



2020 SOUTH EAST YOUTH-LED ASSESSMENT REPORT





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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In Myanmar 55 percent of the population are under the age of 30 and one-quarter of the population is between 15 and 29.ⁱ This youth bulge has and will continue to have a considerable effect on the economy as young people enter the labour market. In both Kayin and Mon many young people are actually moving overseas in search of employment. This is due to the combination of high unemployment rates in both states and the proximately and higher pay opportunities available in Thailand.ⁱⁱ The result is a drastic drop in the population pyramid after the age of 15.ⁱⁱⁱ This means that there are much lower rates of young people in both states and the youth that remain face employment challenges and pressure to migrate. Both states also face ongoing instability which impacts investment and economic growth opportunities.

In this context, that youth are going through social, biological and developmental changes. Young people are redefining their roles in society and the community and seeking new opportunities for the future. All of this individual and social change is taking place alongside ongoing instability and pressures to find employment. And yet, they are the population that will define the future of their communities, and even, the country. This is particularly poignant in Kayin and Mon where many young people have migrated and are not engaged or able to inform the the future of the state's political and economic future – but remittances from their work flow into the local economy.

Because of the role that youth can and will play in the future this youth-led assessment aimed to elevate the voices and experiences of youth living in Kayin and Mon to better understand the barriers that they face to employment and participation as well as to identify opportunities to support positive youth development. Over the course of the assessment, 264 young people, 48 parents and 142 business owners living in Hpa-An and Hliangbwe townships in Kayin and Thanbyuzayat township in Mon gave their time to share their knowledge and experience with the aim to build a better and stronger future for young people.

KEY THEMES

Migration pressure is high, in all directions. Youth face considerable pressure due to internal and external migration trends. There are high rates of youth coming to work in Kayin and Mon, particularly in growth sectors like tourism, from the Irrawaddy region. These young people often have higher education levels than youth living in Mon and Kayin making competition for jobs challenging. Pressure to migrate overseas is also considerable as most families across both states have someone living and working overseas that must provide for and support the family. These migration patterns are likely to continue and will impact the number of young people in Kayin and Mon states. As numbers decrease brain drain increases in Myanmar. However, there are opportunities to bring new ideas and potentially funding for new businesses back into the country.

Gender matters, a lot. At every turn gender defines opportunities and expectations for young people. Jobs become more gendered when education levels are lower. Men work in manual labour and women work in flexible, safe, more frequently home-based jobs. The gendered nature of work reduces the number of opportunities that are considered respectable and acceptable for young women. Across all locations surveyed there was a preference by families and young women and men, for opportunities that support these cultural gender divisions.

Agriculture work and vocational training are perceived as male opportunities. Agriculture is deemed by young people to be a predominately male sector of work. While some young women reported to have worked in the sector their roles were very limited due to the high level of manual labour and the travel conditions often associated with agricultural work. Vocational training is also considered very male with GTHS courses oriented and serving mainly young men. This categorization has a particular impact on pathways for young people with low education levels further limiting employment opportunities.

Low desirability of agriculture work but high interest in innovation. Young men report to be working in agriculture but very few young men aspire to work in this field in the future. Most young men were more interested in technical sectors such as motorbike repair, technology and small business development. Youth perceive opportunities in agriculture to be low-skilled manual labour with very limited opportunities. The sector is deemed unstable with poor crop yields and increased competition from Thailand. However, when youth were asked to brainstorm the types of trainings that would help them many of the most prominently featured ideas were in agricultural innovations and opportunities. This is interesting given the low desire to work in agriculture but also reflects the high number of youth already working in this field. Additionally, both young men and women highlighted the importance of introducing new technologies as a way for women to be more engaged in the sector.

Technology and computer skills were highly desired by male and female youth. Young people – both male and female – were very interested in technology both in terms of training and employment. Technology and computer skills were seen as pathways for better quality jobs and opportunities to work in other sectors. Technology was also often referenced as a skill that was not specially related to a specific gender, however only young men expressed interest in computer jobs, while young women were only interested in computer training. This could be because young women see technology jobs as a male-dominated sector and the skills as cross-cutting.

Market knowledge and information is low and creativity is lacking. People learn from experience and exposure to new concepts and ideas. Young people (15-24) by the very nature of their neurological and biological development, are learning and absorbing information at incredible speeds and are 'the most creative' at this phase in life than they ever were before and ever will be again. Now is the time to introduce new concepts, methods and ideas. It is important that young people also have exposure and access to labour market information to make informed and evolving career choices. Given the strong connections to Thailand there are many opportunities to connect youth to external business models and ideas that will help grow and diversify opportunities in Kayin and Mon State.

