



International  
Labour  
Organization

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

Emerging good practices

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## ► Project highlights

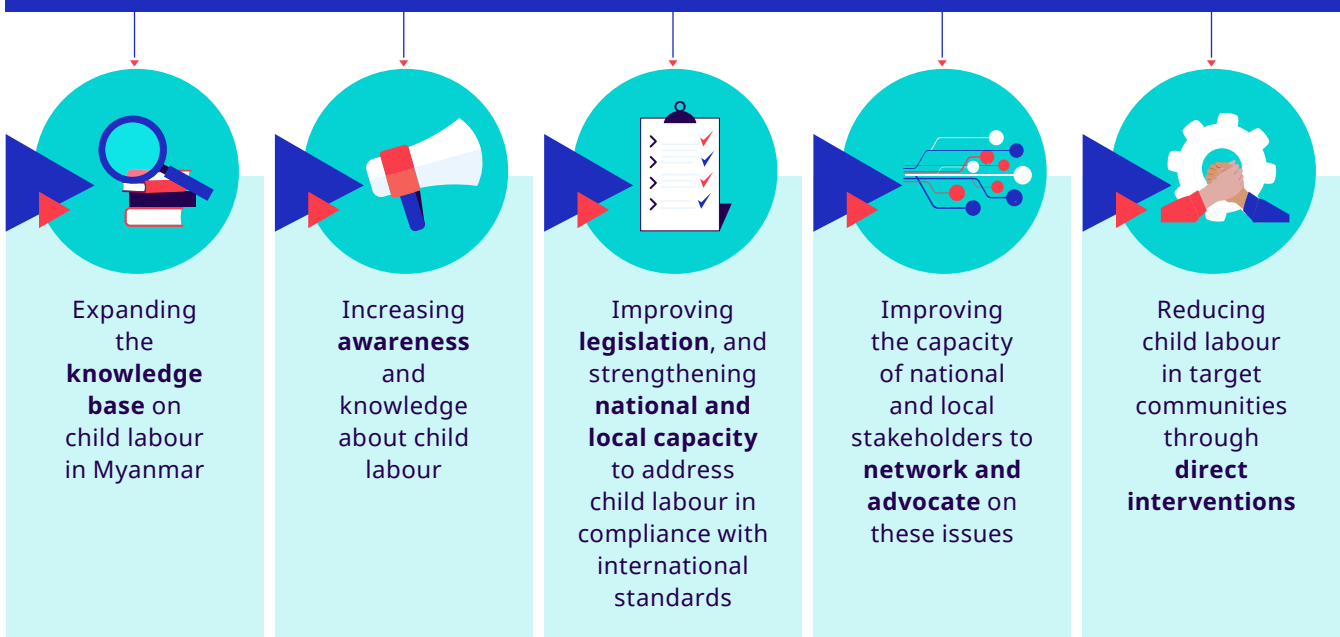
The International Labour Organization (ILO) has implemented the Myanmar Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (My-PEC), funded by the United States Department of Labor, since 2014 – the year after Myanmar ratified the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182).

My-PEC began in the context of nascent democracy. The concepts of duty bearers, rights holders and people-centred socio-economic planning were completely new in Myanmar. My-PEC's design takes this situation into account, with work planned to foster change by cultivating the roles of duty bearers and rights holders, and by introducing the crucial roles of social partners

and civil society organizations (CSOs) in combatting child labour. This understanding of Myanmar's unique, complex context makes My-PEC interventions highly relevant to the real situation on the ground.

The last three years of My-PEC's implementation have been characterized by major upheavals, fundamentally threatening the sustainability of its outcomes. These include the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions to combat the spread of the novel coronavirus. These have made families and children in Myanmar increasingly vulnerable to child labour, despite significant achievements in earlier years.

My-PEC aims to establish a comprehensive, inclusive and efficient multi-stakeholder response to reducing child labour in Myanmar by:



COVID-related restrictions also obliged My-PEC to adjust its strategies and delivery modalities by employing different direct services, engaging smaller groups and online capacity development.

