



Report Number: ICRR0023502

## 1. Project Data

**Project ID**  
P146332

**Project Name**  
Myanmar Decentralizing Funding to School

**Country**  
Myanmar

**Practice Area(Lead)**  
Education

**L/C/TF Number(s)**  
IDA-54550,TF-17814,TF-A4986

**Closing Date (Original)**  
31-Dec-2018

**Total Project Cost (USD)**  
120,871,517.50

**Bank Approval Date**  
20-May-2014

**Closing Date (Actual)**  
20-Jul-2021

	<b>IBRD/IDA (USD)</b>	<b>Grants (USD)</b>
Original Commitment	80,000,000.00	65,000,000.00
Revised Commitment	127,500,000.00	47,500,000.00
Actual	120,871,517.50	47,500,000.00

**Prepared by**  
Sengphet Lattanavong

**Reviewed by**  
Salim J. Habayeb

**ICR Review Coordinator**  
Eduardo Fernandez  
Maldonado

**Group**  
IEGHC (Unit 2)

**Project ID**  
P157231

**Project Name**  
AF Decentr Fund to Schools ( P157231 )

**L/C/TF Number(s)**

**Closing Date (Original)**

**Total Project Cost (USD)**  
0

**Bank Approval Date**

**Closing Date (Actual)**



10-Dec-2018

	IBRD/IDA (USD)	Grants (USD)
Original Commitment	0.00	0.00
Revised Commitment	0.00	0.00
Actual	0.00	0.00

## 2. Project Objectives and Components

### a. Objectives

The original project development objective was to help improve and expand Myanmar’s School Grants Program and Student Stipend Program.”

Development objectives were revised on November 26, 2018, in conjunction with additional financing provided just one month before the project was due to close on December 31, 2018 (ICR, p. 14) to build upon the perceived success of the parent project. The revised PDO was stated as follows: to improve the inclusiveness of school funding management and enhance support to teacher’s professional development while increasing transition rates of poor and at-risk students. Therefore, this ICR Review applies a split rating methodology.

### b. Were the project objectives/key associated outcome targets revised during implementation?

Yes

**Did the Board approve the revised objectives/key associated outcome targets?**

No

### c. Will a split evaluation be undertaken?

Yes

### d. Components

**Component 1: Expansion and Improvement of School Grants Program (Planned: US\$77 million; AF US\$13 million; Actual: US\$69.3 million).** Over the project’s four-year duration, the project would support the expansion of school grants to all schools with primary students supported by government budget. Improving the school grants program referred to introducing innovations from global experience and improving financial management. The innovations would include “(i) the introduction of well-defined program objectives and performance indicators; (ii) tying the grant funding to school improvement planning; (iii) introducing increased autonomy on school-level spending; (iv) promoting community participation and oversight through parent-teacher organizations; (v) standardizing financial reporting; (vi) developing



provisions for audits; and (vii) linking program progress reporting to the Ministry of Education (MOE) own information systems” (PAD, p. 13).

At restructuring in 2018, the additional financing (AF) provided US\$13 million to the component to accommodate its expanded scope to integrate activities focusing on inclusive enrollment and conducting consultations with parents and communities on the School Improvement Support Program (SISP), previously known as School Grants Program, and School Improvement Funds (SIFs). The new activities aimed to provide training to school headmasters on conducting local social/vulnerability assessments to identify minority and marginalized groups in their community and to prepare an outreach action plan to spread information on SISP and SIFs to encourage school enrollment of their children.

**Component 2: Expansion and Improvement of the Student Stipends Program (SSP) (Panned: US\$19 million; AF: US\$8 million; Actual: US\$21.27 million).** The project aimed to increase the coverage of schools and students in a defined number of townships throughout the project: in the 2014-2015 school year, the project aimed to cover eight townships, then twelve in year two, and twenty in year three, accumulating to 40 townships in total by the end of the project. This would cover approximately 25 percent of students from grades 5 to 11 in each township, covering about 32 percent of Myanmar’s population below the national poverty line. By year four of the project, the number of stipend beneficiaries was intended to reach 100,000 students. Key features to improve the stipend program included rigorous targeting criteria and procedures.

At restructuring in 2018, and as a response to the 2017 Rohingya crisis, the component was revised to include two new townships in Rakhine State that were ethnically and religiously diverse in villages and schools as a vehicle to mitigate social tension. The project design through the school grants and student stipend programs was modified to include universal coverage for all schools and students in selected grades 5 to 9 in these newly added townships.

**Component 3: Capacity Improvement Support to Strengthen Monitoring and Implementation of Programs (Planned: US\$4 million; AF: US\$13 million; Actual: US\$13.90 million).** This component would provide training and support to MOE in (i) the delivery of a national training program on the new school grants and stipend programs to township officials and school headmasters and (ii) conducting a baseline assessment of early grades (1-3) reading and math learning outcomes across the country. By the end of the project, the MOE was expected to deliver training to 1,000 township education officers and 43,000 school headmasters.

During the restructuring in 2018, the complementary modules on non-discrimination and children’s rights were integrated into the refresher training on the operational guidelines for SISP and SSP.

