

Management Response

Program Name	Myanmar Education Quality Improvement Program (My-EQIP)
Period	November 2017 – May 2021
Total Funding	\$20 million (\$0.5m for Phase 1 and \$19.5m for Phase 2 and 3)
Implementing Partner	Ministry of Education
Support Contract	DFAT directly managed Phase 1 Cardno Emerging Markets were contracted for Phase 2 and 3 (November 2017 – May 2021).
Country/Sector	Myanmar/ Education
My-EQIP MTR	Finalised 13 May 2020

Overview

The Myanmar Education Quality Improvement Program (My-EQIP) is a joint initiative of the Governments of Australia and Myanmar, costing \$20 million (November 2017 to May 2021). My-EQIP supports the Myanmar Ministry of Education (MoE) to create a more efficient and effective education system and improve better learning outcomes. The objective of My-EQIP is to support improved education policy, planning, budgeting and management through strengthened monitoring, evaluation, quality assurance and research systems.. My-EQIP's End-of-Program Outcomes (EoPOs) are:

- improved education quality improvement systems; including at the sub-national level;
- improved capacity to maintain and use education quality improvement systems; and
- improved organisational culture of informed decision-making.

DFAT commissioned a Mid-Term Review (MTR) of My-EQIP to:

- Assess the extent to which My-EQIP has made progress towards the expected objectives and outcomes, with a focus on describing emerging findings and themes to inform My-EQIP implementation, governance and M&E activities.
- Assess the extent to which the objectives and outcomes for My-EQIP are suited to context.
- Assess the appropriateness of the My-EQIP's Theory of Change (ToC) to the current context, and make recommendations on maintaining/adjusting the ToC, informed by the review findings.
- Assess the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of My-EQIP's capacity development model.
- Inform planning for the final phase of the Program.

DFAT extends thanks to the MTR Team, Ms Kaye Bysouth and Mr Nelson Ireland, and also the MoE and Cardno for their inputs into the Review. DFAT extends special thanks to the

Department of Education, Research, Planning and Trainings (DERPT) and the My-EQIP Support Team for their work supporting the MTR team's in-country mission.

DFAT would like to correct the MTR's reference to the My-EQIP investment value as \$21 million (m). DFAT confirms My-EQIP's total value is \$20m. We would also like to confirm that the current potential Program under-expenditure is not \$4m to \$5m, but approximately \$3m.

This Management Response has been developed in consultation with the MoE and is a joint DFAT-MoE response to the MTR's recommendations.

Summary

Enhancing human development through education contributes to long term poverty reduction, economic growth, and stability. Investing in education improves earning potential and individuals' ability to invest wisely in their future and that of their families. My-EQIP's work to strengthen the Ministry of Education's planning and M&E capacity is important to help build a more efficient, effective and equitable education system in Myanmar.

The MTR report considers the MY-EQIP:

1. ToC, Program logic and outcome statements
2. Progress towards the achievement of outcomes
3. Efficiency and value for money
4. Capacity development model
5. M&E arrangements
6. Governance and management arrangements; and
7. Gender equality and social inclusion.

MTR Options 1 and 2

The findings of the MTR state that DFAT has two options in response to findings:

- a. wind down My-EQIP and commence a design process for a new investment; or
- b. implement a scaled-down version of the Program, as intended, by May 2021.

The MTR focused on how Option 2 might be operationalised.

DFAT does not believe a wind down of My-EQIP is appropriate, as proposed in Option 1. We acknowledge that Program implementation has not been without its challenges, but overall My-EQIP's support for, and approach to, MoE systems strengthening has been sufficiently successful to warrant further investment and DFAT's continued partnership with the MoE.

My-EQIP works in a complex context and with a government that has emerging program and contract management experience. To date, MoE officials have not only demonstrated strong commitment to delivering My-EQIP, but a growing capacity to solve problems; and the public service ethic to deliver the My-EQIP, but they have embraced M&E as a tool to inform improvements to education systems and service delivery. There is sufficient evidence that MoE officials actively use My-EQIP's M&E information to improve My-EQIP project planning and implementation, which in turn improves their own education system. My-EQIP remains

relevant to DFAT's objectives in Myanmar, as well as MoE's goals as expressed in the National Education Strategic Plan (NESP).

DFAT agrees to proceed with the majority of recommendations proposed in Option 2. Our responses to all recommendations, including the two recommendations DFAT and the MoE do not agree with, are provided below.

Theory of Change, program logic and outcome statements

DFAT agrees that the My-EQIP program logic and its M&E Framework require strengthening. The lack of clear, realistic and measurable outcomes has undermined effective implementation. My-EQIP will develop clearer, more readily measurable outcomes, supported by a more robust program logic.

DFAT welcomes the finding that My-EQIP needs to better distinguish between MoE's outcomes for education reform and the outcomes expected from the investment of Australian taxpayers' money in My-EQIP. We will ensure that this division of outcome attribution is reflected in My-EQIP's M&E Framework revision and future M&E reporting. We will review the degree to which My-EQIP funds are focussing on the most important issues where progress can be made or is likely to have greatest impact.