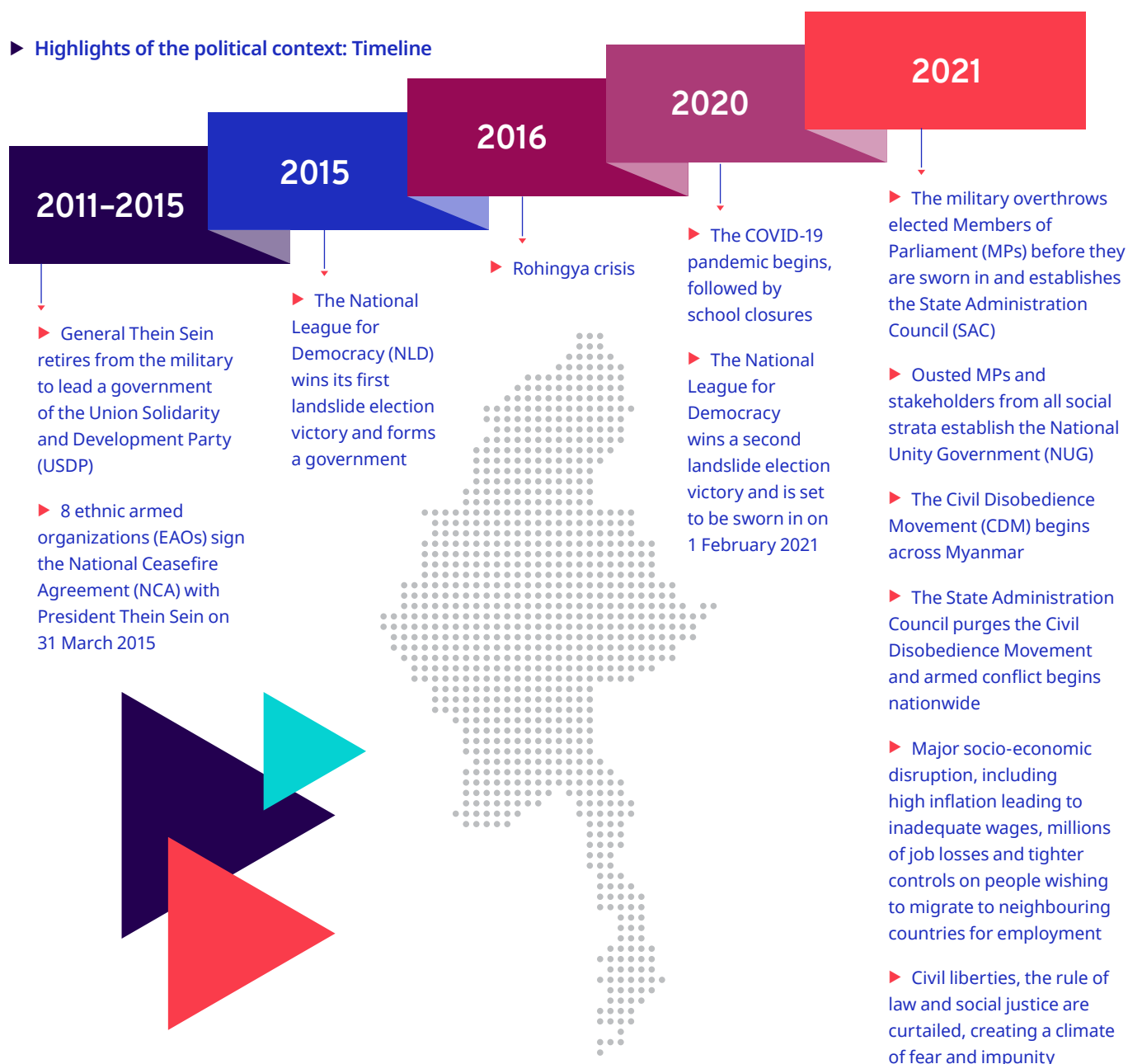
This **factsheet outlines good practices generated through My-PEC**, drawn from a full report on lessons learned and good practices from nearly 10 years of My-PEC interventions. It prioritizes lessons and good practices that support the re-orientation of strategies on child labour in Myanmar, and that can be valuable for other countries and communities experiencing similar challenges. The analysis is based on a desk review of project documentation, key informant interviews, and community (target group) surveys and focus group discussions.