**Component 4: Expansion and Improvement of the Teacher Mentoring and Cluster Support Program (TMCSP) (Planned: US\$20 million; Actual: US\$16.4 million).** This component was added during restructuring in 2018 to support the expansion and improvement of TMCSP. The project aimed to improve in-service teacher professional development in selected schools through two activities: (i) one-on-one mentoring services and (ii) collaboration with peer teachers in school cluster activities. TMCSP in Buthidaung, Maungdaw, and Yathedaung (BMY) townships in Rakhine state focused on the inclusive participation of volunteer teachers, often unqualified, working at schools in Muslim communities.



#### e. Comments on Project Cost, Financing, Borrower Contribution, and Dates

**Project cost:** According to the Financing Agreement of October 11, 2014, a credit amounting to SDR 51,800,000, equivalent to US\$80 million, was approved. In addition, a multi-donor trust fund (MDTF) grant was approved for US\$20 million (PAD, p. 9). This amount, however, did not match with the Myanmar Partnership MDTF Grant Agreement TF017814 (October 11, 2014), where an amount of US\$17 million was noted. No further explanation was provided, but the Project Paper highlighted that the amount of US\$3 million withheld from the original amount was for currency exchange rate protection (Project Paper, para. 3, p. 1).

The additional financing, approved on November 26, 2018, provided an additional US\$54 million through MDTF from Australia (US\$33 million), Denmark (US\$13.8 million), and Finland (US\$7.2 million). It highlighted that the “amendments to the Grant Agreement will only reflect 85 percent of the new contribution of the DPs—US\$45 million—to keep a buffer against exchange rate fluctuations over the multiyear schedule of partial installments of DPs’ contributions” (Project paper, para. 3, p. 1). This amount was reflected in the amended Grant Agreement of December 14, 2018 (total amount of US\$ 65 million, including TF017814 of US\$20 million and TF0A4986 of US\$45 million).

**Financing/Borrower Contribution:** At appraisal, it was expected that the World Bank’s share would be 51 percent of overall project costs and that MOE would contribute 49 percent. By closing, MOE funded 81 percent of project costs, and the World Bank contributed about 19 percent. The main reason for this additional government commitment was that the government decided to expand the size of individual school grant amounts based on recommendations from the annual M&E assessments and give grants to monastic and high schools (ICR, pp. 13-14). The breakdown details were not available.

**Restructuring:** In conjunction with the AF, the project underwent a restructuring on November 26, 2018, to revise the PDO, results framework, and expenditures and extend the closing date from December 31, 2018, to July 20, 2021.

**Dates:** The project was approved on May 20, 2014, and became effective on November 5, 2014. As noted above, the closing date was extended by 2.5 years, and the project closed on July 20, 2021. The ICR (p. 5) pointed out that a military takeover occurred on February 1, 2021, and that the ICR was prepared based on a desk review of World Bank supervision reports and progress reports before that date. It also noted that the ICR did not attempt to assess how project achievements were sustained from February 1, 2021, to the closing date on July 20, 2021.

### 3. Relevance of Objectives

#### Rationale

At appraisal, and according to the ICR (pp. 6-7), there was political uncertainty and social exclusion as the country continued to be confronted with regional and ethnic divisions. These issues were particularly sensitive in education due to language differences and the desire for local control of schools. Hence, the project intended to support MOE’s decision to decentralize more funds from the center to localities via the school grants and stipend programs to help promote inclusion by targeting poor and at-risk groups and by providing incentives for regions, townships, and schools to cooperate with the central authorities to benefit from national resources. There was limited sector planning and analysis, combined with underinvestment.



Many donor agencies were eager to support education in Myanmar, including UNICEF, UNESCO, Australia, the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), Norway, and Denmark, among others; however, most of the support consisted of parallel interventions, and the project provided an opportunity to facilitate the channeling of donor funding through MOE.

Project objectives aligned with the World Bank's Interim Strategy Note (ISN, FY13-14) and the Country Partnership Framework (CPF, FY20-23) for Myanmar. The ISN strategy focused on the Government's "Framework for Economic and Social Reform," highlighting the government's school grants and stipend programs as the two highest priorities for 'quick wins' in the education sector (PAD, p. 11). Quick wins included but were not limited to helping ensure more students completed more years of schooling and more learning materials were available in schools to improve learning outcomes and contribute to the country's economic development. The PAD noted that the project supported two of the three pillars of the ISN. These are Pillar 1: Transforming Institutions, which aimed at improving institutions to deliver basic services for citizens, and Pillar 2: Building Confidence, which aimed at building confidence in the ongoing reform process by helping promote quick wins that provide tangible results. Under the CPF, the project directly supported objectives 1.2: "improve inclusive access to, and quality of, basic social services, and 1.3: "strengthening the capacity of public institutions to make policies, plan, and deliver services more effectively, transparently, and equitably" under the overarching focus area 1: "building human capital and fostering peaceful communities." The project's beneficiary groups included communities in conflict areas, contributing to the CPF's crosscutting themes on gender, conflict, and governance through activities such as school grants and stipends and capacity building to empower local officials and communities. In addition, the project contributed to the Systematic Country Diagnostic (SCD, 2019) pathway, which aimed to "build inclusive institutions and human capital for all to foster peace and shared prosperity." In particular, project activities supported SCD pathway policy area 2.3, which aimed to "ensure education for all and skills for productive employment" (CPF, p. 16).

