

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

Program Name	Strengthening pre-service Teacher Education in Myanmar (STEM)
Period	July 2014 – December 2017 (Phase I)
Total Aust. Funding	\$2,500,000 (USD)
Implementing Partner	UNESCO, in partnership with the Ministry of Education
Country / Sector	Myanmar / Education

Overview

As the primary donor to Phase I of the Strengthening pre-service Teacher Education in Myanmar (STEM) program, in March 2017 the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) commissioned a review to assess overall progress. The scope of the review is limited to the period July 2014 to March 2017. It focuses on key products and the nature of the partnership between UNESCO, the Myanmar Ministry of Education (MoE) and other partners to answer questions on relevance, efficiency, inclusion and effectiveness.

This review was originally intended as an internal review. DFAT acknowledges that the published report has been edited to remove review questions and findings for internal use only and that consequently some gaps in the final report narrative may be apparent. Furthermore, DFAT recognises that the data collection for the review was conducted over a brief period of time, limiting the ability of the team to engage extensively with key stakeholders and visit the range of sites that the program is assisting.

In this regard, DFAT acknowledges the limitations of the review, however accepts the findings as a useful insight into program implementation at a point in time and welcomes the recommendations as tangible steps to improve implementation under Phase II.

DFAT extends thanks to both the Ministry of Education (Department of Higher Education - DHE) and UNESCO for inputs into the review report and acknowledges the significant amount of work that has taken place over 2017 under STEM Phase II. The program updates provided in UNESCO's management response are a useful annex to the report and provide important additional context for the reader.

Summary of management response

DFAT views STEM as a critical program to support the Myanmar Ministry of Education (MoE) in implementation of the National Education Strategic Plan (NESP). The review comments on the significance of the work completed to date. The findings highlight the potential influence of STEM to the sector and UNESCO as a key partner to support DHE and the Ministry in taking forward the reform agenda.

DFAT agrees with the review's recognition of capacity constraints within the MoE to take on evidence-based teacher education reforms; the support of development partners through STEM should be continued.

DFAT welcomes the acknowledgement of the strength of STEM in prioritising ownership of the MoE – in all respects. DFAT values this approach and recognises UNESCO's efforts to establish and maintain effective working relationships with MoE that ensure it is the ministry driving progress.

Relevance

DFAT welcomes the key findings under relevance. The program outputs, particularly the Teacher Competency Standards Framework (TCSF) and curriculum development of a new 4-year teaching degree at teacher Education Colleges, are considered foundational to supporting the implementation of Myanmar's National Education Strategic Plan (NESP). Ensuring that these outputs, and other work under STEM, influence and support coherence across the sector remains critical.

DFAT welcomes the emphasis of the review on the need for STEM to improve strategic positioning and maximise opportunities to support coherence across reform efforts in the sector. DFAT perceives the recommendations to be tangible steps to address these issues.

Efficiency

DFAT notes the review's comments on the current profile of the UNESCO project team and welcomes the recognition of the suitable composition of skills, knowledge and experience. The membership of the TCSF working group, the core curriculum development team and access to leading Myanmar expertise is critical to the quality of products and ensuring input and outputs are relevant to Myanmar's context.

As outlined in UNESCO's management response, DFAT welcomes the shift of approach under Phase II – the intent of the project team and respective working groups to first draft outputs in Myanmar language – noting this is likely to address some of the limitations of implementability flagged in the report.

DFAT accepts that there is greater potential for the program team to leverage partnerships and networks. Through the Steering Committee DFAT will seek to ensure that these opportunities are identified and maximised.

Inclusion

DFAT is concerned with the findings of the desktop review that highlight limitations of the program in considering inclusion aspects, particularly gender equality, ethnic diversity and disability. A significant issue is the suggestion that STEM outputs do not convey the ethnic diversity of Myanmar and miss an opportunity to emphasise the need for competencies in multi-lingual, multi-cultural classroom management.

Work under the new outcome four should address these limitations. It will be important the Steering Committee assumes accountability for progress on these issues.