DFAT accepts concerns raised about the rigour of My-EQIP's partner-led approach. My-EQIP is intended to be implemented using a problem driven, iterative adaptive approach (PDIA). The MTR stated that neither of these labels ('partner-led' or 'PDIA') accurately describe the ways in which My-EQIP has been implemented.

DFAT will review the manner in which My-EQIP is guided by the requirements of the MoE. My-EQIP will improve its approach to MoE capacity development and reassess how its M&E could better support the MoE's needs. This, combined with the M&E Framework and ToC review, will improve the quality of My-EQIP's adaptive programming, supporting systematic, intentional use of emerging knowledge and evidence to drive decisions on both the strategy and the targeting of My-EQIP's work.

The MoE will also lead a review of My-EQIP's activities using the Drop, Add, Keep, Improve (DAKI) methodology and, as necessary, consolidate and adjust activities to match the varying levels of MoE systems capacity and staff capability.

Progress towards the achievement of outcomes

DFAT agrees with the MTR finding that My-EQIP has been most effective in areas where it has been well aligned with Government of Myanmar (GoM) structures and priorities. DFAT welcomes the MTR's acknowledgement of My-EQIP in supporting the MoE to undertake significant system strengthening work. For example, this will include the development of school quality assurance frameworks, departmental annual implementation plans and associated M&E frameworks, which will strengthen monitoring and evaluation of education services and inform better education policy, planning, budgeting and management.

Efficiency and value for money

DFAT agrees there is insufficient clarity around intended outcomes in program documentation, the lack of a sharply targeted program logic and the lack of a systematic way to track changes

in capacity development have negatively affected My-EQIP's ability to use resources in a strategic manner. As above, we agree that the work plan should be revised by the MoE to better focus My-EQIP activities, the first step of which will be to apply the DAKI methodology to ensure My-EQIP is focussing on the most important issues where progress can be made. Although the expected outcomes were not set out as clearly as they could have been in program documentation, the MoE and the managing contract have had a good level of understanding of program objectives. Moreover, actual outcomes have been encouraging (see below).

DFAT does not agree with the MTR recommendation to reduce the My-EQIP budget. The approximately \$3m in current under-expenditure has primarily resulted from a slower pace of implementation than anticipated in the design. MoE quality assurance systems are in an early stage of development, with systems required to fully enact complex program management not yet in place. For example, institutional and management arrangements within the MoE and between the MoE and independent bodies, such as the Myanmar National Accreditation and Quality Assurance Committee, are still weak. MoE staff capacity in program management is improving, but needs more time to build. Although challenging to manage the tension between applying PDIA principles in this context and the need to deliver outputs in a timely manner, DFAT believes My-EQIP's GoM-led, iterative implementation approach is appropriate. DFAT believes My-EQIP under-expenditure can be judiciously re-invested to deepen support for high performing activities, such as MoE's quality assurance frameworks and M&E systems development.

Key outcomes to date that justify ongoing expenditure include My-EQIP support to the MoE to:

- finalise an inaugural Myanmar **Basic Education (BE) School Quality Assurance Standards Framework (SQASF)**, which will, across all government BE schools in Myanmar:
 - decentralise school decision-making to the school level;
 - increase the involvement of parents and communities in school management;
 - develop the capacity of staff, including principals and teachers;
 - strengthen ongoing monitoring and evaluation within the school; and
 - promote access, quality and inclusion in basic education;
- finalise an inaugural draft **Vocational Education (VE) SQASF**, which will, across all MoE Department of Technical Vocational Education and Training VE schools:
 - provide a road map for school improvements, especially for teaching, learning, and assessment in a vocational context;
 - increase the engagement of students, staff, community and industry stakeholders in assessing and improving the operation and outcomes of the schools;
 - strengthen ongoing monitoring and evaluation of school performance; and
 - promote access, inclusion and quality of teaching, learning, and assessment;
- complete a **Teacher Competency Standards Framework (TCSF)** validation study, which will support TCSF finalisation and inform the ongoing improvement of standards and indicators for effective teaching and how best to assess teaching in Myanmar;

- develop inaugural MoE **Departmental Annual Implementation Plans (DAIPs)**, which maps out departmental level activities to be implemented in line with NESP strategies and components and planned short-term and intermediate outcomes;
- develop inaugural MoE **Departmental M&E Plans**, which have supported MoE departments to plan and conduct quality M&E processes to track progress towards intended short-term and intermediate outcomes identified in their DAIPs and relevant strategies and components in the NESP;
- deliver the Myanmar **National Education Strategic Plan MTR**, which marks the successful completion of the MoE's first independent NESP review and will inform the MOE's design and development of a NESP 2 in 2020;
- develop a clearer understanding of available data within MoE on the educational status of ethnic minority children and women at both national and sub-national levels for input into Myanmar's **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)** report, which will assist Myanmar fulfil its international CEDAW reporting obligations;
- develop **capacity to assess the performance and quality of education services against education performance expectations and quality standards**, and lead on quality assurance systems development and implementation.