Furthermore, the project aligns well with the country's Sustainable Development Plan (SDP) 2018-30 and the National Education Strategic Plan 2016-21. The project's support for expanding school grants and student stipend programs directly supports SDP strategy 1.4: "enhance good governance, institutional performance and improve the efficiency of administrative decision making at all levels" and strategy 4.1: "Improve equitable access to high quality lifelong educational opportunities." The project's revised objectives also supported the National Education Sector Plan's key priorities: improving access, quality, inclusion in basic education, and teachers' classroom practices.

## **Rating**

High

## **4. Achievement of Objectives (Efficacy)**

### **OBJECTIVE 1**

#### **Objective**

To improve and expand the school grants program.



(Original Objective)

### **Rationale**

The theory of change outlined the support to the government's existing school grants and stipend programs to strengthen MOE's capacity to deliver quality education and ensure more students, particularly students in rural and conflict areas, complete more years of schooling.

The School Grants Program was designed to introduce innovations from global experience and to improve schools' financial management. Before the project, the amount and timing of school funds were inadequate. Often, funds allocated were earmarked to two budget codes based on the schools' needs. Schools were not required to prepare School Improvement Plans (SIPs). Thus, the project responded to these challenges by focusing on the supply side of the school grants program, namely strengthening financial resources to provide transparent, reliable, and flexible resources to schools. Increasing public spending on schools was anticipated to decrease financial contributions from households, particularly those with limited means, aiming to encourage parents to enroll and retain their children in school. The additional funds allocated to schools were anticipated to translate into greater availability of learning materials and resources, ultimately contributing to improved student learning outcomes.

### **Outputs:**

- A School Grant Operational Guideline was developed with more precise instructions on administering and implementing the grants program to township officers and heads of schools. The MOE endorsed it in the 2014-15 school year. The ICR reported that these guidelines were updated and revised annually from the 2014 to 2019 school year, incorporating lessons learned from implementation (ICR, p. 17). As a result, the SIPs were revised to include three new features: i) school self-assessment to identify needs, ii) short- and long-term improvement plans, and iii) budget plans.
- 48,010 school heads received capacity-building training on school grant operational guidelines, exceeding the project target of 30,000. In addition, yearly refresher training focused on identifying and managing implementation issues and challenges.
- 5,102 township education officials received training in implementing school grant programs in accordance with the new guidelines, exceeding the target of 4,000.
- According to MOE reporting and third-party verification by Save the Children, 47,445 public primary, middle, and high schools, including monastic schools, were covered under the school grants program, exceeding the project's initial goal of covering 35,500 public primary schools nationwide. As a result, the government's budget for School Improvement Funds (SIFs) increased from US\$250 and US\$500 per school for small, medium, and large schools in 2013-14 to between US\$400 and US\$15,000 in 2017-18 school year.

### **Outcomes:**

Before the project's interventions, only 5 percent of schools had SIPs and were without proper guidelines. As a result of improved school grants operational guidelines under the project, 99 percent of schools in 330 townships had SIPs with systematic guidelines in 2018, surpassing the target of 50 percent. The School Improvement Support Program (SISP) and SIF were successfully integrated into MOE's internal system with transparent funding mechanisms provided by the government. As a result, all 330 townships nationwide transferred school grants on time to 99.1 percent of their schools, exceeding the revised target of 280



townships. The ICR noted that SIF continues to function as designed. While the objective is assessed as achieved, the impact on student learning would need to be examined.

**Rating**  
High

## **OBJECTIVE 2**

### **Objective**

To improve and expand the student stipend program  
(Original objective)

### **Rationale**

Before the project, the government's student stipend program was small and only covered a small fraction of the poor and vulnerable student population across 330 townships nationwide. The program also lacked proper guidelines on targeting the poor and vulnerable students and schools. Annually, the MOE provided approximately US\$5-\$8 to about 11,000 poor students at selected primary, middle, and high schools nationwide. In response to these challenges, the project aimed to provide universal coverage, which included monastic schools, and increase coverage to more poor students in grades 5 to 9. The project also aimed to improve the targeting mechanism and administration of the program to ensure resources are leveraged for poor and vulnerable students. The stipend was used to counter barriers preventing children from attending schools or continuing education. The provision of stipends to students aimed to increase school attendance and lower drop-out and repetition rates in targeted grades. Under the AF, students in two new townships in Rakhine states were also added to receive stipends to counter social tension and support continuing education.