Local context is critical. While a plethora of labour-market information exists at the national and state level to support sector identification and employment trends for young men and women, local realities are nuanced and require consideration particularly when identifying employment aspirations and opportunities. Ethnic, religious, linguistic and geographic divisions are critical to understanding what types of opportunities will succeed at the local level, and conversely what types of opportunities will be more challenging. In summary, labour-market assessments can and should provide sector orientation but local level assessments are critical to understanding what will work at the community level and what barriers will need to be addressed.



KAYIN & MON: BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Kayin and Mon States are considered part of Southeastern Myanmar and are geographically positioned on a prime trade route - the East West Economic Corridor - which has the second highest volume of trade among all border trade in the country. It is a central location for commercial activities and is especially linked to opportunities for trade with Thailand^{iv} The economy of Mon State is relatively stable and, according to data

from 2017, had the 5th highest GDP per capita out of Myanmar's 14 States and Regions. Kayin state, however, was considerably lower, ranking 11 out of 15.^v In terms of poverty, 19.2% of the population of Mon State lives below the national poverty line. This percentage in Kayin State is 24.2% which, while still quite high, is still considerably lower than many other states in the country.^{vi} Unemployment levels are reportedly higher in Kayin State at 7.5 percent – historically, one of the highest unemployment rates nationally^{vii} – with unemployment in Mon state at 6.2 percent.^{viii} These two states are demographically very different, with Mon State being significantly more urbanized than Kayin State. In fact, Mon has the 5th largest urban population in the country, whereas Kayin has the 6th largest rural population.^{ix}

Both states, like Myanmar, are ethnically and religiously diverse. In Mon State, while the largest group in Mon are ethnically categorised as Mon with their own language, the state is not homogenous. There are significant minority populations present including the Bamar, Rakhine and Karen ethnic groups. Mawlamyine is especially diverse, with thriving Christian, Muslim and Hindu communities, however, the vast majority of Mon state residents are believed to be Buddhist.^x In Kayin State, previously known as Karen State, the territory is inhabited primarily by the Karen population which includes several ethnicities, Sgaw Kayin, Pwo Kayin, Bwe Kayin and Paku Kayin, each of which has a distinct language. Kayin is also the home to non-Karen groups such as the Shan, Burman, Mon and Pao ethnic groups. Most estimates suggest that the majority of the population in Kayin State are Buddhists, with a significant Christian minority and a small minority of Muslims.^{xi}

From a safety and security perspective southeastern Myanmar has been affected by decades of conflict and waves of displacement. While the signing of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement in October 2015 reduced tensions, challenges still remain. The Karen National Union (KNU) and the New Mon State Party (NMSP), the major EAOs in Kayin and Mon States respectively, have signed the NCA. However, there has been a regain in armed clashes among EAOs and between EAOs and the government in recent months. Currently some 120,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) are estimated to be in a situation of protracted displacement throughout the southeast and close to 100,000 refugees remain in temporary shelters in Thailand along the Myanmar border.^{xii} The 2019 Humanitarian Needs Overview reported that there are over 10,000 people in need in Kayin State's Hlaingbwe Township alone – one of the areas where this assessment was conducted.^{xiii} Additionally, the Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG) has noted that violence, while diminished, has continued since the signing of the agreement. The group has documented serious abuses which included killing, physical violence and sexual violence against women. Landmine and UXO contamination also remains a problem.^{xiv} Even as recently as 2018 sporadic clashes occurred in Kayin State preventing any large-scale return of IDP or refugees to their homes and displacing over 10,000 people across the region.

It is in this shifting landscape of southeastern Myanmar that young people are seeking opportunities for their present and future. They are living in a region with high potential for economic and social stability, and yet plagued by high unemployment rates and questionable internal stability. Additionally, they are living in a trade corridor that allows for easy access to higher paying jobs only hours away. These combined push and pull factors are the driving force for mass out-migration of young people in Kayin and Mon states. As a result, the demographic pyramid is highly skewed after the age of 15 when young people are leaving to find work overseas, primarily to Thailand due to the proximity of relatively higher paying employment.^{xv} While the rest of Myanmar is experiencing a youth bulge, these southeastern states are experiencing the opposite – an economic out-migration of young people (mostly to neighboring Thailand) which both brings economic remittances back to Myanmar and causes brain drain affecting the economy back home.