The research was undertaken throughout 2022, with field work taking significant time due to travel restrictions and security concerns caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and security situation since the military takeover in 2021.

## ► Child labour in Myanmar and responses

The Myanmar Labour Force Survey 2015<sup>1</sup> estimates that 1.125 million children are engaged in child labour, 616,815 of whom are involved in hazardous work.

### ► Highlights of the political context: Timeline



<sup>1</sup> Myanmar, Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population, and ILO, *Report on Myanmar Labour Force Survey 2015*, 2016.

Child labour affects children's health, education and general well-being, preventing them from achieving their full potential. This has direct and indirect effects on socio-economic development at various levels – among households, communities, and countries as a whole.

Before 2021, with the ILO's assistance, the Government of Myanmar developed and initiated the implementation of its first National Action Plan (NAP) to Eliminate Child Labour and its Worst Forms for 2019–2033. It was also in the process of formalizing its first list of hazardous work. To ensure the National Action Plan's implementation, the Government established the Myanmar National Committee for the Eradication of Child Labour (MNCECL) in 2019.

Chaired by the Vice-President, the committee's members included representatives of key ministries, workers' and employers' organizations, and civil society organizations. Myanmar reaffirmed its commitment to addressing child labour by ratifying the ILO Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) on 8 June 2020. This development was heralded as a positive move, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and its threats to children's rights, safety and working conditions across the country.

## ► Emerging good practices

The good practices included in this factsheet are primarily from the early years of My-PEC's implementation, when Myanmar was beginning its transition to democratic processes. Despite considerable uncertainty in all areas of work – from government policy to implementation by stakeholders such as social partners and civil society – the project worked to respond to the contextual needs, gaining steadily more insight and experiences.

The good practices also include **new and innovative** initiatives and, to a lesser extent, practices pioneered by other child labour projects and replicated by My-PEC. Replicated good practices usually involve My-PEC adding new insights and experiences to practices by other ILO projects on child labour.<sup>2</sup> These new insights may be the result of an adaptation of the practice, or of specific circumstances in Myanmar.

The **good practices involve capacity development, policy formulation, awareness raising and direct support**. Rarely does a practice involve just one of these aspects; instead, practices tend to concern a combination of them.



Children take part in My-PEC events marking World Day Against Child Labour.  
© Mon Victor Fleury/ILO

My-PEC's highly integrated strategy – which could in itself be considered a good practice – means that good practices are often multi-faceted and involve multiple impacts. Moreover, there may be **good practices nested within a good practice**. For example, several good practices are nested within the comprehensive, community-based and localized direct support services discussed below, such as the formation of community committees, the mobilization of community leaders, links to village savings and loan associations (VSLAs), and the provision of credit paired with vocational training that suits the local economy. These efforts could all be considered good practices in their own right.

In addition to new insights on replicated good practices, My-PEC has yielded important new, innovative approaches that can be considered innovative good practices. These include the photo journalism training and work with local visual artists in Myanmar, discussed below. These initiatives produced high quality awareness raising materials that have been used to mobilize communities and policy makers. They also built capacities to communicate on child labour in the local visual arts environment, as well as among young people. The photo journalism initiative empowered children and young people to communicate on child labour, on their hopes, dreams and daily lives, on their friendships, and on their creative ideas. It proved an extremely powerful way to facilitate children's participation in public discourse. This tool for empowerment can be replicated in other settings and through other projects.

In general, the **good practices highlighted in this factsheet revolve around empowerment** – empowering young people to speak up, empowering communities to identify, tackle and monitor child labour, and empowering duty bearers to address child labour and protect children.