### **Outputs**

- Operational guidelines for the stipends program were developed and included new parameters on eligibility criteria (i.e., "monastic schools and middle and high schools that have primary level classrooms"), conditionality, payment procedure, reporting from township education offices, social assessment and consultations, grievance redress mechanisms (GRMs), and governance structure" (ICR, p. 18). MOE endorsed the guidelines in 2015 and modified them in 2016 to emphasize more detailed targeting of poor student beneficiaries and reporting at decentralized levels.
- A total of 55 townships, an increase from 8 townships, implemented the stipend program due to the project.
- Under the parent project, 48,010 school heads received capacity-building training on the stipend program, exceeding the project target of 30,000 by 2018. Under the AF, 48,402 school heads were trained, falling slightly short of the revised target of 49,000 by 2021. Yearly refresher training was provided, and they were focused on identifying and managing implementation issues and challenges.
- 5,102 Township Education Officers in all 330 townships received training in implementing programs in accordance with the latest guidance, exceeding the target of 4,000.
- A total of 151,175 poor students in 55 townships received stipend payments, exceeding the target of 100,000 in 2018. Under the AF, the number increased to 305,503 students in 2020, surpassing the revised target of 250,000.



- In two new Rakhine townships, 34,217 students received stipend payments, short of the target of 40,000.

**Outcomes:**

As a result of the project, the operational guidelines were improved with defined eligibility and targeting criteria for selecting poor students and schools. The guidelines were revised and updated annually. According to the ICR, the Qualitative Assessment (QA) conducted by Save the Children in 2016 found that student selection was improved and targeting of poor and vulnerable students was generally accurate. In 2019, a QA assessment found that all stipend recipients were from poorer households. The ICR (p. 22) reported that subsequent rounds of qualitative assessments affirmed that all stipend beneficiaries were from poorer households.

The coverage of the stipend program was expanded from 8 to 55 townships and benefitted over 300,000 students (ICR, p. 34), as intended by the project’s improved targeting mechanism under the revised operational guidelines.

Note: While the objective was fully achieved, the ICR reported under Risk to Development Outcome (p. 34) that the stipend funding was paused due to the COVID-19 pandemic and has not yet restarted. However, it is likely to do so with further donor support.

**Rating**  
High

**OBJECTIVE 3**

**Objective**

To improve inclusiveness of school funding management  
(Objective under the 2018 AF revision)

**Rationale**

Under the additional financing (AF), improving inclusiveness means promoting non-discrimination against ethnic groups and gender in school enrollment, attendance, and in-school and classroom activities. The AF focused on updating the school grants program operational guidelines to include (i) “school consultations with communities, social assessment to identify vulnerable children, and action plans to reach out to marginalized families (ICR, p. 20; Project Paper, p. 7); and (ii) training on human rights, conflict sensitivity, tolerance, and inclusive education to provide school heads with the tools to respect this commitment (Project Paper, p. 63). The goal was to promote and improve inclusive enrollment and consultations with parents and communities to participate in the decision-making process around SIF and SIP, enroll their children in school, and encourage school heads to apply non-discriminatory practices.

**Outputs:**

- Guidelines for the School Improvement Support Program (SISP) were revised in 2018 to include social inclusion, community complaint mechanism, and BMY townships-specific approach in SISP and SSP.





- 48,402 school heads were trained on implementing the program with new guidelines, falling slightly short of the target of 49,000 in 2020.
- 50,744 school heads and state, regional, district, and township education officers received training on new processes to promote socially inclusive consultations, non-discriminatory practices, and feedback loop by 2020, exceeding the target of 48,500.
- The AF introduced and established a phone-based Open Data Kit (ODK) application to collect social assessment reports directly from schools. All school heads received training on operating and administering ODK in 2019 and 2020. However, school reporting was disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the ODK server, it was recorded that 9,200 schools submitted the assessment, and 8,786 (96%) reported the completion of social assessment and community consultations.

### **Outcomes:**

The consolidation of school reports at the Township Education Office and the Department of Basic Education central office was delayed during third-party verification in 2016. Thus, only 25 percent against a 70 percent target were verified to have consultations with parents and the community in 2020.

Despite the project's efforts to improve inclusiveness by providing training to school heads and state, province, and township education officials, there is no evidence to demonstrate that these activities contributed to improving inclusiveness in school grants.

**Rating**  
Modest

## **OBJECTIVE 4**

### **Objective**

To enhance support to teachers' professional development  
(Objective under the 2018 AF revision)

### **Rationale**

In 2018, the AF supported MOE's Teacher Mentoring and School Cluster Support Program (TMCSPP), established in 2016. This program addressed the primary teacher shortage by "providing comprehensive and continuous support to teacher's professional development to improve teachers' motivation and practices and, ultimately, learning outcomes" (Project Paper, p. 11). The program's core focus was on one-on-one mentoring to newly recruited teachers, particularly women, who were untrained. Under the AF, the program was expected to be scaled up from the initial 40 townships to 330 townships nationwide.

### **Outputs:**

- 43 out of 50 targeted primary schools participated in mentoring activities, falling slightly short of the target.
- 150 out of 330 targeted townships implemented the TMCSPP.



- 600 mentor teachers were engaged, trained, and deployed in 150 townships under the TMCSP, meeting half of the target of 1,320.
- The project aimed to increase female mentors engaged, trained, and deployed to Township Education Offices from 133 in 2018 to 594, reaching only 262 (44%) in 2020.
- Over half (2,974) of the targeted 5,000 school clusters for 330 townships conducted meetings following the TMCSP operational guidelines.
- A system for learning assessment at the primary level was in place, meeting the target.
- Two reports analyzing the impacts of supported programs were available, achieving the target.
- School clusters were implemented to support teachers through cluster forums where teachers regularly learn and share issues and challenges. Cluster heads were trained to prepare proposals for cluster action plans.