OVERVIEW OF DATA

WHERE: LOCATIONS

9 Villages were included in the youth-led assessment, breakdown is as follows. This breakdown will be used as the analysis framework throughout this report.

G5: Kayin - Hpa-An Township

G6: Kayin - Hlaingbwe Township

G7: Mon State - Thanbyuzayat Township

Group 5

- Hlaing Ka Bar
- Kawt Hta Ma Lein
- Ka Mawt Ka Sin

Group 6

- Ywar Kaing Kaung
- Win Pa Ya
- Ywar Kaing Kaung

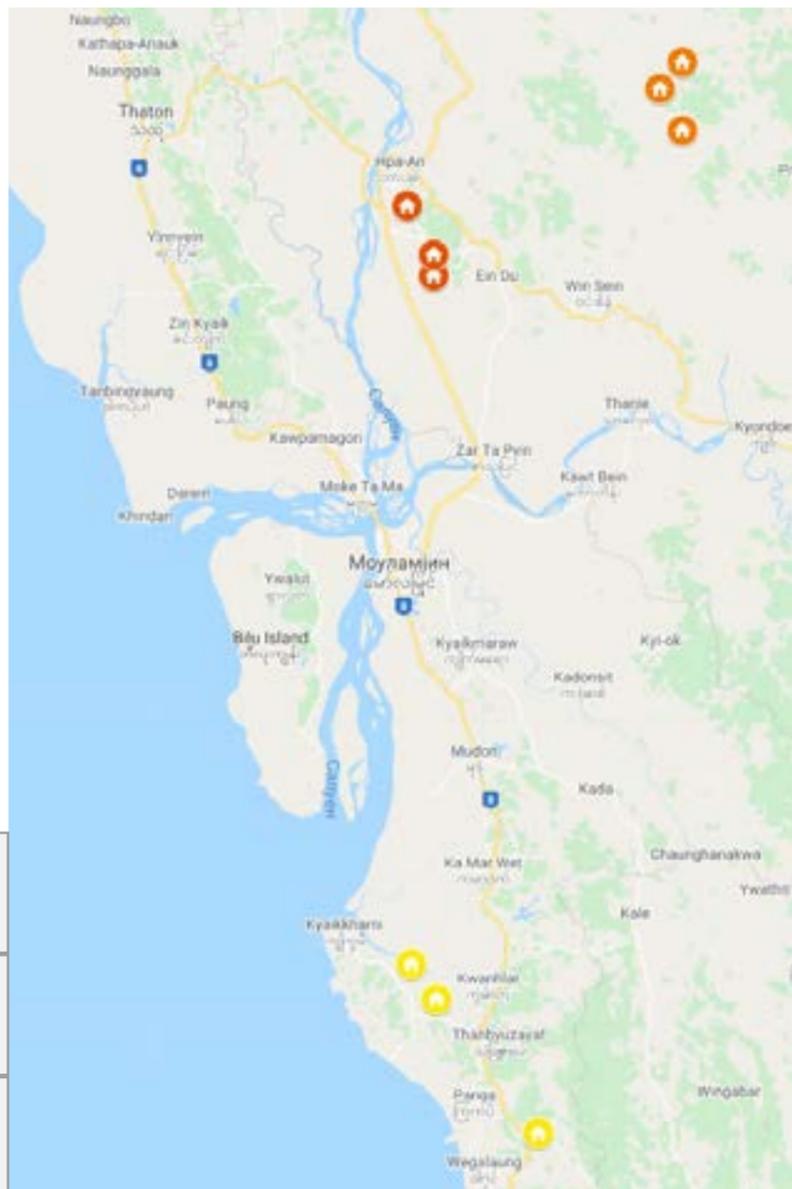
Group 7

- Taung Hpa Lu
- Kun That
- Wea Win Ka Yar

3 villages

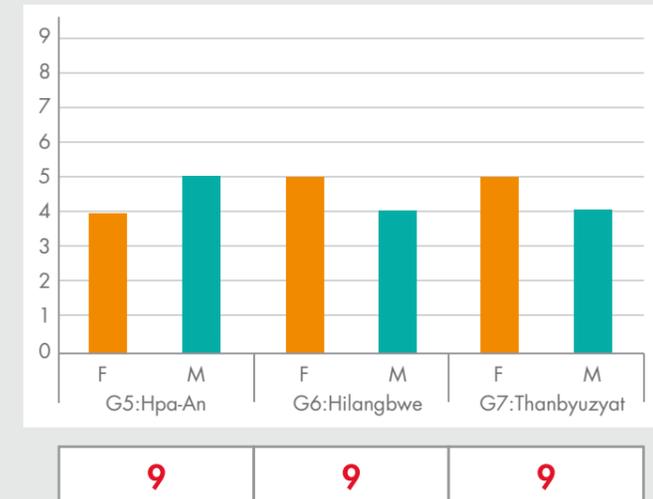
3 villages

3 villages



WHO: YOUTH FACILITATORS

Who did we talk to?