<sup>2</sup> For other reports on good practices identified through ILO projects on child labour, see: [www.ilo.org/global/topics/child-labour/publications/lang-en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/child-labour/publications/lang-en/index.htm)



The establishment of local direct beneficiary monitoring and reporting (DBMR) teams is a particularly interesting empowerment initiative because it uses a project management requirement as a tool to build capacity and empower communities to research, monitor and report on child labour. This is likely to become even more important in the current environment, in which accurate monitoring and reporting by government agencies cannot be taken for granted. The practice can also be replicated in other contexts.

### Good practice

## ► Capacity development at the heart of the National Action Plan's formulation

### Overview of the good practice

The development and adoption of Myanmar's National Action Plan on Elimination of Child Labour (NAPCL) was a lengthy process. At first glance, this may seem inefficient. But on closer inspection, it was time well spent on building national and regional capacity on, and commitment to, eliminating child labour. The results of this investment in national capacity building are evident in the plan's continued implementation after the military takeover, despite civil society and international organizations pulling out. While their disengagement is undesirable, the plan's continued implementation reflects the positive impact of integrating capacity development into the process of formulating the plan.

Capacity development took multiple forms at different stages of the National Action Plan's formulation. The ad hoc Technical Working Group on Child Labour (TWGCL) was the initial vehicle for policy formulation and legal reform. The group included representatives of the Government, workers' and employers' organizations, and civil society organizations, alongside the ILO and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) as non-voting advisors. These UN agencies provided training on addressing child labour, and on planning and executing an inclusive National Action Plan formulation process.

This led to an extensive, inclusive formulation process, involving both national and regional consultations. Regional consultations, supplemented by consultations with specific stakeholder groups (youth, workers and employers), were conducted to account for the diverse contexts of different parts of the country, and ensure a more well-informed National Action Plan.

Extensive consultations enabled the Technical Working Group to reach out to many more stakeholders and duty bearers, and build a stronger, more extensive national coalition to implement the National Action Plan (although this was undermined by the military takeover in 2021). Outreach also included the specific, targeted mobilization of parliamentarians by involving them in national consultations. Members of Parliament not only delivered speeches at the opening sessions of consultation workshops, but also participated throughout these workshops. This built a cadre of well-informed, highly committed parliamentarians, although this result was also undermined by the military takeover. The National Action Plan was adopted in 2018, and its implementation has been ongoing since 2019. While the plan's implementation has not been monitored after the military takeover, its monitoring framework can be used to monitor progress in the future.



### Key takeaways



Consistent and deliberate capacity development through consultations strengthened commitments and capacities to eliminate child labour within government and civil society, and among (the then) policymakers, workers' and employers' organizations.



To be effective, the process of capacity building through consultations requires high levels of patience and sufficient time. There are no quick wins; instead, capacity development must be seen as an important part of laying the foundations for future action and impact. In this sense, this capacity development initiative is analogous to the community mobilization strategy described below. It is a slow process, but an important one, since it builds a strong base for sustained action.



The process of capacity building through consultations can be replicated in any country that embarks on formulating national action plans on child labour or other fundamental rights. Malaysia followed a similar process in the formulation of its National Action Plan on Forced Labour, drawing inspiration from the example of Myanmar with information provided by the ILO.

## Good practice

► **Comprehensive, community-based and localized direct support services****Overview of the good practice**

My-PEC provided direct support services for children and families (see box 1), tied to a range of community mobilization efforts. These clearly reflect how effective the project has been in reaching children, and in sustaining activities during the COVID-19 pandemic and after the military takeover. In large part, this is because activities were firmly rooted in local structures and had significant backing from members of the target communities.

Activities underpinning the delivery of services include awareness raising, training for local community leaders on child labour, and the formation of community watch groups. These groups are tasked with identifying children engaged in, or at risk of, child labour, and reaching out to their families. The services provided were localized to fit the local context and economy, and complemented by access to credit through village savings and loan associations.