### **Outcomes:**

The TMCSP, which was meant to be scaled up annually to achieve nationwide coverage, was interrupted mainly by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. In addition, in the 2019-20 school year, MOE was entirely preoccupied with providing nationwide training on new curricula, which delayed the recruitment and training of teachers in 90 townships. This postponed the further mentor training to 2020, which was then disrupted by the pandemic.

The ICR reported that the total number of participating schools in 150 townships that implemented the TMCSP was 20,332, representing 77 percent of the total 26,326 schools in these townships and 43 percent of the total 47,445 schools in 330 townships nationwide. The achievement fell short of the target of reaching 50 percent of townships.

Also, related indicators were output-driven and did not fully capture changes in enhancing teachers' professional development as intended by the objective. The absence of qualitative information made it difficult to assess the program's effectiveness in improving professional development and practices.

### **Rating**

Modest

## **OBJECTIVE 5**

### **Objective**

To increase transition rates of poor and at-risk students  
(Objective under the 2018 AF revision)

### **Rationale**

The ICR noted the issue of high dropout rates among poor students, particularly in the transition rate from primary to middle school. Thus, the project addressed this issue through the student stipend program to provide financial resources to poor and at-risk students to keep them in school longer. Through the improvement and expansion of the stipend program, the transition rates of poor students from primary to middle school were expected to improve.



**Outcomes:**

As a result of the improved stipends program’s operational guidelines, the Qualitative Assessments (QA) conducted by Saved the Children in 2016 and Cardno in 2019 confirmed an increase in transition rates from primary to middle school. The ICR (p. 38) noted that, based on the data from the Stipend Student Payment Management System and the MOE C4M dataset in 55 stipend programs, the transition rates of poor and at-risk students of the stipends program were at 102% and 93% for non-stipend students between 2018-19 and 2019-20 school year, a difference of 9 percentage points, exceeding the target of 7 percent.

**Rating**  
High

**OVERALL EFFICACY**

**Rationale**

Under the original objectives, the project fully achieved its two objectives to improve and expand school grants and student stipend programs, indicating a high efficacy rating.

**Overall Efficacy Rating**

High

**OVERALL EFFICACY REVISION 1**

**Overall Efficacy Revision 1 Rationale**

Under the revised objectives, two objectives (to improve inclusiveness of school funding management; and to enhance support to teachers’ professional development) were partly achieved and rated Modest. The third objective (to increase transition rates of poor and at-risk students) was fully achieved. The aggregation of achievements is indicative of modest efficacy under the revised objectives.

**Overall Efficacy Revision 1 Rating**  
Modest

**Primary Reason**  
Low achievement

**5. Efficiency**

At appraisal, the economic analysis considered the monetary benefits of both grants and stipend programs, given their contribution to human capital development and increased individual productivity (PAD, p. 22). Using



the Myanmar 2009 Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey, it concluded that an additional year of schooling would generate 6.7 percent higher income.

The ICR (pp. 60-65) conducted a detailed cost-benefit analysis of the school grants program. Reasonable assumptions were made, including that beneficiary, students would go on to complete 7.8 years of formal schooling and that beneficiary students would enter the labor market by age 15 and retire at age 60 (ICR, p. 63). Using a discount rate of 5 percent, the net present value was estimated under different scenarios ranging from US\$449.8 and US\$1,532 million, and the IRR ranged from 13.65 percent under the lower scenario to 18.15 percent under the intermediate scenario and 21.15 percent under the optimistic scenario (ICR, p. 64). These estimates suggested substantial economic returns as a result of the project.

The ICR also analyzed the stipend program separately, used actual project data from December 2020, and employed a set of reasonable assumptions and parameters, including the number of dropouts averted for students who will go on to complete middle school education. Based on the project’s calculation under three different scenarios and using a discount rate of 5 percent, the corresponding IRR estimates ranged from 5.16% to 6.23%. The estimates remained robust under sensitivity analysis carried out for the intermediate scenario.

Concurrently, implementation inefficiencies and external influences moderately reduced overall efficiency. Some remote schools could not open bank accounts. MOE administrative data were incomplete. Internal reporting was weak, and school reports were untimely. The crisis and violence in Rakhine disrupted schooling. Schools in Myanmar were closed for the entire school year in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The closing of schools and shutdown of education administration effectively stopped project implementation. Disbursements were formally paused following the military takeover at the beginning of February 2021 (ICR, pp. 29-30).

## Efficiency Rating

Substantial

a. If available, enter the Economic Rate of Return (ERR) and/or Financial Rate of Return (FRR) at appraisal and the re-estimated value at evaluation:

	Rate Available?	Point value (%)	*Coverage/Scope (%)
Appraisal		0	0 <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable
ICR Estimate	✓	18.15	57.00 <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable

\* Refers to percent of total project cost for which ERR/FRR was calculated.

## 6. Outcome



Relevance of objectives is rated High across the entire project, as development objectives were fully responsive to country priorities and remained consistent with Bank and government strategies at project closing.