14

13

27

1. GENERAL

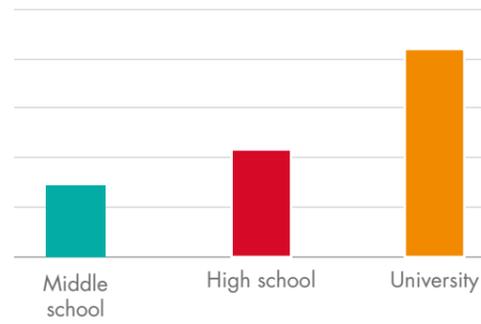
Age: 18 to 24 years old

AVERAGE AGE	EDUCATION OBSERVATIONS	EMPLOYMENT OBSERVATIONS	MARITAL STATUS
Male: 22 years old	None of the youth facilitators held below a middle school level education.	Female youth were much more likely, thank male youth, to be employed. 36% of young women reported that they were working and only 8% of young men.	97% of youth facilitators were single.
Female: 20 years old			
	89% of youth facilitators from G7: Mon state were university students.	Young people in Mon state were far less likely to be working - 89%.	The only facilitator who was married was a young women who had a child (24 years old).
	Male and female youth had relatively equal education levels.	The largest employed group of working youth facilitators (67%) were from Hlaingbwe township in Kayin state.	58% of youth facilitators were living with their parents.
			31% were living with one adult family member.

2. EDUCATION

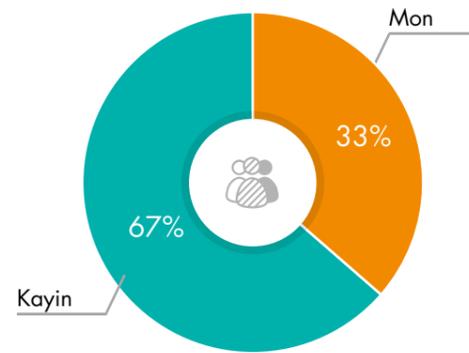
Average Education Levels:

	Group 5: Hpa-An	Group 6: Hlaingbwe	Group 7: Thanbyuzayat
Male: 10.6	9.6	11.5	11
Female: 10.5	10.2	9.6	11.8

