
Ma Nye’s 16-year old elder sister dropped out of 6th standard and worked in a plastic factory. However, she quit from the job because she became ill with a heart condition. It was unclear whether she got sick from working in the factory but her job was apparently hazardous and they didn’t use any personal protective equipment.

The Ward and Village Development Committees are aware of these abuses that children face in the workplace including excessive working hours and have committed to support the



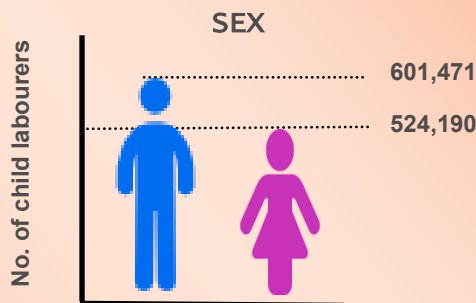


KEY FINDINGS ON CHILD LABOUR



No. of child labourers by...

	AGE GROUP		
	5-11	12-14	15-17
No. of child labourers	21,935	283,060	820,666



SECTOR AND HAZARDS



By severity of employment, that is, percent of child workers in the industry classified in hazardous work, construction is most hazardous (63.4 percent), followed by electricity and gas (56 percent), agriculture (54.6 percent), and mining and quarrying (43.1 percent).

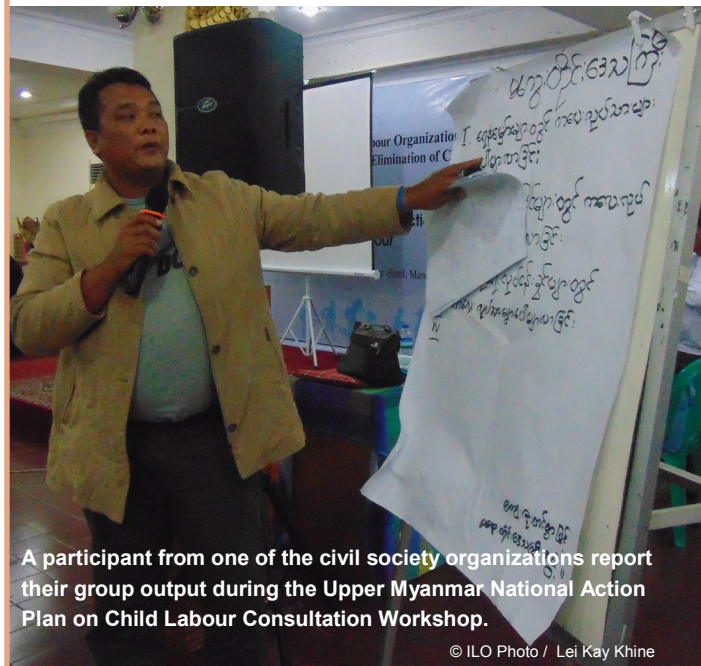
Average weekly hours of work put in by child labour is 54.22 which is more than 9 hours per day. Urban children work for extremely long hours, and more specifically, urban girls aged 15-17 years work about 63 hours weekly.

- Strengthening capacity to withdraw children trapped in the worst forms of child labour and provide them, and their families, with suitable alternatives
- Strengthening the prevention of child labour through addressing the root causes of the problem.

Two additional consultations were conducted in upper and lower Myanmar, in Mandalay (18 November) and Yangon (9 December), respectively.

Selim Benaissa, Chief Technical Adviser of MyPEC stressed the importance of inclusive and participatory process. “This ongoing process for the development of the NAP on child labour in Myanmar should be highly consultative with a strong level of ownership and commitment from the government as well as civil society organizations. Key partners at the national and state level are participating and sharing their experiences and knowledge to actively to identify key priorities for the NAP. It is very encouraging to see these dynamics taking shape as well as the identification of short, medium and long term actions for eliminating child labour in the country.”

The consultations so far were participated by government agencies and different civil society organizations including ethnic groups. Ethnic areas of Kayah and Shan States were also consulted during related activities in October-November. A youth consultation and a national workshop will be conducted in 2017.



A participant from one of the civil society organizations report their group output during the Upper Myanmar National Action Plan on Child Labour Consultation Workshop.

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The Myanmar Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (My-PEC) is an ILO four-year project that aims to develop a comprehensive, inclusive and efficient multi-stakeholder response to reduce child labour in Myanmar. 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 send an email to Selim Benaissa through yangon@ilo.org or call +95 1-2336538 .

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