Effectiveness and Impact

DFAT welcomes the review findings regarding the effectiveness of STEM in delivering on planned outputs and exposing those involved to new ways of thinking and working. DFAT remains cognisant of the role STEM outputs have in providing a foundation for many aspects of the MoE's reform agenda. Ensuring coherence between outputs and giving emphasis to strategic and long-term planning will be critical to align STEM's work with reform efforts in the broader sector.

The implementability of the key products developed under STEM is of paramount importance: DFAT accepts the concerns raised regarding challenges of implementation. To address concerns DFAT notes the importance of STEM reaching diverse stakeholders in the education sector. Phase II should continue to seek out ways to engage, including with individuals who have the responsibility to implement at the school level. Strong engagement with the Department of Basic Education (DBE) will be critical to these efforts.

DFAT notes the concerns raised regarding the implications of an integrated approach to learning (anticipated in the revised curriculum) vis-à-vis existing Education Colleges (ECs). STEM's support to the upgrade of ECs is designed to be comprehensive. DFAT will seek to ensure these aspects of the reform are considered holistically and STEM is appropriately positioned to support implementation.

Individual response to the recommendations

Recommendation	Response	Explanation	Action plan / Timeframe
<p>Recommendation 1</p> <p>Establish a Steering Committee (SC) for the program to better enable systemic change through the program, strategic positioning of the program and influence for the program. The Steering Committee's membership will need to be carefully considered to ensure representation from all relevant parts of MoE, DFAT and UNESCO</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>DFAT agrees with the review's observation of a need for the program to strengthen linkages across the MoE and broader sector.</p> <p>The establishment of a SC will create opportunities for dialogue that considers system level impact and ensures accountability for connecting with other programs supporting the reform effort.</p>	<p>In mid-2017 a Steering Committee (SC) for the STEM program was formed and a Terms of Reference (ToR) developed. Membership includes MoE (DHE, DBE, DEPR) NEPC, NCC, STEM donors and UNESCO as secretariat.</p> <p>The Minister for Education attended the first meeting providing endorsement and recognition of the importance of an active SC.</p> <p>The ToR is explicit in describing the role of the SC in providing strategic guidance and identifying linkages with the broader sector.</p> <p>The SC has committed to meeting quarterly over the life of the program.</p>

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<p>Recommendation 2</p> <p>Look for opportunities to further include in the core STEM documents gender equality, ethnic linguistic diversity and disability inclusion. At a minimum, the STEM core documents should reflect the inclusion language in the National Education Law and National Education Strategic Plan. The program may also identify opportunities where it is possible to reach further than these policies in the core STEM documents, to support teacher competencies that truly realise access for all children.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>DFAT acknowledges the review findings that the current documents are relatively silent on inclusion aspects.</p> <p>The findings of the desk top review highlighting where inclusion features in existing Myanmar core policy and legal frameworks is reassuring. This provides the strong foundation needed to identify opportunities for STEM outputs to better reflect inclusion dimensions.</p>	<p>STEM Phase II has established a fourth outcome that defines progress on addressing issues of inclusion.</p> <p>Annual workplans under Phase II outline activities designed to address the limitations of the current documents and policy discussions around inclusion.</p> <p>Through the SC DFAT and partners will monitor the progress of implementation under outcome four to ensure that the issues identified by the review are addressed over time.</p>

Recommendation	Response	Explanation	Action plan / Timeframe
<p>Recommendation 3</p> <p>Leverage UNESCO’s extensive expert educational network and other Myanmar based expertise (such as the World Bank, British Council etc.) to access the most pertinent, relevant and leading technical advice for the program. This includes gender and social inclusion expertise.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>DFAT welcomes the reviews acknowledgement of a suitably resourced team and notes the perceived limitations in accessing a broader pool of expertise.</p>	<p>DFAT notes that significant work has been taking place to ensure UNESCO’s global networks are drawn on for support.</p> <p>DFAT acknowledges efforts by the DHE to ensure development partners and other departments from the Ministry of Education are invited to key workshops and that opportunities are taken to present on STEM outputs through the existing coordination mechanisms.</p> <p>The establishment of the SC provides a new mechanism (with broad representation across MoE) to ensure these opportunities are maximised and other Myanmar based expertise is drawn on to inform work under Phase II.</p> <p>Progress under outcome four will be reported on regularly at the SC to ensure adequate discussion is taking place and capacity gaps are addressed.</p>