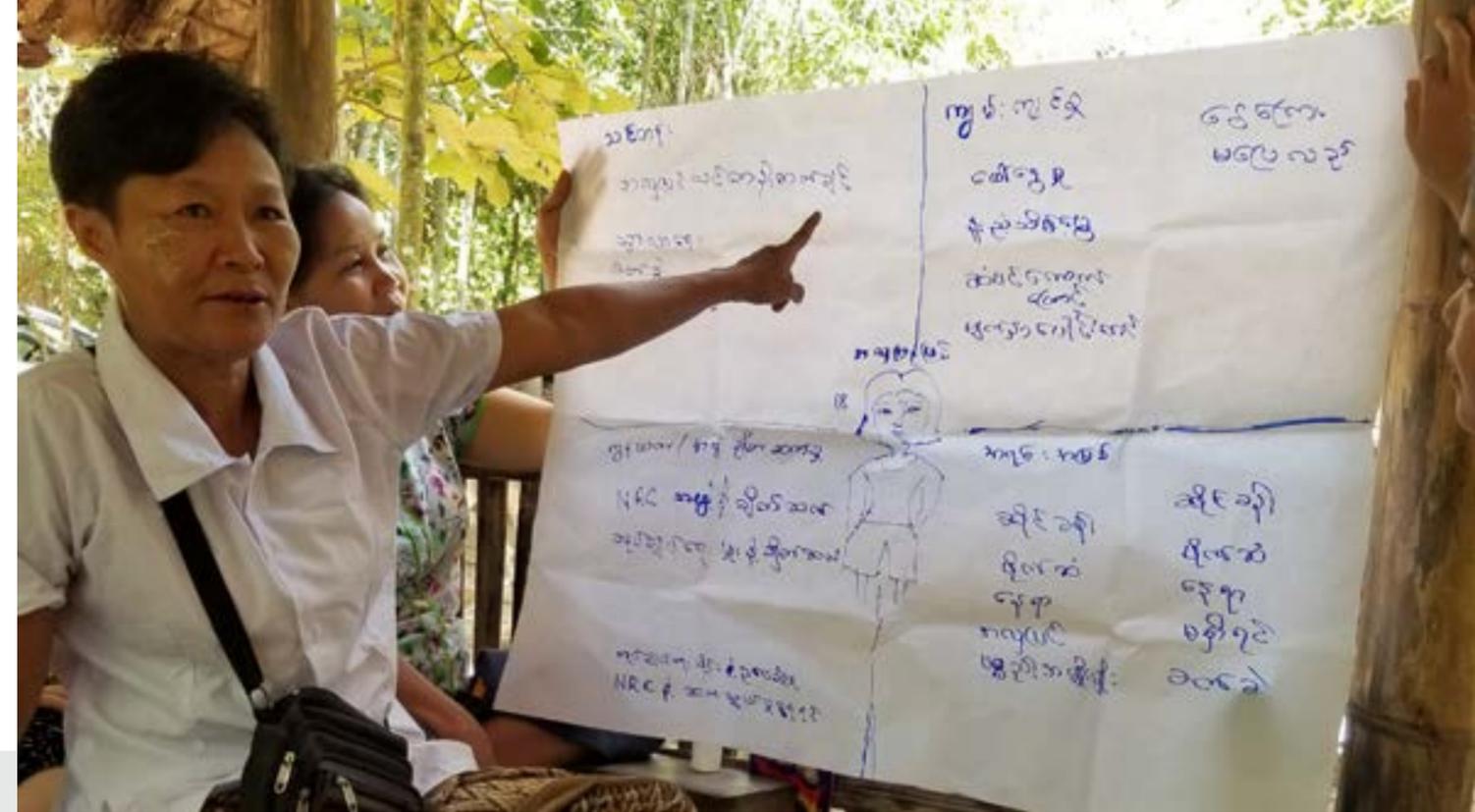


Graph 1.1 Education level

3. ETHNICITY

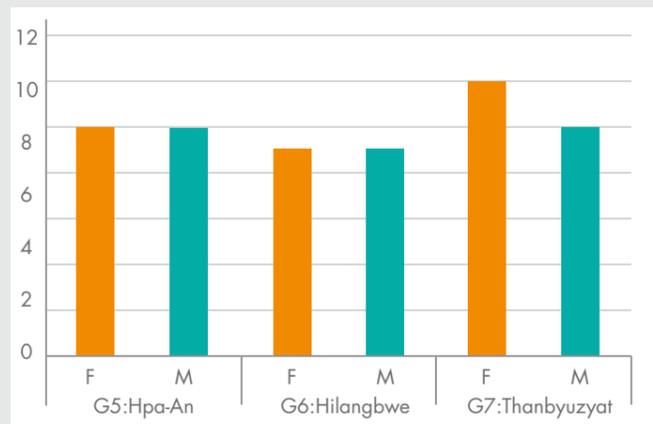


Graph 1.2. Ethnicity



WHO: PARENTS

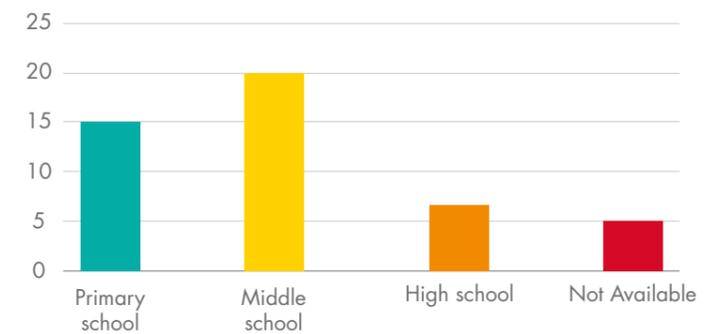
Who did we talk to?



