



International
Labour
Organization

Knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) study on child labour in Yangon, Ayeyarwady Region and Mon State

2015

International
Programme
on the Elimination
of Child Labour
(IPEC)

Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work Branch (FUNDAMENTALS)

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First published 2015

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Myanmar: Child labour knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) study in Yangon, Ayeyarwady Region and Mon State / International Labour Office, International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) / Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work Branch (FUNDAMENTALS) - Geneva: ILO, 2015.

ISBN: 978-92-2-130214-8 (Print); 978-92-2-130215-5 (Web PDF)

International Labour Office; ILO International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour; ILO Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work Branch

child labour / child worker / working conditions / demographic aspect / regional level / methodology / Myanmar - 13.01.2.

ILO Cataloguing in Publication Data

Acknowledgements

This publication was elaborated by Anna Zongolowicz (Consultant) for IPEC and coordinated by Jodelen Ortiz Mitra from the Myanmar Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (My-PEC) – ILO Yangon Office. Comments, contribution and support were provided by Piyamal Pichaiwongse, Lourdes Kathleen Santos-Macasil, Selim Benaissa, Hnin Wuit Yee and Ei Haymar from ILO Yangon Office, Simrin Singh from ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, Bharati Pflug and Bijoy Raychaudhuri from ILO Headquarters.

Funding for this ILO publication was provided by the United States Department of Labor (Project MMR/13/10/USA).

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Photos © Thomas Schaffner

Printed in Myanmar

Photocomposed by the FUNDAMENTALS Geneva office

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Executive summary

The Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP) Study has been conducted to determine how various stakeholders behave and act with regard to child labour as a societal issue in Myanmar. The research aimed to identify factors that contribute to the awareness and high prevalence of the practice of child labour with the objective of developing appropriate awareness raising, advocacy and direct interventions.

The research was conducted in six communities in Yangon, Ayeyarwady and Mon State by a group of experienced local researchers led by an international team leader. It used focus group discussions (FGD), key informant interviews (KII) and administered questionnaires to collect data from different respondent groups.

The following main findings validate that child labour is a result of varying but inter-related factors such as economic hardship experienced by families, social attitudes and practices, lack of adequate facilities and opportunities to avail of quality education and skills acquisition as well as inadequate legislative measures to prevent it.

Child labour is widespread in Myanmar resulting from household poverty, little knowledge about the issue and lack of programmes and services for poor children. The phenomenon is supported by societal attitudes, which see child labour as an antidote to household poverty, and a ‘necessary evil’ for keeping children occupied and out of trouble in cases where they cannot attend school.

Knowledge about the short term and long term perils of child labour is limited, as is knowledge about child rights among adults. Children interpret their situation through the lens of family obligations, with poor children feeling obliged to help their families financially. Awareness of child labour is higher among parents of children who are not child labourers in all areas, except Chaungzon in Mon State, where parents of child labourers showed high awareness, following awareness-raising activities by a local NGO.

Parents are aware that some of their children work in unsafe conditions, which require them to wear protective gear such as helmets, boots or harnesses. In addition, parents and adults observe that child labourers work often in excess of 40 hours a week. These difficult working conditions and long hours do not deter poor parents from sending their children to work.

Attitudes towards gender roles are ambiguous. On the one hand, parents, children and members of society subscribe to the view that girls belong in the home to take care of their families. On the other hand, girls are considered strong and capable to perform the same work as boys. The study did not find that girl labourers were more disadvantaged than boy labourers, although some jobs, such as in domestic service, were considered as the domain of girls, while jobs involving higher risks, e.g. carrying heavy loads, were seemingly for boys.

Either the child herself/himself or the mother decided for the child to work. This is an interesting finding that highlights the important role of mothers in influencing child labour in the

household. Fathers have the principal role of bread-winners and it appears that when they are absent or not working, the children are more likely to become labourers.

Mothers of child labourers reported having the lowest education among all parents, including not having any formal education. Mothers of non-working children were more likely to have high school and university education. This is linked with the previous finding of the influence of mothers on child labour in the household. It confirms the likeliness that the more educated the mother of a child is, the more likely the child will also be educated and the less likely she/he will become a child labourer.

Most adults, including poor parents, consider education the ideal activity for young children and youth, both girls and boys. Direct and indirect costs associated with education, however, especially beyond primary level, make it *unaffordable* for poor parents, especially since immediate investment is required while the payoff can only be realised in the long-term. The high cost of education results in parents taking their children out of school at the end of Grade 4 or 5, at around the ages of 11/ 12 when free primary education ceases and when middle and high schools become more difficult to access due to associated costs and unavailability in some communities.

Parents of child labourers were more likely to agree that children could do the same work as adults, while parents of children who do not work were more likely to believe that child labour has potential harmful effects on the children. The difference in opinions may be due to the parents' circumstances dictating, e.g. poor parents' perception of child labour is due to the need for the children's income for survival.

There are important differences in parents' perceptions as to who should help child labourers and there is room to explore the role of the community in helping monitor and eliminate child labour. Unanimously, parents of child labourers and non-working children listed the government as the primary entity that should extend help to child labourers. Parents of non-working children thought the community should be next in helping child labourers followed by the children's families and international organisations. Interestingly, parents of child labourers mentioned that their own families should help the children before involving the help of international organisations and the community.

Employers feel that they perform a humanitarian/ welfare service to poor families by employing their children. Employment is considered a viable option for children who cannot attend school and who are at risk of boredom and trouble on the streets. Employers reported that they do not actively recruit children, rather that they only hire them in response to the parents' or the children's requests for work.¹

There do not appear to be established wages for children, however, they do appear to increase with age, time spent working and acquisition of skills. Nevertheless, children perform mostly low-skilled jobs and there is little indication that their skill set improves dramatically with age.

¹ Child labourers and their parents, who were willing to discuss how the children found work, said that the children found work either by asking for or about a job at the place of employment themselves or because someone they knew offered/found a job in response to the family's petition (e.g. a relative who moved from a rural to a city area, a family friend).

Government representatives and civil society actors are aware of Myanmar being signatory to the Convention on the Rights of Child but they have not indicated that knowledge of child rights and/or whether international commitments under the Convention are translated into action by the Government or by society. Knowledge of Convention 182 was not indicated. As such, laws intended to protect children, appear to have little effect in Myanmar society where people are poor and access to education and other opportunities for poor children is limited due to cost, lack of infrastructure or human resources.

Government representatives, civil society actors, medical practitioners, teachers, religious leaders and journalists showed limited awareness of the extent to which child labour interferes with or impedes education and negatively impacts on child labourers’ future. While many of the interlocutors from the various governmental and non-governmental institutions saw child labour as a result of the central and local governments’ failure to create positive living conditions for the population, they also thought the families of child labourers to be ignorant or incapable of helping themselves. In this sense, the interviewees saw child labour as an antidote to the children’s families’ poverty and a guarantee of the children’s survival, placing the blame for the phenomenon on the government, but the burden to escape it on the affected families. None of the interviewed social actors felt empowered to prevent or eliminate child labour.

Recommended interventions

Community-level awareness raising

Given the limited reach of media in various parts of the country, and people’s limited access to a variety of information sources, community-level awareness raising initiatives addressing short-term and long-term perils of child labour are recommended. The messages contained in the awareness raising initiatives should be structured in a way that focuses on what a person – regardless of their position - can do once their awareness is raised.

Two important groups to influence **are parents of non-working children** who expressed the opinion that following government, the community should be the next entity to assist child labourers; **and non-working children** who could be targeted for empowerment in encouraging solidarity with their peers to think about their communities and well-being.

Child labour awareness raising could also be done for the public through religious events and festivals, public concerts, which could be organised to this effect (much in the style of MTV Exit concert, which was organised in 2013 to raise awareness about human trafficking), school and/ or sporting events (e.g. soccer matches).

Awareness-raising initiatives should incorporate the five steps	
Learn the Signs	Teach individuals how to spot child labour
Pledge to Act	Ask a group of people to agree – preferably in public – to take a step towards eliminating child labour in line with their station and possibility
Know How to Help	Teach people how to help, perhaps through the creation of a reporting mechanism
Tell Leaders to Act	Ask people to use their newly acquired political space to seek action from leaders (e.g. factory inspectors)

Awareness-raising initiatives should incorporate the five steps

Spread the Word If people are unable to pledge to act, cannot help others or do not feel comfortable with asking leaders to act, people can be asked to spread the word, either by distributing appropriate materials or by instructing others towards a reliable source of information (the study has found that word of mouth is particularly efficient in the Myanmar context, especially among women)

Famous personalities – from show business or religious leaders – could be engaged as advocates of child labour elimination. Messages could then be designed and recorded by the personalities on CDs or TV show/ music compilations to be diffused on cross-country buses, at tea shops and businesses as is custom in Myanmar.

Appropriate awareness-raising activities for people in authority, especially government representatives, should be conducted in a collaborative and mixed setting encouraging networking and communication across the ranks to empower people at various levels of authority to make decision in favour of child labourers.

Employment and livelihoods

The development of livelihood initiatives is encouraged to help prevent unemployment among adults, which contributes to the persistence of child labour. Initiatives strengthening women's access to appropriate livelihoods, including paid employment can be specifically useful, especially when fathers, considered principal bread winners, are absent. Attention should be paid to household dynamics, with a view to providing employment that does not prevent men and women from fulfilling their roles vis-à-vis their families. This is particularly the case for women, who may be precluded from entering the workforce due to gender roles, which see them house-bound or unable to secure stable compensation. Supporting women's entry into the workforce, and protecting their labour rights, could lead to an increase in their family income and a decrease in their need to send their children to work.

Legislation

Existing legislation has significant gaps in terms of coherence and enforcement, which were attributed to weak institutions and lack of appropriate human resources by the respondents.² Additionally, legislation, which is not consistent with societal values and clashes with the socio-economic reality of the concerned population, will be difficult to enforce. Efforts should be made to enhance legislation into enforceable rules protecting children from exploitative practices. This could be achieved by revising the laws to comply with international standards and to present these in a coherent and comprehensive manner to the public

² Factory inspectors were reluctant to discuss the presence of young children in factories (under 13 years old, or 14-15). They mostly associated child labour with 'youth', i.e. individuals who were 16-18 years old – and by Myanmar law, not children. They said they could warn employers against hiring children under the legal working age of 13, and they recommended that employers respect working hour limits for those. Despite the fact, that the Factories Act gives labour inspectors the mandate to sanction employers who break the law, the respondents in the present study did not feel they were in the position to sanction employers for breaking the law regarding employment of children, e.g. under the legal working age. They also said that they understood that children had to work to support families, and that they believed removing children from factories could be detrimental to the children and their families.

(awareness raising). There is also a need to empower officials and community representatives in their implementation and monitoring roles.

Vocational training or skills development

Vocational training or skill development programmes for youth and adults, especially women who are currently unemployed, could be introduced with a focus on future employment. A study to identify the kind of skills needed that may improve the youth's and adults' access to employment and/or better employment should be combined with the development of any programmes to ensure utility and buy-in. This is an entry point for collaboration between public and private sectors.

Research

A follow-up study to the KAP, during the 4th quarter of 2017, will be necessary to measure changes in the stakeholders' knowledge, attitudes and perceptions. It may not be possible to find the same individuals for the follow-up study due to human mobility, the closing of businesses and changes in interest to participate. Efforts will be made to find the same category of respondents. Where possible, and not conflicting with anonymity requirements, names of key informants and their functions were recorded to facilitate follow-up. These should be consulted at the time of the end study.

In addition to the follow-up study, further research is required to understand how household income, spending, health condition of adult earners and existence or non-existence of support networks affect child labour in order to identify factors that can protect children from entering the workforce prematurely. The relationships between parental education, skills and labour migration as well as child labour require deeper exploration. Child labour is a common practice in rural and urban areas, and specific research is necessary to determine whether it is more prevalent in the urban or rural areas.³ It is also recommended to conduct specific research on employers to gain a deeper understanding of why they hire children and how this could be prevented.