**Beneficiaries  
reached with  
direct support  
services  
in 2022**
► **1,269**

children engaged in, or at high-risk of entering, child labour received non-formal education services, such as newly opened non-formal education classes, life skills trainings, and "supporting children's rights through education, the arts and the media" (SCREAM) activities

► **2,669**

children engaged in, or at high-risk of entering, child labour benefitted from formal education services, such as the distribution of school materials

► **12,219**

community members were reached by occupational safety and health (OSH) campaigns

► **1,257**

children received support to improve OSH conditions in their workplaces

► **1,292**

households received support to improve their livelihoods

► **588**

households benefitted from at least one parent receiving counselling on the importance of education

► **500**

teachers benefitted from capacity building on child labour issues

► **916**

adult individuals received economic strengthening services

► **385**

employers, local authorities and other relevant community stakeholders received OSH training

► **278**

children engaged in, or at high-risk of entering, child labour benefitted from vocational services

► **45**

community-based savings groups became functional in project areas



16-year-old Thant Zin Hein benefits from vocational training through My-PEC in Ward 168, Dagon Seikkan. © ILO



## Key takeaways



A community-based approach has proven a good practice in multiple settings and several ILO child labour projects over the last two decades. My-PEC's experiences of community-based support for children reaffirm that this approach is a highly replicable good practice in the right conditions. Experiences in Myanmar demonstrate that services have an impact when they respond to local needs and contexts, and that local capacity development is an important investment that must underpin service delivery.



My-PEC's experiences also show clearly that, in times of great disruption, community-based strategies can be a viable option for outreach and to support the families and children most vulnerable to child labour – now and in the future. ILO-supported community-based strategies in Myanmar are effective in addressing and preventing child labour, as well as important contributions to family and community cohesion and well-being in times of crisis. This gives community-based support the potential to achieve greater impact in addressing child labour now (short-term), and for preventing child labour – even in the most difficult circumstances – in the future (long-term).



Combining local capacity development (outreach, training and community committees) and the delivery of localized services (such as technical and vocational education and training (TVET), and credit) is the key to achieving real potential for long-term impact. The significant stability of service delivery during COVID-19 and after the military takeover is largely due to the commitment and capacity built in the target communities before disruptions. This enabled implementing partners to continue supporting children and families through extraordinarily difficult times.

## Good practice

## ► Building local capacity for monitoring: DBMR teams

## Overview of the good practice

In addition to replicating the good practice of community mobilization, described above, My-PEC went one step further. It utilized the mandatory direct beneficiary monitoring and reporting (DBMR) requirements for ILO projects funded by the United States Department of Labor to build capacity at the community level. This involved identifying and training community-based organizations to monitor and report on children receiving support. This DBMR teams not only satisfied formal donor requirements, but became an active instrument to strengthen local monitoring capacity and commitment. As team members were remunerated, the system contributed to local employment and income generation.

The effectiveness of this approach is evident. Consistent training and support by My-PEC has created well-qualified DBMR teams in target communities, capable of reporting on direct support beneficiaries and of undertaking additional data collection. Local DBMR teams reported to My-PEC regularly and their inputs made My-PEC's direct beneficiary reporting through technical progress reports possible. The teams also undertook field level data collection for the community survey conducted to inform the "Outcome-based research, lessons learned and good practices research on the implementation of My-PEC in Myanmar" study. DBMR teams will also collect data from the field for My-PEC's endline research, and they remain engaged in other data collection exercises.

In 2024, My-PEC will begin the transition from DBMR-based support to the use of the Child Labour Monitoring System (CLMS) during 2024.



DBMR teams may be able to support future research, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) exercises, while generating an income from these activities. This not only strengthens research and capacity for monitoring and evaluation, it can also be considered a form of "white collar income generation support" in communities where training and earnings are usually only associated with vocational skills. While vocational skills are obviously important for income generation, skills training on monitoring and research is a way to expand strategies and potential for income generating activities.