16 14 18

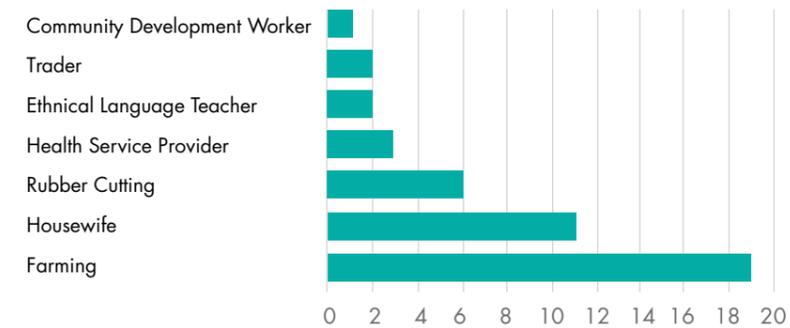


2. PARENTAL EDUCATION



Graph 1.3 Education level

4. EMPLOYMENT



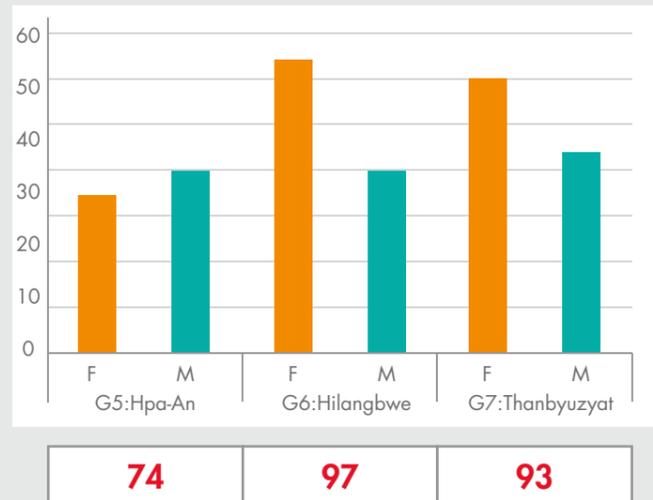
Graph 1.4 Employment

AVERAGE AGE ¹	EDUCATION OBSERVATIONS	EMPLOYMENT OBSERVATIONS	MARITAL STATUS
Male: 49 years old	Largest average family size is in G7: Mon with 5.1 family members.	On average mothers had a higher degree of education than fathers. 76% of mothers had middle school or highschool education compared to fathers – none of whom had attended highschool and 43% had primary school education.	The majority of families were engaged in farming or other value-chain activities associated with agriculture and farming i.e. rubber or trader. Those that specified housewife also often supported agricultural work. ³
Female: 28 years old			

1: 6 focus group discussions were conducted across 3 townships, 2 per township. All FGDs were sex segregated

WHO: YOUTH SURVEYED

Who did we talk to?



1. GENERAL

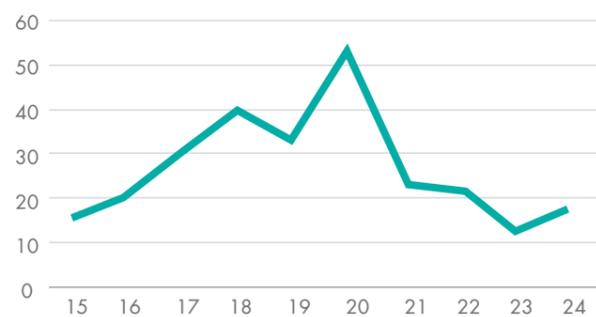
The majority of youth that participated were between 18 and 21 years old.

AVERAGE AGE	EDUCATION OBSERVATIONS	EMPLOYMENT OBSERVATIONS	MARITAL STATUS
20 years old Male: 19.6 Female: 19 Mon had the youngest average age of 18.75	Overall 91% of youth were living in the same place where they were born. The largest group to have moved – representing migration patterns – was G5: Hpa-An Township in which 28% of youth had moved in their lifetime. Males and females demonstrated similar experiences.	More young men (65%) felt that they had sufficient income than young women (53%) – although not significantly different. 83% of G7: Mon: Thanbyuzayat Township youth said that their family had sufficient income – considerably higher than G5 & G6 in Kayin state (~50%).	95% of young people were single. This was consistent across all groups. The only divorce rates (very low 2%) were reported by young women in both Kayin and Mon state.

7% of youth reported that someone in their family had a disability.

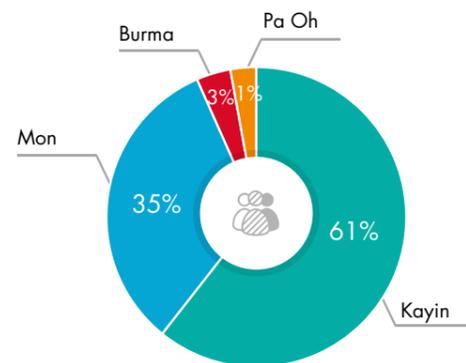
56% of young people were living with their family or both parents, while 21% were living with only one parent.