The present study did not focus on migration, however, it is a cross-cutting issue that should be incorporated into future studies on child labour in Myanmar. The International Organisation for Migration estimates that 10% of the country's population migrated abroad, while internal migration is much more difficult to estimate. Internal migration may positively or negatively impact the children's ability to access education, adequate housing, healthcare and other social services, depending on their migration circumstances. In some cases, migration may accelerate the children's entry into the workforce, especially in cases where children are sent away from home to work at another location.

³ This research is ongoing as part of the ILO's Labour Force Survey.

1. Introduction

In Myanmar, child labour is highly visible in rural and urban settings. According to the 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census data, 23.7% of children aged 10-17 years participate in the workforce, which is indicative of the children's situation in the country. Based on anecdotal evidence, children who work within their households, in family businesses and on farms are mostly unpaid. Children in paid employment enter the workforce either because they are sent to work by their parents or by their own decision.⁴ Evidence also suggests that brokers may be involved in the process.

Children are paid in cash and in kind, and in some industries, like the service industry, they may be provided with shelter, food, clothing and at times schooling or training. In some sectors, sex appears to play a part in the type of employment available to girls and boys, e.g. teashops employ predominantly boys, while households employ predominantly girl domestic workers. Not all children are involved in what the ILO recommends for consideration as hazardous work⁵, however, the majority are forced by economic constraint to abandon schooling to perform their jobs, and they are exposed to physical and mental pressures from a very young age.

Increasing awareness of different national and local stakeholders including community members and leaders as well as child labourers and their families is vital to the elimination of child labour in Myanmar. This is necessary to ensure that responsible agencies adapt decisive behaviour vis-à-vis the issue, and to promote the cooperation and participation of concerned communities.

1.1 Research objective

The KAP study aimed to capture and measure key stakeholders' knowledge about child labour, their attitudes towards the phenomenon and associated practices. The stakeholders included working children, parents, workers' and employers' organisations, the media, civil society groups, representatives of national and local governments, and community leaders. It also served to examine whether the socio-cultural characteristics of communities in studied locations have an impact on people's perceptions and behaviours towards child labour.

⁴ The context within which children make the decision to work is explored further in the report. It suggests that while children do decide to work, their decision is often the result of household poverty, duty and gratitude towards the family and lack of educational or other learning opportunities – which appears as part of a culture of payback to parents.

⁵ ILO Recommendation 190 Section 3 states that: „3. In determining the types of work referred to under Article 3(d) of the Convention, and in identifying where they exist, consideration should be given, inter alia, to: (a) work which exposes children to physical, psychological or sexual abuse; (b) work underground, under water, at dangerous heights or in confined spaces; (c) work with dangerous machinery, equipment and tools, or which involves the manual handling or transport of heavy loads; (d) work in an unhealthy environment which may, for example, expose children to hazardous substances, agents or processes, or to temperatures, noise levels, or vibrations damaging to their health; (e) work under particularly difficult conditions such as work for long hours or during the night or work where the child is unreasonably confined to the premises of the employer.“

The findings of the KAP study will be used towards the design of specific interventions that will raise awareness about child labour and its socio-economic cost, and those that will promote change in thinking and doing by various actors.

A follow-up KAP study will be conducted at the end of the project period of the ILO's Myanmar Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour that is during the 4th quarter of 2017.

1.2 Child labour working definitions

The Shops and Establishments Act 1951 provides that children below 13 years old are not permitted to work in any shop, commercial establishment or establishment for public entertainment. It further mentions that no person employed by those shops or establishments shall be permitted to work for more than 8 hours in any day or more than 48 hours in a week. The Factories Act of 1951 prohibits children below 13 years old from working in factories while those 13 years old and above are allowed to work but are required by law to procure a Certificate of Fitness to gain employment.⁶ In addition, children between 13-15 years old are not allowed to work in any factory for more than 4 hours a day and between 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. Those 16-17 years old are allowed to work up to 44 hours weekly.

The Child Law defines "child" as a person who has not attained the age of 16 years.⁷ The Factories and General Labour Laws Inspection Department (FGLLID) imposes regulations that contradict the minimum age principles laid down in ILO Conventions and do not cover children working in the informal economy, where the vast majority of child labour is believed to exist. Hazardous work to be prohibited for children below 18 years of age has yet to be determined in Myanmar.

Taking into account these different laws, the absence of the Hazardous Work List for children, and the lack of national legal child labour and child work definitions, for the purpose of the studies conducted under the ILO's Myanmar Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (My-PEC), technical definitions on child labour were developed in consultation with stakeholders in September 2014.⁸ As such, children between the ages of 13-15, who work more than 4 hours but less than 8 hours a day qualify as **child labourers**, same as children between the ages of 16-17 (who are considered adults by existing labour law) who work more than 8 hours a day. Any of the children (below 18 years old) working between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m. are considered child labourers. **Working children** are those children aged 5-17 years engaged in economic activity for more than 1 hour per week.

⁶ Amendments to these laws increasing the minimum age to 14 have been submitted to the Parliament.

⁷ The Child Law is currently being revised and the definition of the child may be revised and increased to 18.

⁸ The working hour measures used in the consultation are not the same as international statistical standards. See: "Report II: Measuring Working Time", 18th International Conference of Labour Statisticians at: http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---stat/documents/publication/wcms_099576.pdf .

2. Methodology

2.1 Research hypothesis

Child labour is common in Yangon, Ayeyarwady Delta Region and Mon State. It is not only the result of economic hardship experienced by families. It also springs from low awareness on child labour, socio-cultural attitudes and practices, and lack of adequate facilities and opportunities for children to avail of quality education.

2.2 Data collection

The research consisted of a desk review of available documentation concerning child labour in general, child labour in Myanmar and field research. A team of five data collectors and one supervisor per team conducted field research in Yangon and Ayeyarwady Regions as well as Mon State over a period of 11 days in March 2015. All data collectors were hired locally and had experience conducting research or performing community work in the target areas. All interviews and discussions were held in Myanmar (for Yangon and Ayeyarwady) and Myanmar and Mon (Mon State) languages.

Two townships each in Yangon and Mon State and one inner ward and one outer ward of Patheingyi Township were surveyed. The survey areas were selected as presumed locations of high or low incidence of child labour.

Given that child labour appears to be rampant in Myanmar, and that data on child labour remains scarce, it is not possible to establish with certainty, which areas have a high or a low incidence of child labour. In this case, central city areas, where more affluent families live and where children have better access to schools and other necessary services were chosen as areas where child labour is *less likely to occur*. This is not to say that there are no child labourers in these areas. The current real estate boom in cities like Yangon, for example, has resulted in construction sites springing up in many central suburbs. Anecdotal evidence suggests, however, that children employed at these sites are unlikely to come from the areas where they work, and are mostly migrant child workers or children from outer townships of Yangon.

2.3 Research tools

The three research tools, designed to capture each key group's specific needs, concerns and attitudes as well as relationship to child labourers, were developed in consultation with the ILO's FPRW-SIMPOC. These were:

- 314 structured (questionnaire-based) interviews with child labourers and non-working children as well as parents of child labourers and non-working children;⁹

⁹ 300 interviews with children were to be conducted, and 314 took place. Given the scarcity of quantitative studies on child labour in Myanmar, and the fact that a higher number of interviews was conducted due to the children's willingness to be interviewed, all 314 questionnaires were analyzed.

- 17 focus group discussions (FGDs) with CSO/CBO/NGO representatives, adult workers who work alongside children and employers (6 in Yangon Region, 6 in Mon State, and 5 in Patheingyi)¹⁰;
- 56 key informant interviews (KIIs) with representatives of key local and national government agencies, religious leaders, journalists, law enforcement officers and medical staff (20 in Yangon, 20 in Patheingyi and 16 in Mon State).

2.4 Sampling methodology

Three non-probability sampling methods were used for this study: quota sampling, volunteer sampling and snow-balling.

The quota sampling method was selected throughout the research to identify child labourers and non-working children and parents of child labourers and non-working children for participation in **questionnaire-based interviews**. The researchers selected children participants according to sex, age, work status¹¹ and location, while parent participants were selected according to sex, status of children and location. In total, 314 and 300 parents were interviewed.

Quota sampling, being a non-probability sampling method, can result in a bias and sampling error since it does not meet the basic requirement of randomness as some children may have no chance of selection or their chance of selection may be unknown. This method, however, offers advantages as it gives a good representation of certain groups without over-representing them. In addition, using quota samples makes comparisons of groups easy. It is also a helpful method to create an accurate sample of the studied population where a probability sample cannot be obtained.

Volunteer sampling was chosen to select participants for **FGDs** to avoid pressure for people to participate in the study against their will. People in Myanmar do not engage easily in public speaking and expression of opinion in front of people they do not know. Volunteer sampling was also used to ensure that focus group discussion participants were well informed about the research topic and methods before making a decision to participate.¹²

The bias associated with this sampling method is that voluntary participants may have pre-established opinion or interest in the research topic, and they want to share it publicly. Their views do not necessarily represent or match those of people who choose not to participate in the focus group discussion. This bias, however, is mostly problematic in large opinion poll studies.

¹⁰ One of the Focus Groups Discussions in Patheingyi was cancelled due to a no-show of participants.

¹¹ Due to time limitations and the method used, the data collectors asked screening questions to determine whether the child qualified for an interview as a child labourer or not. Children who said they worked all day, or every day, or throughout the week were selected for interview as child labourers, as were children who were interviewed at their workplace. Children who said they did not work were selected as non-working children.

¹² Volunteer sampling can be complimented by the nomination method, whereby confirmed volunteers may nominate people they think would make good participants, i.e. participants who are concerned by the issue and who express their thoughts.

Snow-balling was used to identify participants for KIIs. It is a useful technique to access relevant people who may not be known outside their communities. It facilitates reaching people who may not otherwise agree to interview. In Myanmar, where interpersonal relationships and recommendations from mutual acquaintances are important precursors to establishing contact, snow-balling helps to efficiently identify and recruit participants. The bias associated with this sampling method is that people may recommend friends, acquaintances and colleagues who share the same ideas and opinions, which can lead to quicker saturation.

2.5 Research locations

The study was conducted in six communities in three regions - two communities per region - to identify whether any immediate socio-cultural or geographical factors impacted on KAP and therefore, on the incidence of child labour. Yangon township, a cosmopolitan urban location, represented a destination area for child labourers from around the country. Patheingyi township and its wards, with mostly Burman and Karen populations, represented urban and semi-urban areas, which are both a source of and destination for child labourers. Mawlamyine and Chaungzon townships in Mon State, which is the traditional homeland of the Mon people, were chosen for their urban and rural locations, respectively, known to be a source of migrant workers mostly to Thailand and a destination for labourers from others parts of Myanmar who come to fill in the manpower gaps left by outbound migrants.



The KAP survey was too short and reduced in scope to allow for the study of cultural specificities, which may or may not contribute to the incidence of child labour in each location. A government official in one of the townships covered by the study cautioned against generalisations about children pointing out the socio-cultural diversity of the country. This sentiment, while common, is not necessarily shared by everyone, especially where human mobility is high and, as one law enforcement officer interviewed said, “*nationalism is being blurred*”.

In each region, two areas were selected, one representing a high likelihood and the other a low likelihood of child labour occurrence. In the absence of child labour data, indicative information was used for the area selection. The same number of parents and other community member representatives (such as teachers, religious leaders’ community-based organisation

representatives¹³) were interviewed in both high and low child labour prevalence communities. A gender balance was sought in all interviews with roughly the same number of women and men interviewed.

Yangon division

In Yangon Region, with a population of 7,360,703, the KAP study took place in the Hlaing Thar Yar Township - an industrial area known for high incidence of child labour - and Sanchaung township, a middle-class area undergoing an upgrade of housing and infrastructure where child labour is visible but where schools, medical facilities and other services are available to ever more affluent families and their children. Sanchaung was treated as an area with “low likelihood of child labour prevalence” in this study.

Hlaing Thar Yar, the biggest industrial zone in Yangon, where national and international companies are located, consists mostly garment and light industries. There are 46 primary schools, eight middle schools and four high schools and the Yangon Technical University in this township.

Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC) data shows that in December 2008 there were more than 340,000 people living in the area. The first population swell in the area resulted from a government-led resettlement programme in 1989-1990, which saw over 1.5 million people countrywide moved from inner-city to peri-urban and even rural areas.¹⁴ In the case of Yangon, squatters who previously occupied areas around pagodas and monastic compounds, were moved to industrial zones, including Hlaing Thar Yar.¹⁵ It is thought that as many as 500,000 people were moved within Yangon alone.¹⁶ The second population swell occurred in the aftermath of Cyclone Nargis, which took place in May 2008, and caused widespread damage and loss of life in the Ayeyarwady Delta. Adult and independent child migrants continue to come to Hlaing Thar Yar bringing along their children, who are put to work to contribute to the family income.¹⁷

Hlaing Thar Yar is generally unsafe, and there are areas, such as ward 19, which are known for robbery¹⁸, underage prostitution and gang-related crime, such as elimination of unwanted social elements from communities or extortion of rent money from migrant workers who ‘squat’.¹⁹ The lack of social cohesion, human mobility, lack of law enforcement renders Hlaing Thar Yar not only unsafe but ripe for exploitation and abuse, to which children are

¹³ The elderly, e.g. grandparents, were not interviewed in this study.

¹⁴ Andrew Bosson, “Forced migration/internal displacement in Burma with an emphasis on government-controlled areas”, Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC) – Norwegian Refugee Council, 2007.

¹⁵ Guy Lubeigt, “Industrial Zones in Burma and Thailand”, Burma Update Conference, Australian National University, 2007.

¹⁶ Andrew Bosson, “Forced migration/internal displacement in Burma with an emphasis on government-controlled areas”, Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC) – Norwegian Refugee Council, 2007.

¹⁷ Data retrieved from Yangon City Development Committee website – link no longer active: this data was verified by interview with local NGO/CSO workers as well as employers.

¹⁸ Maxime Boutry, “Urban Poverty in Yangon Great City – A Qualitative Study of Urban Poverty, Its Causes and Consequences”, WFP, UNICEF, UN-HABITAT, 2014, p. 30.

¹⁹ ILO Rapid Assessment team comments.

especially vulnerable. The current population of the area is difficult to estimate due to continuous migration into and out of the area.

Sanchaung is a residential zone located in the north central part of Yangon with a population of 99,712.²⁰ According to YCDC data, it comprises 18 wards and is location to 19 primary schools, two middle schools and four high schools. With a population density of 20,001 – 53,814 per square kilometre, it is one of the most densely populated townships of Yangon. The area is known for its cultural and religious diversity, as well as leisure facilities, restaurants and shopping centres, which attract large numbers of youth over the weekend. The absence of factories and manufacturing plants means that child labour occurs mostly in restaurants, private households and on construction sites. High rental fees impede large-scale immigration and anecdotal evidence suggests that unless child labourers are accommodated by employers, they are unlikely to live in the area.

Mon state

Mon State is located in the southeast of Myanmar, and has a population of 2,054,393 spread over two districts and 12 townships and sub-townships. According to the 2014 census, 72% of Mon's population is based in rural areas, while the State's main economic activities are agriculture, fishing, mining and forestry. Some 31.3% of the population is between 0-14 years old and child labour is common with 67.1% of boys and 36.7% of girls aged 10 and over employed.²¹ According to UNICEF, 'a sizeable proportion of children in Mon continue to have some of their most basic needs unmet [...] almost 12 per cent of children still do not have access to primary education and only slightly over half (56 per cent) of primary school children in the State complete their schooling on time'²². The State is also affected by outbound and inbound migration.

In Mon State, Chaungzon township, with a population of 122,126 was chosen as an area of high incidence of child labour, largely attributed to mass outmigration of the working age adult population to neighbouring Thailand. Mawlamyine township²³, the capital of Mon State, with a population of 289,388, was chosen as an area of low-incidence of child labour, not because child labour does not occur there but because there is a *higher likelihood* of children being educated and engaged in activities other than labour.

In November 2013, The Woman and Child Rights Project published a report titled "Children for Hire."²⁴ The report offers a 'portrait of child labour in Mon areas' and is the most recent *detailed* publication about child labour in the area. The authors of the report point out that while much attention has been paid to urban child workers, such as teashop boys, rural

²⁰ Myanmar Information Management Unit, "Population and Population Density Map of Yangon (2014 Census Provisional Results)" http://www.themimu.info/sites/themimu.info/files/documents/Population_Map_2014_Population_Density_Yangon_MIMU841v05_17Feb2015_A4.pdf.

²¹ Department of Population of the Ministry of Immigration and Population, "The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census - Mon State Census Report Volume 3 J", May 2015, p. 2.

²² UNICEF, "Mon State Profile – A Snapshot of Child Wellbeing".

²³ Mawlamyine Township is part of Mawlamyine District, which has a total population of 1,232,221.

²⁴ The Woman and Child Rights Project, "Children for Hire", November 2013, accessed at: <http://www.rehmonnya.org/reports/childrenforhire.pdf>.

child workers have gone largely unnoticed. According to the report, ‘civil society members and child protection officers [interviewed for the report] described child labour in Burma as vastly under-researched, and said that accurate data from the country’s peripheral areas is almost non-existent.’²⁵

The report’s conclusions were drawn from interviews with 45 children and 22 civil society representatives, child protection officers, community members, parents and teachers in Mon State. Most of the interviewed children said they work in agriculture, mainly on rubber and betel nut plantations. Other children listed waiting and washing dishes in small restaurants, working in furniture factories, scavenging, woodcutting, gathering grass to make brooms, cow herding and weeding on plantations as jobs. The report looked into factors driving child labour and found that ‘poverty was not necessarily the sole cause of child labour, but rather the two were jointly symptomatic of poor access to education and healthcare, landlessness, migration, and the effects of decades of armed conflict and human rights abuses’.²⁶

The non-governmental organisation Friendly Child, through its Director Daw Wah Wah Lin Htut was interviewed in *Myanmar Times* on July 2014 and she stated that Chaungzon township is particularly affected by child labour because most working age adults left for Thailand. She said that ‘only the old and the young are left in the villages. In the past years, they [those who stay behind] would go to work at 16 or 17 but nowadays they go at 13 or 14. Children want to help their parents but they are facing abuse in the workplace’²⁷. It is important to note that children’s desire to help is motivated primarily by the family’s poverty. In the case of their families’ economic well-being, children’s obligation is to study well and help in adulthood.

Ayeyarwady delta

Ayeyarwady is the second most populated region of Myanmar with a population of 6,184,829 of which 14.1% is urban-based.²⁸ It is an area known for inbound and outbound migration. Developed as the world’s foremost rice-producing region by the British during the colonial period, the region went ‘from a lightly populated swampy area, largely inhabited by the Karen, into the world’s rice basket’²⁹, which led to substantial immigration from Myanmar’s Dry Zone. The area remains ‘home to large numbers of seasonal migrants who work in the paddy fields as well as itinerant “boat families.”’³⁰ Since the 2008 Cyclone Nargis, which claimed over

²⁵ The Woman and Child Rights Project, “Children for Hire”, November 2013, accessed at: <http://www.rehmonnya.org/reports/childrenforhire.pdf>.

²⁶ The Woman and Child Rights Project, “Children for Hire”, November 2013, accessed at: <http://www.rehmonnya.org/reports/childrenforhire.pdf>.

²⁷ Cherry Thein, “NGO program trains villagers in Mon State about child labour”, July 11, 2014, accessed at: <http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/10965-education-program-tackles-child-labour-in-mon-state.html>.

²⁸ Republic of the Union of Myanmar, *The Population and Housing Census of Myanmar, 2014*, “Summary of the Provisional Results”, accessed on February 3, 2015 <http://countryoffice.unfpa.org/myanmar/drive/SummmmaryoftheProvisionalResults.pdf>.

²⁹ David I. Steinberg, *Burma/Myanmar: What Everyone Needs to Know*, Oxford University Press, 2010, p. 32.

³⁰ IOM, *Remote Myanmar delta communities receive life-saving medical care*, February 21, 2014, accessed on January 20, 2015 <https://www.iom.int/cms/en/sites/iom/home/news-and-views/press-briefing-notes/pbn-2014/pbn-listing/remote-myanmar-delta-communities.html>.

100,000 lives and caused widespread devastation, the Ayeyarwady Delta has become an important source area of labour migrants, including children.

Two wards in Patheingyi, the capital of the region, with a population of 1,630,716, were selected as having high and low likelihood of child labour prevalence. An inner-city and an outer-city ward were selected for this purpose. While the Delta is known for child labour in fisheries and agriculture, many children have been sent away to work and study in cities. Patheingyi – not a frequently researched location - is a place where children migrate for school and work. Here, data collectors were able to find students and child labourers and they were better placed to study factors, which contribute to their differing situations.

2.6 Research challenges and limitations

One of the main challenges in the study was to identify areas with low prevalence of child labour. Given the dearth of reliable data on the issue, proxy indicators were used, e.g. in central urban areas such as Sanchaung or urban areas of Mawlamyine and Patheingyi, a higher number of schools was interpreted as an indication that a higher number of children could be educated and that child labour had a lower likelihood of being prevalent. The study was not designed or intended to collect data on victims of trafficking and/or child labourers in hard-to-reach sectors.

The sampling methodology used in the present study was useful for revealing indicative patterns of awareness, perceptions and behaviours of different target groups but the survey data cannot be used to determine estimates due to the limited sample size.

2.7 Research ethics

The KAP Study relied on voluntary, confidential and anonymous participation of respondents, except in the case of key informant interviews where many respondents allowed for their names to be recorded. Researchers took specific measures to ensure that their presence did not interfere with the well-being of the children who were interviewed.

Where possible children were interviewed in their homes. In situations where children were interviewed at their workplace, an employer's permission to conduct the interview was sought. Data collectors worked in tandem when interviewing children in order to ensure confidentiality of the interviews, especially those with children. In case an adult, e.g. an employer, wanted to be engaged in the interview with the child, which could impact on the quality of data, the child was not interviewed or the adult was engaged/ interviewed at the same time as the child thus avoiding her/his interference.

The research team did not report coming across observable situations of abuse, in which case the data collectors were required to report the abuse to the ILO. This does not categorically mean that child labourers do not experience abusive situations.

2.8 Quality control

Team supervisors provided daily phone and email reports about their teams' accomplished tasks, challenges and issues. Supervisors conducted spot checks, observed data collectors during questionnaire-based interviews, KIIs and FGDs. The ILO's My-PEC team conducted additional quality checks in the field.

3. Findings

There are different views and perspectives about child labour. Some experts are of the opinion that ‘so long as parents benefit more when the child works than when the child goes to school, child labour persists’³¹ and that improvements in living standards will not reduce the incidence of child labour. Other social scientists argue that parents in developing and rich countries have a similar view of child labour and that in both cases they would prefer their children to be schooled. What sets them apart is their socio-economic status and ‘the simple reason that impoverished households need their children to work’.³²

Interviews with key informants, parents and children for the present study found that poverty is considered the main driving factor behind child labour in Myanmar. Children’s access to employment and acceptance within the work place is further fuelled by attitudes, which require children to help their families financially, and the employers’ belief that they are providing social assistance to the impoverished families whose children they employ. The study found that all of the interviewed adults, regardless of age, background, activity or relationship to child labourers, believed that children should help in the households. What is more, the majority of adults - including a significant portion of parents of non-working children - were of the opinion that where necessary children should work for an income,. In this context, the family’s well-being and the child’s survival depend on the child working and supplementing the family income.

If one of the main reasons for widespread child labour in Myanmar is poverty, societal attitudes, lack of cohesive legislation and law enforcement weave together and compound the phenomenon, rather than work towards its elimination. There does not exist a specific child labour law in Myanmar and existing related laws are under review to comply with international labour standards.

3.1 Respondent demographics

The KAP study combined quantitative and qualitative forms of data collection. A significant amount of data was collected about the parents of child labourers and non-working children and child labourers and non-working children. This data is presented in the Findings section to enable the reader to understand the demographic profiles of questionnaire respondents. For ease of read, the demographic data is presented before the knowledge, attitudes and practices of interviewees are discussed.