Efficiency, also rated across the entire project, is rated Substantial given expected returns, but with implementation inefficiencies that moderately reduced overall efficiency.

Under the original objectives, efficacy is rated High, as objectives were fully achieved. The review findings are indicative of a Highly Satisfactory Outcome rating.

Under the revised objectives, efficacy is rated Modest, as objectives were partly achieved. The review findings are indicative of a Moderately Unsatisfactory Outcome rating.

According to IEG/OPCS guidelines, the final outcome is determined by the weight of Bank disbursements under each set of objectives (73% under the original objectives and 27% under the revised objectives).

- Under the original objectives, the outcome is rated Highly Satisfactory (6) with a weight value of 4.38 (6 x 73%).
- Under the revised objectives, the outcome is rated Moderately Unsatisfactory (3) with a weight value of 0.81 (3 x 27%).

These add up to a value of 5.19 (rounded to 5), corresponding to an overall outcome rating of Satisfactory, indicative of minor shortcomings in the project’s preparation, implementation, and overall achievement.

**Overall Outcome Ratings:**

Rating Dimension	Original Objectives	Revised Objectives
Relevance of Objectives	High	
Efficacy		
Objective 1: Improve and expand school grants	High	
Objective 2: Improve and expand stipends	High	
Objective 3: Improve inclusiveness		Modest
Objective 4: Enhance teachers’ professional development		Modest
Objective 5: Increase transition rates of poor and at-risk students		High
Overall Efficacy	High	Modest
Efficiency	Substantial	
Outcome Rating	Highly Satisfactory	Moderately Unsatisfactory
Outcome Rating Value	6	3
Disbursement Percentage	73%	27%
Weight Value	4.38 (6 x 0.73)	0.81 (3 x 0.27)
Total Weights	5.19	



Overall Outcome Rating	Satisfactory
------------------------	--------------

**a. Outcome Rating**  
Satisfactory

## 7. Risk to Development Outcome

Notwithstanding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the disbursement pause of World Bank and other donor-assisted operations after the military takeover in February 2021, programs developed under the project remain sustainable from an institutional and financial capacity perspective. Project outcomes, such as decentralized funding mechanisms and monitoring and evaluation capacity, remain viable and would serve to further progress. MOE has adopted the school grants funding and is functioning as designed, even without donors' funding. MOE is committed to sustaining its allocations in the coming years. However, the student stipend funding was paused during the COVID-19 pandemic and has not yet been restarted.

Several developments are likely to reduce the risk to development outcome. Institutional capacity was built at the national, state, regional, township, and school levels, as demonstrated by MOE's ability to implement the programs effectively and report on their implementation regularly. Qualitative annual assessments showed that the programs supported under the project were popular in the townships and schools. Iterative assessments provide a mechanism for improving and adapting the programs to a changing environment. School grants enhanced community participation. Decentralizing the funding to townships and schools is a mechanism that can be used by the national government in other areas of the education sector and can incentivize the participation of ethnic and political groups to work with the central authorities in social development aspects.

## 8. Assessment of Bank Performance

### a. Quality-at-Entry

Despite the project being the Bank's first investment in the education sector in Myanmar, the Bank's long-standing engagement in Myanmar since the late 1980s gave the team a good understanding of the country's political economy and environment. At the time of appraisal, Myanmar encountered political instability and ethnic tensions. Familiarity with the sector was limited. Thus, at appraisal, all risks were assessed as high or significant (PAD, p. 21). Against this backdrop, the project team kept the design simple and focused. The project was output-oriented. Targets were easy to meet. More ambitious objectives were to be expected in later years. The ICR (p. 33) explained the design purpose to generate positive momentum, such as with DLIs associated with the first year, which were important but largely procedural, providing an early sense of success and eagerness to deepen the partnership.

Implementation arrangements were established on the existing MOE's school grants and stipend programs governance structure. A Project Steering Committee within MOE would coordinate the



operation (PAD, p. 40). Based on the Bank's initial assessment of local capacity, schools and townships were adequately implementing the programs, and the project scope was designed to be focused.

Underlying the simplified scope, the project was the first operation using disbursement-linked indicators (DLI)-based disbursements. Selected DLIs were easy to monitor, and importantly, they would allow funds to flow quickly to peripheral levels. In addition, the Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability report and IMF analysis informed the project's financial management arrangement that MOE had adequate internal control mechanisms. They had a "high level of integrity in terms of accuracy of financial records and financial statements despite using a manual system" (PAD, p. 41). The project team acknowledged high risks in social safeguards and intensified consultations with central and local officials to mitigate risks.

### **Quality-at-Entry Rating** Satisfactory

#### **b. Quality of supervision**

The M&E framework and bi-annual reviews of the program results were conducted in close collaboration with MOE and technical staff to discuss administrative data from MOE and data from quantitative and qualitative assessments conducted by third-party partners, such as Save the Children. The results from the annual evaluation of the grants and stipend programs were used to inform and to update MOE's operational guidelines for these programs. In addition, the lessons learned informed the preparation of school improvement plans. The ICR noted that the Bank and MOE proactively triangulated data and information from third-party monitoring and convened bi-annually at the M&E Working Group meetings to discuss findings and issues. This structure allowed the project team to continuously dialogue with the government at the central and local levels to resolve implementation issues and improve performance. For example, during the crisis in Rakhine state in 2017, the project team worked closely with counterparts through continuous consultations to integrate social safeguard mitigation measures into school grants and stipend programs. This facilitated strong cooperation between the central authorities and the authorities in northern Rakhine townships, allowing project resources to reach their respective townships.