It is important to note that establishing and training local salaried DBMR teams requires that interested community members have sufficient levels of education to apply DBMR principles and tools, such as sufficiently high levels of literacy and numeracy.



In the current context of misinformation and censorship following the military takeover, DBMR teams' skills and knowledge may become important assets for communities and organizations wishing to undertake community-based research. As they could conduct data collection beyond state-controlled data collection systems, DBMR teams have the potential to help safeguard an element of Myanmar's shrinking democratic space. Therefore, building local capacities for research and monitoring as part of DBMR is among My-PEC's most innovative initiatives.



## Key takeaways



By deliberately turning a project monitoring and reporting requirement – which in theory only concerns the ILO and the donor – into an opportunity for capacity development, My-PEC has significantly improved local capacity in vulnerable communities. This approach could be useful in other contexts.



The project plans to use the CLMS to identify cases of child labour (direct beneficiaries) in each project area, and provide direct support to them. The DBMR database will be used to initially guide the identification of beneficiaries. However, as of 2024, the monitoring of beneficiaries will be conducted through the CLMS, rather than DBMR. The referrals and services provided will focus on community-based support for children and families.

Priorities in this regard are: (1) instituting new, innovative non-formal education, and technical and vocational education and training options to reinstate access to education and training opportunities that are not currently available; and (2) cushioning livelihoods to prevent child labour and poverty-driven internal migration as survival strategies. In essence, the CLMS will be rolled out in each project communities, and cases of child labour identified through the system will be referred to service providers. In the long-term, financial support for direct service will be channelled through village savings and loan associations. This strategic transition will ensure the sustainability and replicability of the models.

### Good practice

## ► Developing the Child Protection Case Management System through strategic work-sharing

### Overview of the good practice

The Child Protection Case Management System (CMS) is a child protection system implemented by Myanmar's Government before February 2021. In the framework of My-PEC, the ILO and UNICEF worked together to devise and support the inclusion of child labour indicators and action protocols in the system. Until early 2021, the child labour-sensitive Case Management System was being implemented and case managers were participating in training on child labour delivered by 13 organizations across Myanmar's states and regions.

Integrating child labour with wider child protection systems is recognized as a good practice in earlier initiatives and in initiatives in other countries. A study on child labour monitoring options in Myanmar confirmed that this would most likely be the most effective strategy for establishing a sustainable child labour monitoring system in the country.



Children in a project area of Ward 168, Dagon Seikkan, where a community-based savings group is in place. © ILO

Therefore, the good practice here does not focus on the integration of child labour indicators and protocols into Myanmar's Case Management System. Instead, it focuses on the way in which the ILO and UNICEF worked together and divided responsibilities to support the Government. Key informant interviews (KIIs) highlight that My-PEC's groundwork (awareness raising and mobilization on child labour) is a key reason why child labour was integrated in the Case Management System relatively easily. This, alongside the legal reforms on child labour that My-PEC supported, underpins this integration.

Despite this solid groundwork, the roll-out of the Case Management System has had to be re-configured after the military takeover. It remains unclear what a civil society version of the system will look like.

My-PEC also identified the need to develop a database built upon child labour monitoring tools. It recognized that the database should be simple, user-friendly and accessible – both online and offline – with affordable long-term maintenance costs. The project further identified the need to capacitate partner organizations on how to access and maintain the database. Given the current situation and partners' concerns, particularly in areas controlled by ethnic groups and concerns among trade unions, the ILO has decided to develop a Child Labour Monitoring System through an independent standalone database using the KoBo toolbox. This first stage of the system includes 800 child labour cases in the database, half of which have been referred to relevant referral services.





### Key takeaways



The willingness and ability of all involved parties, both in the government and in the UN, to work together and make viable compromises is at the core of this good practice. The ILO and UNICEF clearly defining their responsibilities and timeframes made productive cross-departmental work far easier.