³¹ Eric V. Edmonds, *Globalisation and Child Labour*, Dartmouth College, 2002, p.2, <https://www.dartmouth.edu/~eedmonds/nzzessay.pdf>.

³² Eric V. Edmonds, *Globalisation and Child Labour*, Dartmouth College, 2002, p.3, <https://www.dartmouth.edu/~eedmonds/nzzessay.pdf>.

3.2 Parents' profiles

Only one parent in each household was interviewed. The sampling method did not require that the same number of fathers or mothers be interviewed, although data collectors were encouraged to aim for a balance. The parent interviewed was the parent available and/or wishing to participate in the interview.

In Hlaing Thar Yar in the case of parents of non-working children, 41.2% of the respondents were fathers and 58.8% were mothers. In the case of parents of child labourers, 48.1% were fathers and 51.9% were mothers. In Sanchaung, over 75% of interviewed parents of non-working children and 100% of parents of child labourers were mothers.³³ In Chaungzon, the enumerators did not interview any fathers of non-working children, while 75% of the interviewed parents of child labourers were mothers. In Mawlamyine, in the case of parents of non-working children, 80% of the respondents were mothers and in the case of child labourers, 83% were mothers. These percentages reflect the high number of fathers who migrated, predominantly to Thailand, for work. In Pathein, an equal number of fathers and mothers of child labourers and non-child labourers were interviewed.

The majority of parents across all surveyed locations were Burmese. Child labourers are often children of migrant parents or migrants themselves, coming from all around the country. In Mon State, for example, it is common for Mon people to migrate to neighbouring Thailand in search of work. They are replaced by immigrants from other parts of Myanmar, including Burman areas, which are collectively more populated than ethnic states, resulting in Burman migrants being more numerous than others.³⁴ Migration dynamics were not documented in detail in the KAP, and ethnicity was not used as a variable in the analysis.

Table 1. Parents' ethnicity & location

Ethnicity	Location				
	Hlaing Thar Yar	Sanchaung	Chaungzon	Mawlamyine	Pathein
Burman	79.7%	67.6%	86.4%	87.5%	99%
Kayin	18.8%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Mon	0%	0%	13.6%	7.1%	0%
Shan	0%	0%	0%	1.8%	0%
Kachin	0%	23.5%	0%	0%	0%
Rakhaing	1.4%	2.9%	0%	0%	0%

The study did not look specifically into the respondents' migration patterns, however, it attempted to establish whether they were local or immigrant residents. The study did find variations in percentages of local residents vs. immigrant residents by location. In Yangon, 33%

³³ Only 2 cases of child labour were found in Sanchaung. The two cases are not enough to give us a picture of child labour in this area, which is designated as one of low likelihood of child labour prevalence. Given that a statistical analysis was not possible based on two cases, these were left out of tables and graphs - specified as N/A.

³⁴ See the ILO's "Safe migration knowledge, attitudes and practices in Myanmar", 2015.

of parents of non-working children and 31% of parents of child labourers reported being from the area. In comparison, 62% of parents of non-working and child labourers in Mon State reported being local residents, while in Pathein, 85% of parents of non-working and 90% of parents of child labourers said they were from the area.

In the case of migrant parents of non-working children, those in Yangon reported having come mainly from the Ayeyarwady Delta, followed by Kachin and Shan States, Magway and Bago. Among those in Mon State, the majority of migrant parents reported to have moved within the State, followed by arrivals from Yangon and Bago. In the case of Pathein, the migrants were from other areas of the Ayeyarwady Delta.³⁵

In the case of migrant parents of child labourers currently in Yangon, 43% reported moving to Hlaing Thar Yar from somewhere else in Yangon, followed by 35% who said they were from the Ayeyarwady Delta, followed by migrants from Magway, Bago and Kachin State. In Mon State, 50% of migrant parents of child labourers moved within the State, while 21% came from the Ayeyarwady and Bago respectively, and 16% from Kayin State.

Table 2. Average age of parents

Location	Age	
	Parents of child labourers	Parents of non-working children
Hlaing Thar Yar	36.82	44.04
Sanchaung	N/A	39.06
Chaungzon	44.50	39.35
Mawlamyine	44.04	41.40
Pathein	45.71	41.21

The study found that parents of child labourers were on average 4 years older than parents of non-working children, except in Hlaing Thar Yar where the parents of child labourers were 8 years younger than parents of non-working children in the same area.

Parents of child labourers and non-working children were found to have a similar number of children, except in Hlaing Thar Yar where parents of child labourers were found to have on average one child more than parents of non-working children. A direct link between household size and child labour did not emerge, however, other factors, such as the age of children, the presence of one or both parents, health conditions of working adults, and household income among others could explain why some families are able to sustain themselves without resorting to child labour while others cannot. Further research is required to understand contributing factors.

³⁵ The study did not delve into migration dynamics of families. It is possible that in each of the families, a family member, or members, had migrated abroad or to other parts of Myanmar. In Mon State, the stark absence of fathers in households where interviews with parents took place suggests that men have migrated, a hypothesis supported by anecdotal and IOM data.

Table 3. Average number of children

Location	Number of children	
	Parents of child labourers	Parents of non-working children
Hlaing Thar Yar	4.19	3.18
Sanchaung	N/A	1.75
Chaugzon	3.54	3.75
Mawlamyine	3.58	3.37
Pathein	3.38	2.88

Parents of both child labourers and non-working children were found to have predominantly low-skilled jobs, except for parents in Sanchaung. Most of the mothers of both child labourers and non-working children reported being non-earning housewives across all surveyed locations – with the exception of mothers of non-working children in Mawlamyine.³⁶ Occupations in the ‘other’ category reflected the mothers’ locations, with mothers of both child labourers and non-working children being employed as casual labourers in Hlaing Thar Yar and Pathein, and as farmers, casual labourers and fishing industry helpers in Chaungzon and Mawlamyine. In the case of fathers, occupations in the ‘other’ category included thatching, fishing and casual labour in Chaungzon and Mawlamyine, and cigar making, betel shop keeping and casual labour in Pathein.

The mothers and fathers of non-working children in Sanchaung were more likely to have higher-skilled jobs than parents in other research locations. This reflects the nature of the location, with the economy thriving where many residents are considered as middle class. Although the majority of mothers were housewives, some of them also worked as teachers, tailors and one reported working on a local development committee. Among the fathers of non-working children in Sanchaung, in addition to working as shopkeepers and drivers, the majority of men held a variety of jobs ranging from broker to logistics manager to web developer.

In Chaungzon and Mawlamyine, a significant percentage of fathers of child labourers reported undertaking responsibilities as though they were ‘housewives’. There are a number of possible reasons for this occurrence, which is rare given that the role of ‘housewife’ is reserved for women, with the strong possibility that the “housewife” fathers are actually unemployed. The reasons for their unemployment can range from lack of work, shortage of necessary skills to access available jobs, very low wages or health problems.³⁷ It is also possible that these fathers’ partners (the children’s mothers) have migrated, although related research has shown that fathers are unlikely to care for children in the absence of mothers, and that this duty is usually taken up by grandmothers.³⁸

³⁶ The survey did not include questions regarding the migration of adults or children from the households in Mon State.

³⁷ The study did not explore reasons for parents’ unemployment.

³⁸ Forthcoming IOM study on the impact of migration on children.

Table 4. Mothers' employment

Employment	Mothers of child labourers					Mothers of non-working children				
	HTY	SC	CZ	MW	P	HTY	SC	CZ	MW	P
Housewife	59.3%	N/A	55.6%	65.2%	61.5%	60%	62.5%	55%	29.2%	62.5%
Factory	7.4%	N/A	...	...	...	10%	...	...	...	...
Construction	3.7%	N/A	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Shopkeeper	3.7%	N/A	...	...	7.7%	10%	8.3%	5%	8.3%	8.3%
Teacher	...	N/A	...	...	...	...	12.5%	...	...	...
Nurse	...	N/A	...	...	...	...	...	...	4.2%	...
Tailor	...	N/A	...	...	...	...	8.3%	...	4.2%	4.2%
Hawker	11.1%	N/A	...	13%	15.4%	...	...	5%	16.7%	4.2%
Unemployed	...	N/A	...	...	...	...	4.2%	...	...	...
Other	14.8%	N/A	44.4%	21.7%	15.4%	20%	4.2%	...	37.5%	20.8%

Table 5. Fathers' employment

Employment	Fathers of child labourers					Fathers of non-Working children				
	HTY	SC	CZ	MW	P	HTY	SC	CZ	MW	P
Housewife	...	N/A	33.3%	33.3%	3.8%	14.3%	...	N/A	...	4.2%
Factory	...	N/A	...	...	15.4%	...	...	N/A	...	8.3%
Construction	32%	N/A	...	...	11.5%	28.6%	...	N/A	16.7%	...
Shopkeeper	8%	N/A	...	...	3.8%	14.3%	12.5%	N/A	...	...
Tailor	...	N/A	...	...	...	...	...	N/A	16.7%	4.2%
Hawker	8%	N/A	...	...	3.8%	...	...	N/A	...	...
Trishaw	16%	N/A	...	...	15.4%	...	...	N/A	...	...
Driver	...	N/A	...	...	3.8%	...	12.5%	N/A	16.7%	4.2%
Unemployed	12%	N/A	...	...	3.8%	14.3%	...	N/A	...	4.2%
Other	24%	N/A	66.7%	66.7%	38.5%	28.6%	75%	N/A	50%	62.5%

The study found notable differences in the level of education between the sexes within each category of parents and between categories. Mothers of child labourers reported having the lowest education among all parents, and were the highest group with no formal education. Mothers of non-working children were more likely to have high school and university education. Fathers of non-working children reported having the highest education of all parents. They were 16% more likely to have high school and 14% more likely to have university education than fathers of child labourers. The study did not find any fathers of non-working children without any formal education.

Table 6. Mothers' education level

Education level	Mothers of child labourers	Mothers of non-working children
Primary School	59%	43%
Middle School	18%	25%
High School	3%	13%
University	2%	11%
Lack of Formal Education	16%	8%
No Answer	2%	N/A

Table 7. Fathers' education level

Education level	Fathers of child labourers	Fathers of non-working children
Primary School	53%	29%
Middle School	33%	31%
High School	8%	24%
University	2%	16%
Lack of Formal Education	2%	0%
No Answer	2%	N/A

All of the interviewed parents reported to live predominantly in nuclear households with their spouses and children. Where an extended family member was present in the household, such family member was usually the grandmother or the grandfather in the case of households of non-working children, and only the grandmother in the case of households of child labourers. Further research is required to understand the role of grandmothers and grandfathers in the families of both non-working children and child labourers, however, the study showed that the grandmother is more likely to be present in the absence of one of the parents, especially the mother³⁹. This suggests that the grandmothers, rather than the fathers, take over child rearing in the absence of the mothers.

3.3 Children's profiles

In total 314 children across five locations were interviewed. Of those, 152 were identified as child labourers and 162 as non-working children.

The average age of child labourers was higher than that of non-working respondents. This finding does not mean that children under the age of 13 or around 13 years of age do not work in the selected locations. Rather, it reflects the sampling bias. **While the study was not designed to capture risk, it is possible that children who are currently not working, may become child labourers at an older age.**

³⁹ The study question enquiring into household composition did not seek to identify the reason for the absence of the mothers, which could have been caused by divorce, illness, death or migration.

Table 8. Type of child respondents

Location	Child labourers	Non-working children
Hlaing Thar Yar	32	24
Sanchaung	21	39
Chaungzon	23	25
Mawlamyine	25	25
Pathein	51	49
Total	152	162

The study showed that boys started working at an earlier age than girls, except in Chaungzon. On average boys started working below the age of 13 in all of the surveyed locations, except Hlaing Thar Yar. In Chaungzon, children reported having started work earlier than in other surveyed locations.