The task team was proactive and provided extensive technical support to strengthen MOE's project management capacity. This included hands-on training in data analysis, and when needed, the Bank recruited NGOs or consulting firms to carry out complementary M&E activities, such as conducting qualitative assessments, quantitative surveys, evaluations, and other studies to provide recommendations and quality control, including the achievements of DLIs. For example, the Bank team provided technical support to the MOE for data analysis from a small-scale reading intervention pilot conducted in response to the results from several rounds of Early Grade Reading Assessment to improve reading in early grades. The ICR (p. 31) noted that the findings informed the design of the Early Learning Component of the Inclusive Access and Quality Education Project (approved in 2020).

The ICR (p. 33) reported that the project highly benefited from a large team based in Myanmar with conflict, operational, and technical experience. This allowed the task team to deepen their relationship and partnership with MOE.



Despite adequate identification of risks, the project encountered three unforeseen events that hindered implementation and supervision, particularly during the additional financing. Firstly, the crisis in Rakhine state in 2017 caused 38 MOE schools to close, and teachers of Rakhine ethnic also stopped going to schools due to communal tension and security. The approval of the additional financing in 2018 “strengthened social safeguard mitigation measures for non-discrimination in affected townships” in Rakhine state through school grants and teacher training programs (ICR, p. 30). Secondly, the COVID-19 pandemic closed down schools, and all education administrations at all levels stopped the implementation of the project, except for the school grant transfers, which later helped the schools get ready for reopening. Lastly, the implementation was interrupted by the military takeover in February 2021, which stopped all World Bank disbursements shortly before the project closed.

### **Quality of Supervision Rating**

Highly Satisfactory

### **Overall Bank Performance Rating**

Satisfactory

## **9. M&E Design, Implementation, & Utilization**

### **a. M&E Design**

The objectives were clearly stated, although the PDO indicators were output-oriented, as noted in section 8a. The theory of change was based on components rather than objectives. Indicators were closely linked and sequential, such as updating the guidelines for SISP, which was produced to enable training of education officials at all levels, townships to transfer funds to schools on time, and students receiving stipends.

As noted above, there were gaps in the M&E framework to capture outcomes adequately. For example, the professional development of teachers could not be adequately assessed by outputs only. In addition, as acknowledged by the ICR, the M&E framework would have benefited more had it included Early Grade Reading and Mathematics Assessment (EGRA and EGMA) measures and linked these to improving the grants and stipend programs.

### **b. M&E Implementation**

M&E arrangements were well managed. An existing M&E working group, which included development partners, convened twice a year at the working group meetings and annual program review meetings to discuss the project’s progress and rising challenges. The World Bank and third-party assessment agency (i.e., Save the Children) “spot-checked” the DLI data.

Findings from the social assessments were an integral part of MOE’s annual status reports, which were made available on the MOE Website: <https://www.moe.gov.mm/?q=content/social-assessment-report-2020>.





Through supplemental trust funds, the Bank outsourced to a third party, such as Save the Children, to conduct qualitative assessments annually during the project's duration. This engagement provided real-time feedback that informed updating the operational guidelines for the grants and stipend programs.

Some issues pertained to verifiability. For example, some achievements, such as the social assessments, could not be verified because of school closures (ICR, p. 38). Local government-level reporting was weak, and school reports were not collected on time (ICR, p. 37).

The quality of M&E improved throughout the project. During project restructuring in 2018, the M&E framework was modified to accommodate the scaling up of the school grants and stipend programs, and the objectives on social inclusion and teacher training were revised.

### **c. M&E Utilization**

The results obtained from MOE's monitoring of the results framework, DLIs, outputs achieved, and the qualitative assessment were presented at the end of the school year and before the beginning of the next school year. Based on the findings, the government updated the operational guidelines of school grants and stipend programs two times during the project lifespan. "The project provided a good example of an M&E feedback loop from the school and townships to the senior leadership level" (ICR, p. 31). Findings were shared with stakeholders and were disclosed on the MOE website.

Findings of EGRA and EGMA prompted a small pilot for reading intervention in the 2019-20 school year. This pilot was focused on addressing key factors resulting in poor reading. This resulted in introducing a new teaching pedagogy, reading material and supplies, and allocated hours for reading in classrooms. The ICR (para. 51, p. 27) reported that the results from these activities informed the early learning component of the Bank's Inclusive Access and Quality Education (IAQE) project.

In addition, the township-level expenditure reports, transmitted to MOE electronically, became more transparent, allowing MOE to monitor township-level spending with more accuracy and timeliness.