Both UN agencies leveraged their comparative advantages to support the integration of child labour into the Case Management System. UNICEF, leveraging its long-term child protection strategy, successfully supported the system's roll-out across the country over a longer period of time. The ILO, leveraging My-PEC's time-bound strategies, helped lay the foundations required to build ownership in both the Labour Department and the Social Welfare Department for child labour's integration into the system. The shorter-term outputs supported by My-PEC paved the way for the system's longer-term roll-out.

### Good practice

## ► Providing specific guidance on integrating child labour into other programmes

### Overview of the good practice

Integration and mainstreaming are generally recognized as a good practice for addressing child labour – from mainstreaming the issue into national and sectoral policies, to its integration in case management systems (as discussed above), projects and programmes. My-PEC produced multiple tools to support the mainstreaming and integration of child labour.

These include a training kit on safe work for youth,<sup>3</sup> which provides sector-specific information on how to protect young workers and addresses concrete risks in different sectors. It presents guidance in a way that can be easily understood by users, such as technical and vocational education and training instructors or operations managers in garment supply chains.



### Key takeaways



Child labour cannot be mainstreamed or integrated into policies, systems, projects or programmes unless stakeholders have sufficient knowledge of, and information on, how to do so. By providing specific guidance relevant to concrete conditions in high-risk sectors – such as construction and fisheries – My-PEC helped duty bearers in these sectors understand and apply this guidance easily.



Tailoring guidance to a sector, rather than just providing general guidance, makes tools more relevant to users. This makes it more likely that they will apply the guidance and, therefore in this case, more likely that young workers will be protected. This also has the potential to lower users' transaction costs, as they will not have to spend time or resources interpreting the guidance for their specific contexts.

<sup>3</sup> ILO, *Myanmar Safe Work for Youth: Training Kit*, 2nd ed., 2021.

## Good practice

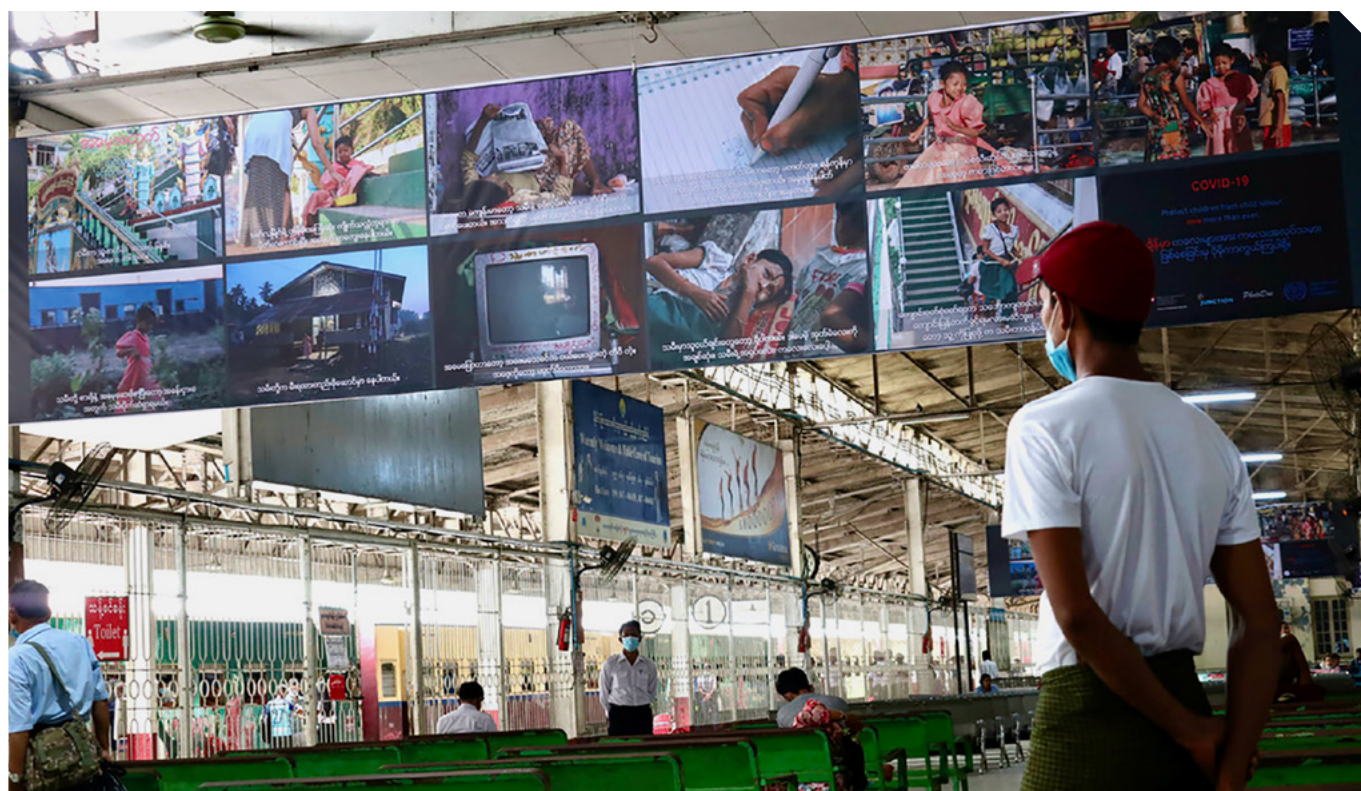
### ► Awareness raising and youth empowerment through photo journalism