Table 9. Average age of child respondents

Location	Girl labourers	Boy labourers	Non-working girls	Non-working boys
Hlaing Thar Yar	15.08	16.13	10.8	11.92
Sanchaung	15	14.81	13.26	14.20
Chaungzon	15.50	14.69	13.25	13.23
Mawlamyine	15.15	14.92	11.67	12.54
Pathein	14.44	14	11.58	11.64

Table 10. Average age respondents started work

Location	Girls	Boys
Hlaing Thar Yar	13.58	13.38
Sanchaung	13.20	12.40
Chaungzon	11.30	11.54
Mawlamyine	13.38	12.92
Pathein	12.36	12

The study did not look specifically into the migration status of the interviewed non-working children. Answers to proxy questions regarding the amount of time they have spent at their current locations suggest that the majority of them came from somewhere else, *usually in early childhood*. In Sanchaung, for example, the children arrived in the area when they were infants, while in Hlaing Thar Yar, the children indicated having been in the area on average 5.5 years, having presumably arrived with their migrant parents.

In the case of child labourers, all of them appeared to be migrants in all five locations. In Hlaing Thar Yar, Chaungzon, Mawlamyine and Pathein, the children appear to have arrived at around the age of 5. The area of Sanchaung stands out, however, as the average duration of stay

in the area by boy labourers was 7 months and girls 1.8 years. This indicates that they migrated to the area for work.

Both child labourers and non-working children reported living in predominantly nuclear households, with parents and siblings without the presence of extended family members. None of the children reported living alone, and in the case of those living in single-headed households, both child labourers and non-working children were more likely to live in households headed by the mother rather than the father.

In terms of housing quality, the study found that both child labourers and non-working children had a similar likelihood of living in a specific type of house depending on their location rather than their status, with the exception of Sanchaung and Pathein, where child labourers were significantly more likely to live in bamboo housing than non-working children who lived mostly in brick and wooden housing.

According to the children, parents of child labourers and non-working children hold predominantly low-skilled jobs, however, fathers of non-working children work in a wider variety of sectors. Almost half of the child labourers and non-working children responded their mothers were housewives. The most common earning activities for mothers of child labourers and non-working children were street hawking, shop keeping and farming.

Child labourers and non-working children reported that their fathers were mostly construction site workers, casual labourers or trishaw drivers. It was also common for fathers of child labourers to be street hawkers, farmers, and fishermen, while fathers of non-working children were commonly shopkeepers and motorcycle taxi drivers. In Sanchaung, the jobs were more varied, with non-working children reporting fathers' jobs to be: medical doctor, party member, government informer and broker. Only 5% of fathers of non-working children and 4% of fathers of child labourers said they did not have a job.

It is noteworthy that among child labourers, 7% said that their mother and 20% said that their father had passed away. The study did not establish when or how the parents passed away, and whether this impacted the child's decision to work, however, it did note that among non-working children, only 2% said their mother and 10% reported that their father had passed away.

Among child labourers, only 11% of the boys and 9% of the girls said they attended school. Among the non-working children, 92% of the boys and 99% of the girls said they went to school.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ The non-working children who do not attend school did not specify what they did.

4. Knowledge, aptitudes and practices

4.1 Knowledge

Parents

Awareness of and knowledge about child labour among parents do not appear to be widespread, which may be due to people's limited access to media and other sources of information. What is more, it appears that parents of child labourers were less informed than parents of non-working children about the issue. Indeed, the study found that parents of non-working children across all surveyed areas, except for Chaungzon, were more aware about child labour than parents of child labourers. In Chaungzon, a slightly higher percentage of mothers of child labourers were aware of child labour than mothers of non-working children, which may be attributable to awareness raising conducted by a local CSO "Friendly Child" in July 2014.

While parents of non-working children in Sanchaung reported having better access to a variety of information sources about child labour, ranging from international organisations to the government to mass media (including the radio), the majority of parents of child labourers and non-working children reported finding out about child labour from their neighbours, suggesting that community awareness raising might be an effective way to spread information about the issue.

Table 11. Child labour awareness

Location	Parents of child labourers		Parents of non-working children	
	Mothers	Fathers	Mothers	Fathers
Hlaing Thar Yar	26%	32%	30%	71%
Sanchaung	N/A	N/A	54%	38%
Chaungzon	28%	17%	25%	N/A
Mawlamyine	26%	33%	50%	50%
Pathein	27%	31%	46%	33%

Parents of both child labourers and non-working children reported being aware of the hazards involved in child labour. The physical hazards that children face depend on their work. In the case of Hlaing Thar Yar and Pathein, where parents reported children working mostly in factories and at construction sites, dust and fumes, extreme heat, loud noise and heights were considered the main hazards. In Chaungzon, parents of child labourers said that their children were predominantly exposed to extreme heat, dust and fumes, which are consistent with their work in agriculture. In Mawlamyine, dust and fumes as well as exposure to gas and fire were reported as the principal hazards faced by working children who were mainly employed as rubber tappers or waiters. Across all locations, parents reported that the helmet was the main piece of protective gear that children wore, followed by a bodysuit and gloves in Hlaing Thar Yar, Chaungzon and Mawlamyine. Observation at studied locations did not reveal that children wore protective clothing.

Few parents reported their children being injured as a result of work. Based on their reports, however, it appears that factories are places where children face the broadest range of risks and have experienced injuries and ailments such as burns, shortness of breath, sore eyes, fevers and extreme fatigue. This does not mean, however, that children are more likely to be hurt in factories. Indeed, this is a sensitive issue, and further, qualitative research is required to determine the range and level of risk experienced by children in the various work environments.

Children's work is not risk free, however, parents of non-working children are more likely to recognise that children face physical, psychological and social risks than parents of child labourers. Both types of parents identified *physical risk* as the most important faced by child labourers, with 56% of parents of child labourers and 71% of parents of non-working children reporting that work could be physically harmful to the children.

Children

Children did not describe their situation in terms of rights. Their responses indicated that they have obligations towards their families and these obligations can be met through diligence at school or work. The concept of child rights does not necessarily fit the concept of child and family in the context of Myanmar where family well-being precedes the individual's comfort and where young people are expected to pay homage and respect to their elders whose authority prevails.

It is not possible to state with certainty that all the interviewed children do not have knowledge about labour rights, as a question regarding labour rights was not posed to them. Nevertheless, child labourers, who described working long hours and being unable to attend school, did not appear to question their situation, and did not indicate any awareness as to the illegality or inappropriateness of their labour conditions.

Government representatives, civil society members, employers & workers

There is growing awareness of child labour as a social phenomenon to be tackled. *Eleven Media*, a Myanmar news outlet available in the Myanmar and English languages, publicised in 2014 the news that the Minister of Labour, Employment and Social Security signed an agreement with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) to participate in a project to end forced labour by 2015.⁴¹ In the same article the outlet stated that '*Eleven Media believes that the government is responsible to put an end to forced child labour by 2015. It must cooperate with the ILO to eliminate the worst forms of child labour and protect the rights of children. Only this way can the next generation be sure of a brighter future.*'⁴² This is a step towards publicising child labour-related information and improving public knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon, while putting it into a rights-based framework.

'Eleven Media believes that the government is responsible to put an end to forced child labour by 2015. It must cooperate with the ILO to eliminate the worst forms of child labour and protect the rights of children. Only this way can the next generation be sure of a brighter future.'

⁴¹ Ratification of ILO Convention No 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour in December 2013.

⁴² Eleven Media, "Children's Rights Must Not Be Ignored", May 5, 2014, accessed at: http://www.elevenmyanmar.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5967:children-s-rights-must-not-be-ignored&catid=57:editorial&Itemid=406.

The study found little evidence of knowledge about child rights. Government representatives, civil servants and policemen interviewed for this study appear to be aware that Myanmar ratified the Convention on Rights of the Child, however, they were unable to explain how the provisions of the Convention or how it translates into domestic legislation and its enforcement.⁴³ Children’s rights were listed as being *‘the right to life, the right to be developed, the right to be protected and the right to be inclusive’* in addition to the right to *‘freedom and happiness’*. These rights, however, are rarely respected in Myanmar where children have first and foremost obligations towards their families, and their individual well-being appears secondary to that of their families.

It is worth noting that none of the interviewees from the government and related bodies showed awareness of Myanmar having ratified Convention 182, which calls for the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour including slavery and hazardous work.

In all areas where interviews took place with adult workers, they remarked on the presence of migrant child labourers. In Patheingyi, for example, which was described as *“the last place before the sea”*, workers remarked on the presence of children from the outer Delta – victims of the 2008 Nargis who had moved to Patheingyi and Rakhay State. In Mon State, children from Karen and Shan States as well as Burman children were mentioned, while in Yangon, children are known *“to come looking for jobs”*. Internal migration of children with families and independent children appears to be an important factor in child labour and deserves specific attention.

4.2 Attitudes

Parents

Parents of child labourers were more likely to agree that children could do the same work as adults, especially in Chaungzon where 67% of parents of child labourers were of this opinion. The parents of child labourers were also significantly more likely to agree that children are easier to control as employees than adults, except in Patheingyi where 75% of parents of non-working children believed so as opposed to 69% of parents of child labourers. Both parents of child labourers and non-working children thought mostly that children worked to supplement family income and the overwhelming majority believed that children who worked needed some assistance – presumably financial – to keep them out of the workplace. In Hlaing Thar Yar 77% of parents of child labourers thought so, in Chaungzon and Mawlamyine 100% of them said so, and in Patheingyi 90% of parents of child labourers believed that children who work were in need of assistance.

Parents of child labourers were more likely to agree that children could do the same work as adults, especially in Chaungzon where 67% of parents of child labourers were of this opinion

⁴³ The study did not specifically enquire about the Convention on Rights of the Child, however, the question ‘Do children have rights?’, which was asked to government representatives, community leaders and members of CSOs, etc. was met with a reply evoking the Convention. This suggests that ‘rights’ are understood to exist in the legal sense, however, not as a result of society’s attitudes/ actions towards children.

Parents of child labourers and non-working children listed the government as the primary entity that should help child labourers. Parents of non-working children thought the community should be next followed by the children's families and international organisations. Parents of child labourers placed the burden to help on themselves, followed by international organisations and then the community. These make for important differences in the parents' perceptions as to who should help and there is room to explore the role of the community in helping monitor and eliminate child labour.

Vocational training is often presented as an alternative to academic education for child labourers. In order to be successful, however, it requires a significant buy-in from the children's parents and guardians in addition to employers when the latter are involved in the process. The present study found that less than 10% of parents of child labourers in Hlaing Thar Yar and Mawlamyine and less than 2% of their peers in Patheingyi had received what they thought to be vocational training. In Chaungzon, none of the parents of child labourers reported having received vocational training.

Parents of child labourers who had received vocational training – albeit very few – were more likely to desire it for their children than those who had not. Women reported sewing and computer usage as the mostly commonly received vocational training, while men's experiences were more varied and ranged from construction to mechanic to traditional healing skills.⁴⁴

Among the parents of non-working children, 17.3% of those based in Hlaing Thar Yar, 53.1% in Sanchaung, 5% in Chaungzon, 13.3% in Mawlamyine and 12.5% in Patheingyi said they had received some vocational training. This finding suggests that parents who had received vocational training – or another form of skills development may benefit from employment that prevents them from sending their children to work. Further research is required to understand the relationship between vocational training for parents and the impact on child labour.

Parental attitudes towards gender did not reveal any specific preference for one gender over another, although girls emerged as having more household chores associated with housekeeping and looking after family members, while boys' household chores were mainly limited to running errands. This was the information gathered from parents of child labourers and non-working children. When it came to working for an income, parents of child labourers did not indicate any noticeable differences in the working hours of girls and boys, and both sexes were reported to experience extreme fatigue due to work.