Age: 15 to 24 years old



Graph 1.5 Age of participants

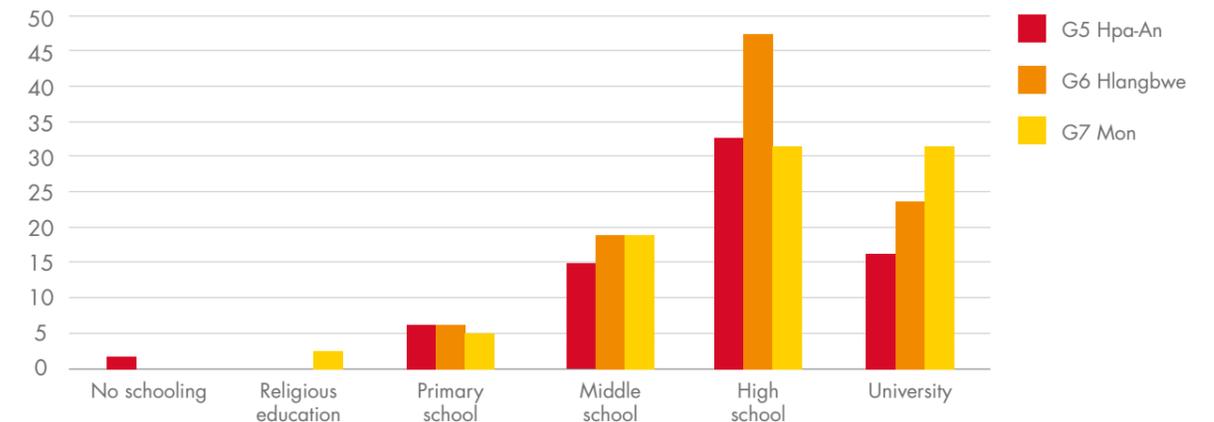
2. ETHNICITY



Graph 1.6 Ethnicity

3. EDUCATION

Only 1% of youth surveyed had 'no schooling' or only 'Religious education'.

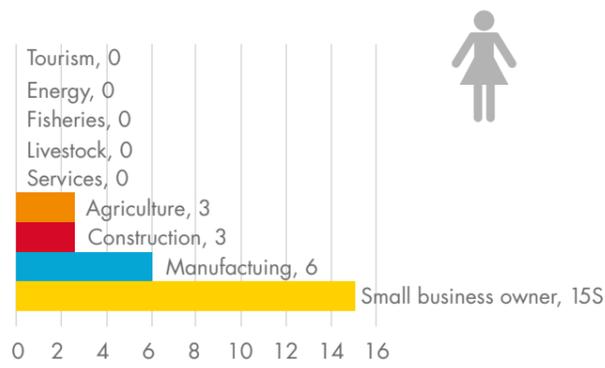


Graph 1.7 Education

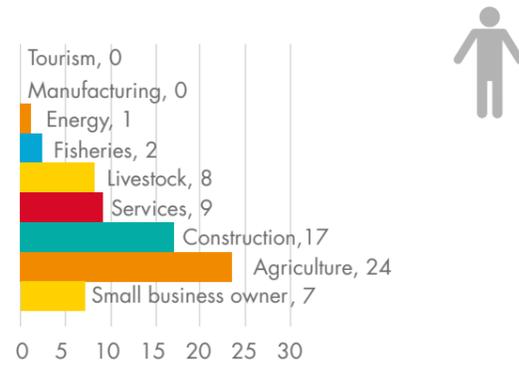
GENDER	ETHNICITY
Young women reported higher education levels with 51% in highschool (51%) and 30% in university than young men. More young men held only a primary school education (12%) than young women (4%). More males were likely to report 'basic' literacy levels than their female counterparts.	Almost all groups reported high levels of 'intermediate' literacy and numeracy – which is somewhat surprising given the high numbers of young people attending HS and university. G7: Mon state had the largest group attending university at 36% compared to G5 and G6 in Kayin state (22-24%).