#### Overview of the good practice

My-PEC engaged with the PhotoDOC Association, a non-profit organization that supports youth activists, civil society, photojournalists and others to produce photo stories on child labour. It trained 113 participants – between 14 and 60 years old, from different parts of Myanmar – on photography and on child labour, before working with them to document children's working conditions and the causes of child labour. They also documented daily life – including friendships, play, educational activities and creativity.

Professionals from the PhotoDOC Association helped edit the participants' outputs into multiple photo stories showcasing the reality of child labour and visually capturing a fundamental truth – children engaged in child labour are not just labourers. They are children; they are friends, brothers and sisters, daughters and sons. The stories balance honest depictions of desperate circumstances with hope and joy.

The photo stories were featured at the Yangon Photo Festival, with many awarded prizes and honourable mentions. They are also used in awareness raising activities, such as engagement with policymakers, in community mobilization, at international events, and in training and learning materials, including a new [e-learning tool](#). One story fed directly into a [Rapid Assessment on Child Domestic Work in Myanmar](#) as a source document. Photo stories are often presented at the beginning of meetings and events to humanize the conversation and remind participants that the issues at stake concern real children who have hopes, feelings, a sense of humour and a place in the world.



Yangon railway station on World Day Against Child Labour 2020. © Christophe Loviny/ILO





## Key takeaways



The photo journalism project is a highly innovative good practice enabling children, young people and activists to document their lives, dreams, concerns and thoughts. It is a strong model for promoting children's and youths' voice and empowerment on their own terms, while yielding engaging visual products that can be for awareness raising. The focus on children as children helps deepen the audience's connection with the children featured and, in turn, their understanding and appreciation of the human implications of child labour.



This good practice's importance is multi-faceted. First, the photo journalism initiative built skills among participants trained on photojournalism and child labour.



Second, it enabled the creation of photo stories that raised awareness and cemented commitment to tackling child labour among different audiences. Third, it contributed to guidance and resource materials available to national, local and international stakeholders on the reality of child labour in Myanmar.

My-PEC is using this methodology to train partners from pilot areas on producing impact stories. Strengthening the capacities of these key implementing partners is equipping them to produce engaging case studies/success stories and visual photo stories on pilot activities, showcasing the real lives of beneficiaries and the real change that My-PEC is contributing to in Myanmar.



Images from a photo story on child labour by Ye Naing and Yan Moe Naing, developed as part of My-PEC's photo journalism initiative. © Ye Naing and Yan Moe Naing/ILO

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