Table 12. Percentage of children who want to return to school

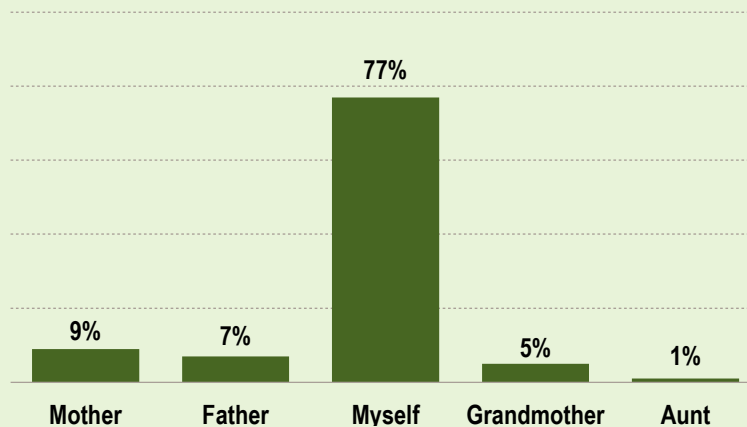
Sex	Age		
	Under 13 Years	13-15 Years	16+
Girls	39%	29%	34%
Boys	52%	26%	41%

⁴⁴ It is important to note that the number of adults who reported having received vocational training was so low that we cannot draw any conclusion as to general trends in skill acquisition among women and men.

Children

Children who drop out of school do so mostly for financial reasons, either due to the cost of education, the need to work for money or lack of interest, which needs to be understood within the context of household poverty. Less than half the children, except for boys under 13 years of age, expressed a desire to return to school. The majority of children reported that they did not want to return to school mainly because they did not like to study and because they liked to work, rather than due to cost. Indeed, 80% of the interviewed boys and 83% of the girls said they liked their jobs. Children in the 13-15 and 16+ age groups, irrespective of gender, were the most likely to say that they liked their jobs. This is an important finding, which requires further study to understand what contributes to children liking their jobs and what makes them not interested in studying.⁴⁵ The latter has implications for rehabilitation or vocational training incentives, which require academic commitment.

Chart 1. Decision Makers



Interviews with children revealed that the decision to work was predominantly made by the children themselves, followed by their mothers. The finding suggests that the children are willing to work and that they have a significant amount of autonomy in the decision-making process. This finding, however, needs to be understood within the context of family in Myanmar described earlier, where children are expected not only to respect their parents and elders, but are also expected to take on their share of responsibilities in the household, which includes contributing financially when parents are unable to provide fully for the family – as suggested by adult interviewees in this study.

The decision to work, therefore, does not necessarily reflect the children's willingness to work; rather, it reflects the children's willingness to meet their family obligations and their desire to help when the family is in need. Indeed, when asked why they work, most of the children of all ages and across all locations said it was to supplement the family income or to help pay family debts. While this indicates a cultural trait, it does not eliminate the fact that household poverty drives the children into this obligation. Indeed, non-working children did not express any obligation towards the family, although presumably it exists, and may have to be

⁴⁵ The questionnaire administered to children did not capture why children liked their jobs. Anecdotal evidence suggests that they enjoy the ability to fulfill their family obligations and the apparent independence that working gives them when compared with constraints experienced in school.

met in adult life. As such, the present study does not lead to the conclusion that child labour is a result of a cultural norm.

Government Representatives, Civil Society Members, Employers & Workers

Child labour is an accepted social phenomenon, albeit community leaders appear to be able to recognise its negative impacts on the children’s future opportunities. In a society, where obedience, ‘kind attitude’ and ‘good character’ are prized, child labour is seen as a means to protect children unable to attend school from idleness and delinquency. Nevertheless, child labourers are frequently generalised by social workers from local organisations as aggressive and as bearers of an “inferiority complex” compared to non-working children.

In a society, where obedience, ‘kind attitude’ and ‘good character’ are prized, child labour is seen as a means to protect children unable to attend school from idleness and delinquency.

Some of the community leaders expressed the belief that child labourers are in a better position than non-working poor children in host communities, due to the attention of civil society organisations and other donors apparently concerned about their plight. One general practitioner in Yangon’s Hlaing Thar Yar township said that child labourers “*have more advantage than the children living in the community because NGOs, INGOs and other donors are willing to help them. You can see it recently, many organisations come and gave presents to them for Christmas. And political parties also came to donate rice, food, money, etc.*”

Adult workers expressed concern about child labour’s impact on adult employment wages, rather than the working conditions or hours experienced by the children. Children earn less than adults, although they also perform work that requires fewer skills. Nevertheless, many adult labourers have few if any skills and see the children’s presence in the workplace as a threat to their own livelihood. Those same adults, who cannot earn enough, often require their own children to work to supplement the family income, creating a-lose pattern.

In interviews with civil society members and government representatives, the study found that attitudes towards gender roles are not consistent. On the one hand, many adults expressed the opinion that boys and girls are equal, and that there does not exist discrimination in education and work against girls – i.e. it is not that boys are granted priority access to education, or that girls are considered unfit for certain jobs. On the other hand, the overwhelming majority believed that “*any type of housework*” is the most suitable work for girls whose role is closely linked to the family. A township officer in Chaungzon said that “*it is an honour to have a daughter in the family. We have great expectations for her. She can extend our family life*” expressing a belief that was common among other interlocutors relating to the girls’ role of careers and child bearers.

In addition, it appeared to be a general sentiment among people that city life is easier than rural life, and that it offers more opportunities to both girls and boys. In the case of girls, it offers a possibility to move beyond traditional family-oriented roles. As one representative of the Ministry of Home Affairs in Mon State said “*in rural, girls have high expectation, in urban girls have beautiful lives*”, suggesting that girls in urban areas have less gender-related obligations and therefore better lives. Those who saw urban settings as offering better education and work opportunities resulting in relevant independence echoed his sentiment.

More research is required to understand gender dynamics affecting children in various settings in Myanmar, and the extent to which they impact on education and child labour.⁴⁶

4.3 Practices

Parents

The risk of hiring child labourers in Myanmar is high, not only because of the abundance of children from poor families but also because it is often difficult to ascertain an individual’s age. According to a report on labour in the oil and gas sector by the Institute for Human Rights and Business, ‘birth registration in urban areas was reported at 94%, but in rural areas the rate was only 64%.’⁴⁷ Anecdotal evidence also suggests that children may use older siblings’ or friends’ national registration cards (NRCs) to prove that they are older than they are. The present study has shown, however, that employers are not only exposed to the risk of hiring children but that they hire children knowingly, usually to help the poor families whose members ask for jobs for their children.

Children of parents in Chaungzon and Mawlamyine started work at 11.65 and 12.80 years of age respectively, that is earlier than children of parents in Hlaing Thar Yar and Pathein. In Chaungzon, the majority of parents said that their children worked in fisheries, thatching or farming followed by the construction sector. In Mawlamyine, the children worked predominantly as waiters or in rubber tapping. In Hlaing Thar Yar, 49.1% and in Pathein, 35.8% of the children were employed in factories followed by 25.4% and 15.1% in the construction sector. In all cases, it appears that children were sent to work not because they were of an appropriate age, but in line with the availability of certain jobs, which are predisposed to hire children for low-skilled, repetitive tasks, such packaging products in Hlaing Thar Yar’s factories, or rubber tapping in Mon State.

Table 13. Average age interviewed child labourers started work

Location	Average Age
Hlaing Thar Yar	13.82
Sanchaung	N/A
Chaungzon	11.65
Mawlamyine	12.80
Pathein	13.72

⁴⁶ The 2014 OECD Social Institutions & Gender Index on Myanmar reiterates the point that there is not sex-disaggregated data on child labour in the country, although it notes that girls are particularly vulnerable to trafficking for sexual exploitation and violence. In addition, citing UNICEF, the Index notes that slightly more males than females are enrolled in secondary education, although access to primary education appears to be equal. See <http://www.genderindex.org/country/myanmar> .

⁴⁷ Institute for Human Rights and Business, Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business, The Danish Institute for Human Rights, “Project Level Impacts: Labour” in Myanmar Oil & Gas Sector-Wide Impact Assessment (SIWA) p. 117, accessed at: <http://www.myanmar-responsiblebusiness.org/pdf/SWIA/Oil-Gas/10-Labour.pdf> .

Chart 2. Incidence of child labour

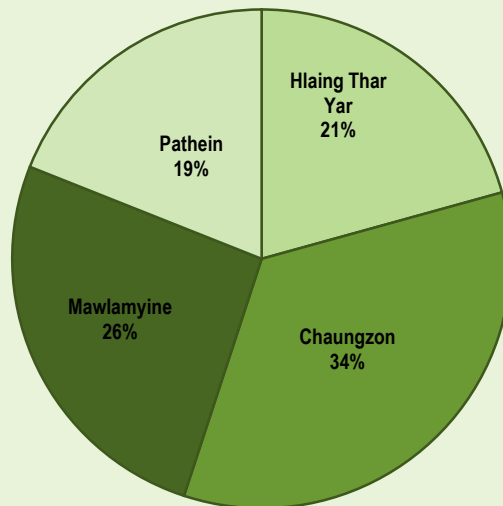
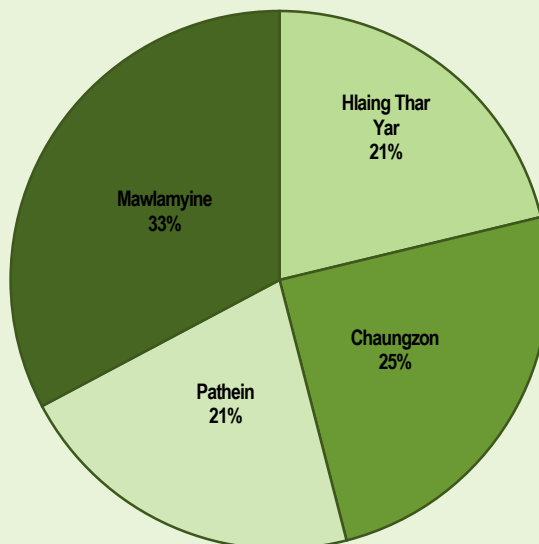


Chart 3. Children who study and work



The highest incidence of child labour - that is the highest percentage of child labour from the total households interviewed per township - was found in Chaungzon, followed by Mawlamyine, Hlaing Thar Yar and Pathein. In Chaungzon and Mawlamyine, the parents said their children worked predominantly in agricultural activities, the same as themselves, suggesting that the children follow in the parents' footsteps not only at a higher rate but also at a younger age than their peers in other locations. According to the ILO, "60 per cent of all child labourers in the age group 5-17 years work in agriculture, including farming, fishing, aquaculture, forestry, and livestock."⁴⁸

According to the parents, the majority of children who work drop out of school. Combining school and work is not easy for children who tend to work long daily hours, often six days a week in addition to spending at least an hour a day on household chores, which are mostly running errands, buying groceries and specifically for girls, cooking and cleaning.

⁴⁸ International Labour Organisation, "Child Labour in Agriculture", accessed at: <http://www.ilo.org/ipec/areas/Agriculture/lang--en/index.htm> .

In Chaungzon, where the mothers were the primary decision makers in sending their children to work, the youngest children combined work and school. It is important to note here that grade 5 is often the highest level reached by most children before they stop schooling, especially in rural areas where middle and high schools are scarce and located far from home, and where poverty tends to push more children into work, often alongside their parents. The children in grade 5 are at risk of dropping out of school.

The parents reported that 78% of children who work attended a government school in the past, with most not progressing beyond primary or early middle school. In Chaungzon, children appeared to drop out of school at an earlier stage than in other study areas, mostly due to higher levels of poverty in the area and lack of access to schools. In Pathein, the option of continuing school until higher grades may reflect the fact that interviews took place in areas where schools are more accessible.

Table 14. In School child labourers grade attendance

Location	Average grade
Hlaing Thar Yar	7
Chaungzon	5
Mawlamyine	8
Pathein	10

According to interviews with parents, only 6% of the children across all locations never attended formal school. Among those 6%, half never went to school because they could not afford it or had to work and 10% were not interested.⁴⁹ Parents are most likely to pull their children out of schools at the end of primary school when the cost of education increases and school accessibility becomes more difficult.