### **M&E Quality Rating**

Substantial

## **10. Other Issues**

### **a. Safeguards**

The project operated in areas where ethnic minorities are present, with high potential risks, including exclusion. The project triggered OP 4.10 (Indigenous Peoples) and was assigned category B. During project preparation, in line with OP 4.10, the Community Participation Planning Framework (CPPF) was developed to ensure that vulnerable groups will participate in and benefit from the project. In addition, based on nationwide consultations, a Social Assessment, Environmental and Social Management Framework, and a central-level Community Participation Plan (CPP) were prepared. The operation guidelines of school grants



and stipend programs outlined mandatory community participation, consultations, and the inclusion of “guidelines for addressing community feedback and complaints” (ICR, p. 32).

The AF addressed risks of conflict and exclusion explicitly through the school grants and teacher training programs. The school grants and stipend programs required consultation with community groups on using school grants and ensuring that non-discriminatory practices are exercised for targeting children of poor households of all backgrounds, particularly in Rakhine State. Key activities included (i) revised operational guidelines of school grants and stipend programs to include community consultations to raise awareness of the programs; (ii) social assessment to identify vulnerable children; (iii) action plans to reach out to marginalized families; and (iv) the M&E framework included monitoring and reporting of social safeguard activities (that is, community consultations). 50,744 school heads and state, regional, and township education officials in 330 townships received training on the new processes to promote socially inclusive consultations and non-discriminatory practices. The AF introduced a phone-based Open Data Kit (ODK) application in 2019 for school heads to collect social assessment reports, but it was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the ODK server, out of 9,200 schools that submitted the report, 96% or 8,786 schools reported that SA and community consultations were completed. However, it was not verified because of the COVID-19 shutdown.

Overall performance in dealing with safeguards was rated moderately satisfactory, as recorded in the Operations Portal.

## **b. Fiduciary Compliance**

The ICR did not include a section on Fiduciary Compliance, although no issues of high significance were observed.

## **c. Unintended impacts (Positive or Negative)**

The ICR (p. 27) highlighted that the project was a key player in the groundbreaking milestone in Myanmar's primary education sector through the introduction of the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) and Early Grade Math Assessment (EGMA). The EGRA and EGMA were Myanmar's first standardized assessment of student learning outcomes. EGRA was introduced to schools in the capital of Yangon in the 2013-14 school year. Then, at the request of the MOE, EGMA was introduced nationwide in the 2016-17 school year. A total of six rounds of iterations were conducted with samples from the regional and national levels. Since their introduction under the project, the tools have been acknowledged as one of the assessment pillars in Myanmar's National Assessment Policy for Basic Education (2019). The results from sampled EGRA and EGMA assessments prompted the project to pilot a small-scale reading intervention. The pilot aimed to address key factors contributing to poor reading by introducing new teaching pedagogy, reading materials, and supplies to enhance reading proficiency for early-grader students. The findings informed the Inclusive Access and Quality Education Project (approved in 2020). The ICR noted that these tools profoundly impacted Myanmar's education sector beyond the project's initial expectation that only planned to establish the baseline for early-grade reading acquisition.



**d. Other**

--

**11. Ratings**

Ratings	ICR	IEG	Reason for Disagreements/Comment
Outcome	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	
Bank Performance	Highly Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Quality at entry is rated Satisfactory, considering shortcomings in the M&E design, while Quality of Supervision is rated Highly Satisfactory. In accordance with IEG guidance, the lower of the two ratings determines the rating of overall Bank Performance.
Quality of M&E	High	Substantial	Moderate shortcomings in design and implementation and the output-oriented indicators could not adequately capture the development change in some areas.
Quality of ICR	---	Substantial	

**12. Lessons**

The ICR (pp. 35-36) offered lessons and recommendations, including the following lessons re-stated by IEG Review:

- 1. The project’s support for decentralizing funds was, among other things, a tool to promote peace and inclusion.** In 2017, conflicts in Rakhine state broke out but did not stop project implementation. The ICR noted that local authorities in Northern Rakhine state were cooperative and used national funding to reach their townships, promoting dialogue between the central and local authorities and bringing local groups together.
- 2. The project benefited greatly from its simple design in the context of unknown or low institutional capacity.** The project’s decision to support the already established framework and system that the MOE had for the school grants and student stipend programs played a key role in fast execution and smooth implementation. The MOE was familiar with the implementation structure and benefited from additional financial resources and technical assistance to increase the project’s scope and scale.
- 3. One uniform M&E framework among development partners, MOE, and the World Bank strengthened data collection and utilization.** This uniformity facilitated a practical



approach for addressing bi-annual M&E Working Group meetings and the Technical Working Group meetings where all concerned partners participated to confront arising issues and operational challenges.

### 13. Assessment Recommended?

No

### 14. Comments on Quality of ICR

This ICR Review acknowledges and appreciates the efforts and challenges facing the ICR team members who prepared the ICR as a desk review without benefiting from a field mission. The ICR was well-prepared and written. Its narrative was candid and aligned with the objectives, although its evidence was output-oriented.

There were some inconsistencies in the reported costs of project components against the values reported in the PAD, Project Paper, and Financial Agreement, and the total number of townships differed among sections. The ICR did not include a section on fiduciary compliance and was not concise. However, within the larger context of overall ICR quality, the above shortcomings were moderate.

#### a. Quality of ICR Rating

Substantial