DFAT will also work with MoE to pivot My-EQIP's efforts to respond to COVID-19 and consider windows of opportunity for My-EQIP to support the MoE's COVID-19 Response and Recovery Plan.

Capacity development model

DFAT agrees with the recommendation that there is a need to develop a more coherent capacity development framework for My-EQIP, to ensure practical application of capacity development concepts, test what's working and meet critical capacity development needs.

M&E arrangements

DFAT agrees that the lack of clearly stated, realistic and measurable outcomes and a robust program logic have undermined My-EQIP's intended efficiency and effectiveness. DFAT agrees with the MTR's recommendation to address this deficiency and acknowledges that further refinement of My-EQIP's M&E systems is required to meet DFAT standards. DFAT agrees that a revision of the My-EQIP 12 month Work Plan, ToC and M&E Framework is required to be able to effectively measure and report on the progress towards My-EQIP's outcomes.

Governance and management arrangements

DFAT agrees that improvements to the operation of the My-EQIP Steering Committee (SC) are required to ensure it is a strategic decision-making body.

Consistent with the views of the MoE, DFAT does not agree that the functions of the SC should be progressively absorbed into the work of the Education, Technical and Vocational Sector Coordination Group (ETVSCG) or that the functions of the My-EQIP Technical Working

Group (TWG) be absorbed into the work of the Management, Capacity Development and Quality Assurance Sub-Sector Working Group (MCQSSWG). The SC and TWG functions and mandate does not align with the ETVSCG and MCQSSWG.

The functions of the SC is to, amongst other things, set the strategic direction, track progress results, and approve My-EQIP work plans and budgets. The function of the TWG is to, at working level, ensure that My-EQIP is implemented in accordance with agreed plans, values and standards. Further consideration will be given to streamlining forums, but at present the MoE has confirmed its preference for a separate My-EQIP governance structure.

Gender equality and social inclusion

DFAT agrees that more clarity and coherence is needed in My-EQIP's social inclusion reform agenda. Social inclusion as a concept (and choice of preferred terminology) is still nascent in the MoE, making it challenging to make progress. Since the establishment of the Program, a number of planned social inclusion activities included in My-EQIP work plans have not proceeded - at the request of the Ministry. According to the MoE, this is primarily due to the need for them to further develop appropriate expertise. These work plan amendments to delay or delete planned social inclusion activities have negatively affected the implementation of My-EQIP's Social Inclusion Strategy.

DFAT agrees that progress on certain gender equality and social inclusion deliverables was also affected by differences within the My-EQIP team on how best to engage on social inclusion with the Ministry. DFAT has engaged a part time Senior Gender Equality and Social Development (GESI) adviser to provide guidance. The adviser will be involved in refocusing of My-EQIP's future work plans to ensure adequate integration and resourcing of GESI activities.

Based on suggested ‘Option 2’: Implement a scaled-down version of My-EQIP with completion of Phase 3, as intended by May 2021.		MoE and DFAT Response
MTR Recommendations		
Rec 1	That the My-EQIP Support Program ¹ (MESP) develop clear outcome statements which describe Australia’s intended contribution over Phase 3 of My-EQIP, supported by a robust program logic.	Agree
Rec 2	That the scope of work for Phase 3 be reshaped in order to: (i) phase out support for work for task teams / activities which do not represent ‘value for money’ (ii) continue to focus on areas achieving results (iii) focus M&E support within MoE where it is likely to have the greatest impact (iv) investigate ‘windows of opportunity’ to consolidate and strengthen the effectiveness of Australia’s contribution to education reform.	Agree (i) Agree (ii) Agree (iii) Agree (iv) Agree
Rec 3	That the Phase 3 budget be reduced by a minimum of AUD4 million and that the work plan be revised to reflect the reduced scope of work and budget.	Disagree
Rec 4	That DFAT appoint an international capacity development specialist, with expertise working in the education sector in developing countries, to: (i) provide advice to the MESP team in appropriate Capacity Development approaches to implementing selected actions during Phase 3 of My-EQIP. (ii) oversee the conduct of a second organisational review of MoE and preparation of a long-term capacity development framework which may feed into a design for a follow-on investment (if any).	Partially Agree (i) Agree (ii) Agree* *to an Organisational Review of My-EQIP, not of the MoE.
Rec 5	That MESP M&E staff prepare a ‘minimum-sufficient’ M&E Plan, linked to the revised set of outcome statements and program logic for Phase 3.	Agree
Rec 6	That the functions of the Joint Steering Committee be progressively absorbed into the work of the ETVSCG and that the functions of the Technical Working Group be absorbed into the work of the MCQSSWG.	Disagree
Rec 7	That the DFAT Senior Gender Equality and Social Development Advisor be requested to review the revised outcome statements, program logic, work program and budget for Phase 3 to ensure that gender equality and social inclusion is adequately addressed.	Agree

¹ The MoE leads implementation, supported by the My-EQIP Support Team (MESP) and their partners. Cardno, as the Managing Contractor, determines the staffing profile of the MESP, in consultation with the MoE and DFAT.