Table 15. Out of school child labourers’ grade completion

Location	Average Grade
Hlaing Thar Yar	5
Chaungzon	4
Mawlamyine	6
Pathein	7

An estimated 10% of Myanmar’s population lives abroad, and estimates are not available for internal migration. What is certain, however, is that labour migration, both seasonal and long-term, is a widespread phenomenon throughout the country, which affects children in numerous ways, especially those who accompany their parents who are labour migrants or children who migrate independently for work. In all surveyed areas, migration of children and their families was associated with children dropping out of school and going into child labour. It

⁴⁹ Given the young age of children discussed, is it likely that the parents were not interested in educating their children, rather than that the children were not interested in education.

is difficult to ascertain whether migration causes these phenomena or vice versa, however, a relationship between the two exists, as people move around and out of the country in search of better livelihoods. Specific research into this dynamic is needed.

In the case of Mon State, for example, two migratory flows co-exist. There is the outbound migration of adults and youth, predominantly to Thailand, and the inbound migration of people from other parts of Myanmar in search of employment on rubber plantations, in fisheries and related industries, especially in areas affected by outbound migration. In Hlaing Thar Yar and Sanchaung, inbound migrants make for a steady supply of labour in factories and on construction sites respectively as well as numerous service-oriented industries. In Patheingyi, migrants from the regional countryside arrive in search of work and children find work in the service sectors, factories and on construction sites.

The parents of child labourers reported that in most cases the decision to work is made by the mother or the child. The children's decision to work, however, needs to be understood within the context of family expectations and obligations. All of the interviewed parents and other adults expressed the view that children have an obligation to help their families, including financially when the family is poor.

The finding that children work to help their families is supported by the fact that the overwhelming majority of them gave their salaries to their families. In Hlaing Thar Yar, 77% of the children gave all or part of the money they earned to their families, followed by 68% in Chaungzon, 97% in Mawlamyine and 91% of the children in Patheingyi. In Hlaing Thar Yar, 33% of the parents said that the child spent part of the money on themselves, however, in Chaungzon, Mawlamyine and Patheingyi none of the parents reported this. Where the children did not give their salaries to their parents, the children's employers did.

Children

The study found that children drop out of school to work. While 92 % of non-working boys and 99% of non-working girls reported attending school, only 11% of boys and 9% of girls who work reported still attending school. The overwhelming majority of child labourers - 94% of the boys and 100% of the girls - who dropped out of school to work did attend school at an earlier time. The majority of them finished primary school, 60% of the boys and 63% of the girls, while a third reached middle school, 32% of the boys and 30% of the girls. Only 2% of the boys and 7% of the girls had reached high school before dropping out. These percentages reinforce the finding that work interferes with children's ability to reach higher education.

Both child labourers and non-working children who attend school are not prone to missing school and when they do, it is mainly due to vacation or illness. In-school child labourers did not report missing school due to work, and appeared to keep the same attendance standards as non-child labourers.

Child labourers reported working in low-skilled jobs. It is rare for children to work two jobs. In the course of this study, 95% of the boys and 97% of the girls reported having only one job. In the case of boys, the boys under 13 years of age and between 13-15 years old were found to work predominantly in teashops where they served, while 16+ year old boys were found to work mostly on construction sites where they carried rocks or built. In the case of girls, 13-15 year old ones and 16+ ones said they worked mostly in garment and food factories followed by

restaurants. These jobs, while common for boys and girls, do not represent the full range of employment opportunities for children, which include water delivery, rubbish collection, domestic service, farming, rubber tapping and fishing to list but some.

Children work long hours. The majority of children across all age groups and in all surveyed locations reported working more than 40 hours over six days a week. These findings indicate that over 80% of interviewed children across all locations could be classified as child labourers.

Table 16. Children who work 40 + hours weekly

Sex	Age		
	Under 13 Years	13-15 Years	16+
Girls	86%	78%	82%
Boys	80%	76%	84%

Girls and boys do not receive much time off their work. During a working day, 73% of interviewed boys and 69% of girls said they were given a lunch break, although they did not specify the length of this break. As many as 13% of the girls and 4% of boys reported not receiving any time off during the day, however, those were among the children who worked less than 40 hours a week. In terms of weekly time off, 31% of the boys and 48% of the girls reported having one day off a week, while as many as 33% of the boys and 23% of the girls reported not receiving any time off.

Table 17. Emotional fatigue

	Girls	Boys
Very Tiring	5%	5%
Tiring	13%	23%
Little Tiring	30%	21%
Not Tiring	43%	44%
Not Tiring At All	9%	7%

Despite long hours, children of all ages and at all study locations reported that they were treated well by their bosses and their colleagues. Children did say they were ‘yelled’ at by the boss, however, they did not perceive this as abuse. It is noteworthy that the study was not designed to precisely capture cases of abuse, and that further, qualitative research is required to study specific vulnerabilities and dynamics of exploitation and abuse that girls and boys may face in various working environments.

Children of all ages and across all locations, regardless of the work they did, did not report high levels of physical and emotional fatigue, although boys were more likely to report being physically and emotionally tired than girls. This is surprising given the number of hours and days a week the children work and may indicate a social desirability bias on the part of the

children.⁵⁰ It is noteworthy that while overall boys appeared to experience more fatigue, when it came to specific jobs/ activities, the results differed.

Boys who work ‘carrying rocks’ and ‘building’, that is, boys who work on construction sites, reported the highest levels of physical fatigue. In the case of both girls and boys, however, ‘serving’ [in teashops and restaurants] was the main job activity and in this case girls and boys felt differently about the job. While 31% of the girls described serving as ‘not tiring’, 65% of the boys said it was ‘not tiring’, which may be the result of treatment by management, customers or peers.⁵¹ This difference in perception, albeit on a smaller scale, was also observed for other *shared* activities. Further research is necessary to determine why girls and boys experience different levels of fatigue performing the same jobs.⁵²

Table 18. Physical fatigue

	Girls	Boys
Very Tiring	6%	8%
Tiring	12%	20%
Little Tiring	34%	37%
Not Tiring	44%	32%
Not Tiring At All	4%	3%

The study found a difference in the way that girls and boys spend their time away from work. Girls, regardless of age and location, reported that their two main activities during time off work were helping their families around the house or helping their families by running errands. Boys, regardless of age and location, reported that their main off-work activity was playing with friends followed by helping their families around the house or by running errands. This finding is consistent with gender roles in Myanmar where girls’ societal roles are associated predominantly with the household where they are expected to look after their families.

⁵⁰ In social science research, the ‘social desirability bias’ refers to the respondents’ tendency to answer survey questions in a way that will be perceived positively. In the case of this study, it is possible this bias was present when children talked about their attitudes towards their jobs or their earnings.

⁵¹ Anecdotal evidence suggests that when girls and boys work side by side in a service setting, the girls tend to do more work, with the boys more frequently standing by chatting or waiting to be called to serve. This dynamic warrants further study.

⁵² In the case of girls living with parents, their work-related fatigue may be compounded by fatigue acquired in the household when performing chores.

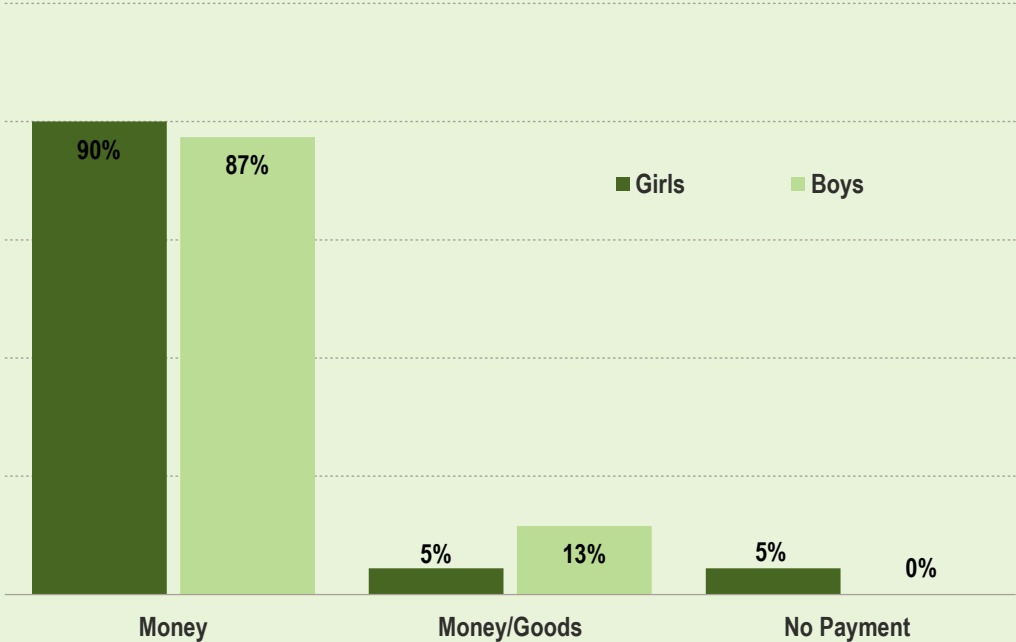
Table 19. Girls' average monthly wages by location

Location	Age		
	Under 13 Years	13-15 Years	16+
Hlaing Thar Yar	...	48900 MMK	89700 MMK
Sanchaung	...	42500 MMK	63300 MMK
Chaugzon	...	38300 MMK	495000 MMK
Mawlamyine	52500 MMK	60000 MMK	53750 MMK
Patheingyi	36000 MMK	93500 MMK	56300 MMK

Children work for money. Of girls, 90% said they were paid cash for their work, 5% reported receiving cash and goods and 5% said they did not receive money (the money was given directly to the parents). Of boys, 83% said they were paid in cash, and 17% said they received cash and goods.

Few children responded to the question regarding their monthly earnings. In the case of younger children, most of whom are paid daily, the children were unable to calculate their monthly earnings due to the irregularity of their working hours and days. There are also cases, mostly in teashops and restaurant settings, where parents receive an advance payment for their children's work, sometimes worth 6-12 months of wages. In such cases, children are not aware of the amounts they earn.

Chart 4. Payment



The average monthly wage amounts per location are only indicative of what happens at each place. What we do observe is that children earn more in the surveyed urban areas, most likely due to the variety of work available and a higher cost of living. The potentially higher earnings in urban settings need to be kept in mind as a possible pull factor for migrant families with children who are sent to work, or for rural-dwelling families who send their children away to work.

Children reported earning the least in teashops and restaurants, especially the younger children. It is possible that service jobs pay less because oftentimes boys and girls receive accommodation and food as part of the work package. Children reported earning the most on construction sites and in garment and food factories.

The discrepancies in reported wages, however, are very high. These discrepancies are reflective of the children's age and actual tasks in a given setting, e.g. a 13.5 year-old boy who carries rocks at a construction site reported earning 12,000MMK/ month, while a 16 year-old who 'builds' reported earning 180,000MMK/ month. In addition, the reported wage amounts varied vastly from what the employers said they paid children, with the lowest reported monthly wage in a garment factory being 35,000 MMK and the highest 65,000 MMK.

Overall, there do not appear to be established wages for children, however, they do appear to increase with age, time spent working and acquisition of skills. It is telling that among the children who are under 13 years old, 100% of the girls and 89% of the boys reported not having learnt any skills in their jobs.⁵³ Among the 13-15 year olds, 76% of the girls and 82% of the boys said they had not learnt any skills, while 56% of 16 + year old girls and 68% of the boys in the same age group said they had not learnt anything. These numbers suggest that with time, children can and do acquire some skills throughout their employment, although the majority do not feel this to be the case.

Table 20. Boys' average wages by location

Location	Age		
	Under 13 Years	13-15 Years	16+
Hlaing Thar Yar	...	82500 MMK	144000 MMK
Sanchaung	32500 MMK	35000 MMK	73000 MMK
Chaungzon	33000 MMK	23400 MMK	34200 MMK
Mawlamyine	67500 MMK	90000 MMK	111600 MMK
Patheingyi	47500 MMK	45500 MMK	87000 MMK

⁵³ The study did not define skills, however, it did presume (given that almost all the children had attended school at some point in their lives) that they could read, write and do basic arithmetic, having learnt to do that at school. By not defining what was meant by 'skills', the study allowed the children to express whether they thought they had learnt something through work or not.

Government representatives, civil society members, employers & workers

Employers reported hiring children in response to the parents' or the children's demand or request, rather than through active recruitment. While some admitted that children are indeed a cheaper form of labour than adults, they also said that children work according to their ability and build skills over time. One employer recognized that children face risk at work because *"every job has risk"*, however, as one teashop owner in Mon State said, working is good for children because they can help their families and *"they become more active, good at calculating (Mathematics), more intelligent and confident"*. Employers, like parents and community members see work as a character-building and educational activity in the absence of formal schooling.

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Child labour is not only common today. It appears to have been common in the past. The overwhelming majority of interviewed parents, employers and CSO/CBO/NGO employees worked as children, usually in jobs alongside their parents, especially in rural areas where educational and diverse livelihood opportunities were and continue to be limited. The study did not enquire into their past working hours, conditions and earnings, and is unable to qualify their experience as child labour. Today, these respondents consider that having worked as children was *"normal"* and *"necessary"* *"to help their struggling families"*. It is important to note, however, that this does not mean that a freestanding cultural norm promoting and condoning child labour exists. Those who worked did so to help their poor families, suggesting that poverty was the driving factor behind their need to work. It is important to note, however, that the reproduction of the cycle of poverty appears to have created a *"culture"* of child labour in modern Myanmar that allows for the phenomenon to be accepted and justified but that is not compatible with the country's stated development goals. It is poverty that needs to be addressed before the custom of relying on children before they reach adulthood becomes even more normalized condemning a portion of the population to the practice.

The study did not find a unanimous agreement as to the relationship between children working and dropping out of school, with some teachers claiming that children experienced difficulties at school due to work and had to drop out, with others saying that work did not interfere with the children's schooling. It is possible that in the latter case, the children did not work full time – although research indicates that child labourers work mostly full time – or that the teachers did not want to admit to having problematic students or express doubt about their ability to interact with and teach students who are labourers.



It is important to note that although not directly captured by the KAP study, anecdotal evidence gathered by My-PEC through consultations with various stakeholders identified a huge need to improve poor children's access to quality public education, without the need to enrol in private tuition/tutor classes, which their classroom teachers themselves run and which are *"compulsory"* if children want to pass school. The latter practice, which subsidises public

teachers' meagre salaries, precludes children from equally accessing affordable education pushing them into child labour.

Other community observers, such as religious figures⁵⁴, observed that child labourers did not continue their education and felt that an appropriate educational service for child labourers should address this issue. They warned, however, against taking a generic approach. Vocational training interventions, for example, were said to not always be successful, and it has been suggested that this is due to the children's need to earn money.⁵⁵ According to the Assistant Director of the Provincial Education Department in Patheingyi "*there are some vocational trainings in villages but children come if they are paid to come, if not, they don't. So those trainings are not very successful*". Indeed, vocational training does not appear to have a clear definition and understanding, with some interviewees identifying it with government-led training institutions, some associating it with NGOs and similar organizations, while others still believing that work is an equivalent of vocational training.

⁵⁴ Buddhist and Christian religious figures were interviewed for the KAP study. One team supervisor reported that she approached a Muslim religious centre in Hlaing Thar Yar where she wanted to interview an Imam, however, her request was refused and she felt that her intentions were misinterpreted as she was followed for the remainder of the day.

⁵⁵ Interviewees did not specify the kind of vocational training initiatives they cited, however, it is possible that they referred to activities conducted by NGO. It is not always clear what is understood as vocational training. In one of the surveyed locations, Hlaing Thar Yar, people interpreted training in disaster preparedness as vocational training.

Conclusion

The analysis in this report is not meant as a generalization of childhood and child labour experiences in Myanmar. Rather, it presumes and discusses the knowledge, attitudes and practices of research participants who are key stakeholders in child labour, including the children themselves, to gain a deeper understanding of the drivers of the phenomenon in this country.

The study subsequently found that the major driving factor of child labour is poverty, which is compounded by societal attitudes and lax legislation as well as lack of educational and training opportunities. What is more, child labour is seen as an antidote to household poverty and a way to ensure the child labourers' survival.

While child labour is perceived as an antidote to poverty today, it is detrimental to the children's and their families' futures and there is no evidence that the children get to enjoy social mobility in later life. Indeed, judging from the fact that most do not feel that they acquire what they consider to be professional skills at work, it would appear that they will remain in low-skilled, low-paid labour in adulthood, possibly also sending their future children into the workforce at an early age.

The difference in education is marked between parents of child labourers and parents of non-working children, however, this alone cannot explain the tendency to send children to work. Overall, the occupations of parents whose children are labourers and those whose children do not work are not very different, although parents of non-working children are more likely to hold middle-skilled jobs. There are other factors at play, which impact child labour, such as the parents' age and the number of children they have, their location and socio-economic status, possibly health and access to support networks and services among other social institutions and structures.

Child labour is detrimental to children's education. Currently, the majority of children in Myanmar have access to primary education, and as the study shows, it is rare to find child labourers who have never been to school. It is evident, however, that the cost of education increases with age and the majority of children who drop out of school drop out at the end of primary school, around the age of 11. What is more, middle and high schools are scarce in the countryside making access to higher schooling difficult. Improved access and quality of education – including access to vocational training - will be necessary to gradually eliminate child labour.

Child labourers' physical and mental well-being is at risk, as admitted by many parents, the children themselves and community members who observed that children work long hours and often perform repetitive manual tasks that include carrying heavy loads and working in risky environments. Their diminished well-being and fatigue, as well as the continued need to earn money for their households, may interfere with interventions that aim to remove children from the workplace – e.g. by placing them in vocational training facilities – if this means that they cannot meet their family obligations.

In general, rehabilitation of child labourers is a complex issue. While the temptation may be there to send children back to school, not all are interested in returning and their

apparent interest or lack thereof may depend on their previous academic performance, attitude towards educational institutions and their representatives, and parental guidance. There is reason to believe that while children feel obliged to work to help their families to make ends meet, they do meet this obligation with awareness and determination and do not speak of themselves as victims of their circumstances.

The study shows that the elimination of child labour will not be easy without the involvement of Myanmar's government. The impetus for the elimination of the phenomenon must come from above and meet with efforts made by international and local development partners, civil society, communities and their leaders as well as the private sector to find lasting and viable solutions for poor children and youth. The road ahead will not be without obstacles, not in the least, because child labour is such an ingrained phenomenon throughout the country, and will require socio-economic, political and legislative measures that work towards educating the public, altering their attitudes and enforcing practices that favour the children's well-being today and as future adults.

Recommendations

Child labour is a complex phenomenon, which requires a long-term, multi-pronged approach to be eliminated. Given the economic situation of families of child labourers and attitudes towards children and their obligations towards the family, it is evident that efforts to eliminate child labour will require legislative action from the government, and the buy-in and cooperation of the family unit as well surrounding communities. Simultaneous efforts on numerous fronts are required, especially in:

- addressing poverty
- improving access to education and skills training
- creating a coherent legislative framework and enforcing legislation that protects children's rights and protects them from exploitation

Awareness raising and advocacy

Numerous legislative steps regarding children have been taken in Myanmar since 2011, such as the discussion to align the minimum age of employment in Myanmar with international standards, the revision of the Child Law and the ratification of Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour. Awareness raising and advocacy for children's rights, however, will be necessary to support the enforcement of related legislation destined for the protection of children as current societal attitudes do not correspond to legal prerogatives.

Given the limited reach of media in various parts of the country, and people's limited access to a variety of information sources, community-level awareness raising initiatives addressing short-term and long-term perils of child labour are recommended. These initiatives should be designed for parents, teachers, employers, health and community workers and other concerned individuals in an effort to create understanding of the issue and encourage a search for appropriate community-based solutions. Government staff should be targeted in specifically-designed trainings that takes into account their rank and influence and the impact those have on their ability to bring about change.

Two important groups to influence **are parents of non-working children** who expressed the opinion that the community should be the entity to assist child labourers following the government; **and non-working children** could be targeted for empowerment to encourage solidarity among their peers to think about their communities and well-being.

Specific times at which the phenomenon of child labour could be raised with the greater public are religious events and festivals, public concerts, which could be organised to this effect (much in the style of MTV Exit concert, which was organised in 2013 to raise awareness about human trafficking), school and/ or sporting events (e.g. chinlon competitions).

Awareness-raising initiatives should incorporate the five steps

Learn the Signs	Teach individuals how to spot child labour
Pledge to Act	Ask a group of people to agree – preferably in public – to take a step towards eliminating child labour in line with their station and possibility
Know How to Help	Teach people how to help, perhaps through the creation of a reporting mechanism
Tell Leaders to Act	Ask people to use their newly acquired political space to seek action from leaders (e.g. factory inspectors)
Spread the Word	If people are unable to pledge to act, cannot help others or do not feel comfortable with asking leaders to act, people can be asked to spread the word, either by distributing appropriate materials or by instructing others towards a reliable source of information (the study has found that word of mouth is particularly efficient in the Myanmar context, especially among women)

Famous personalities – from show business or religious leaders – could be engaged as advocates of child labour elimination. Messages could then be designed and recorded by the personalities on CDs or TV show/ music compilations to be diffused on cross-country buses, at tea shops and businesses as is custom in Myanmar.

Appropriate awareness-raising activities for people in authority, especially government representatives, should be conducted in a collaborative and mixed setting encouraging networking and communication across the ranks to empower people at various levels of authority to make decisions in favour of child labourers.

Legislation and policies

Existing legislation on child labour is fragmented and seldom enforced, which is attributed to weak institutions and lack of appropriate human resources. Nevertheless, legislation, which does not resonate with societal values and clashes with the socio-economic reality of the concerned population, will be difficult to enforce. Efforts should be made to address existing gaps and enhance legislation to become enforceable protecting children from exploitative practices. Rendering laws accessible, coherent and comprehensive to the public as well as empowering officials and community representatives in their implementing and monitoring roles is recommended.

Employment and livelihoods

The development of initiatives in support of youth and adult employment are encouraged as a way to prevent parental unemployment, which contributes to the persistence of child labour. Initiatives strengthening women's access to appropriate and paid employment can be specifically useful. Particular attention should be paid to women's specific duties in their households, with a view to providing employment that does not preclude them from fulfilling their roles, e.g. with regard to their children.

Parental poverty in rural and urban areas will require different approaches. Studies in countries like Vietnam, Ecuador or Brazil show that one of the means to fight child labour and ensure children's continued education is to increase the family income. A combination of initiatives, which ensure stable and sufficient incomes for women – who have been shown to

earn 11% less than men in Myanmar – the minimum wage for both women and men, the respect for labour rights and access to social services can all lead to improved well-being of families and therefore children.

Vocational training or skills development

Vocational training or skill development programmes for youth – especially those who cannot or do not want to be scholarized in late teenagehood - and adults, especially women who are currently unemployed, could be introduced with a focus on future employment. Surveys and interviews with employment seekers and employers to determine the kind of skills that may improve adults' access to employment and/or better employment should be combined with the development of any programmes to ensure utility and buy-in.

Research

A follow-up study to the present one will be required at the end of programming, in the 4th quarter of 2017. While it may not be possible to find the same individuals for the follow-up study due to human mobility, the closing of businesses and children growing up, efforts will be made to find the same category of respondents. Where possible, and not conflicting with anonymity requirements, names of key informants and their functions were recorded to facilitate follow-up. These should be consulted at the time of an end study.

In addition to an end study, further research is required to understand how household income, spending, health condition of adult earners and their support networks operate to identify factors that can protect children from labour, which forces them to forego the opportunity to develop. What is more, the relationship between parental education, skills and labour migration as well as child labour require deeper exploration. It is also recommended to conduct specific research on employers to gain a deeper understanding of the role and place of child labour within the broader labour dynamics. Specific research into the role of brokers, possible abuse in the workplace and the dynamic exploring the set-up of workplaces where girls and boys work side by side are recommended for better understanding of the circumstances and conditions experienced by child labourers. A deeper understanding of these surrounding factors will allow for tailored messages and effective prevention and rehabilitation programmes to be designed.

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