4. EMPLOYMENT

GENDER	ETHNICITY
Young men (40%) were more likely to be working than female youth (28%). Women had considerably fewer sectors of work than men with the majority managing a small business followed by manufacturing (dressmaking/sewing). The majority of men are working in agriculture followed by construction and services.	Considerably fewer young people were working in G6: Kayin Hlaingbwe Township compared to other groups (86%). Only in G7 Mon State did women report working in construction and agriculture – albeit very few. Sectors of employment change according to the township. For example construction is highest in G5: Kaying Hpa-An followed by agriculture.



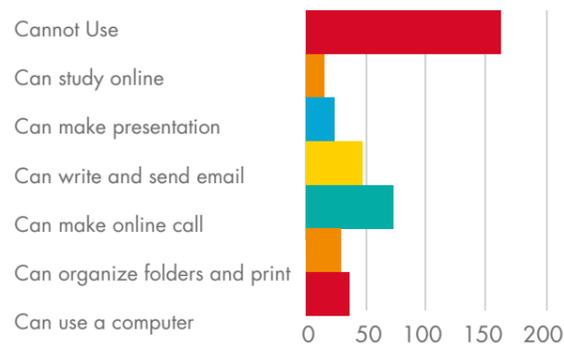
Graph 1.8 Sector of work: Female



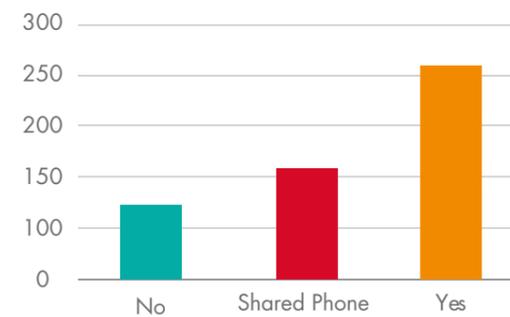
Graph 1.9 Sector of work: Male

5. TECHNOLOGY ACCESS AND SKILLS

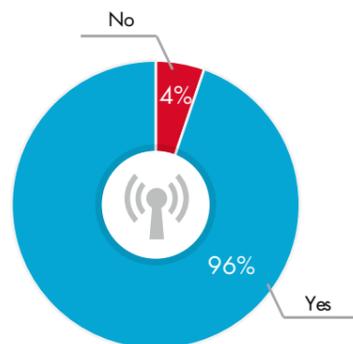
The majority of young people had little to no computer literacy.



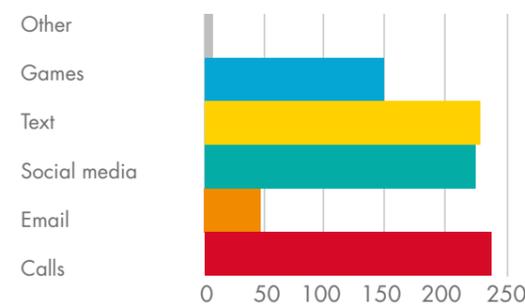
Graph 1.10 Computer literacy



Graph 1.11 Phone Ownership



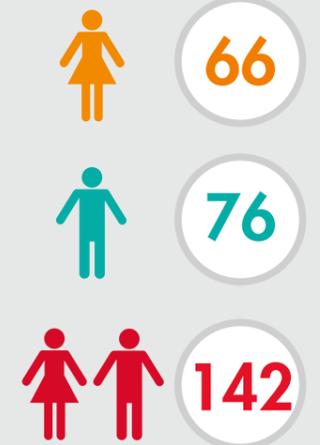
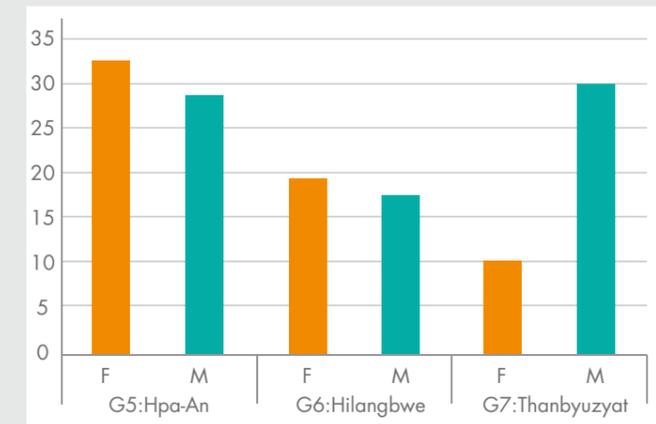
Graph 1.12 Mobile Data



Graph 1.13 Mobile Phone Usage

WHO: BUSINESSES

Who did we talk to?



1. GENERAL

Average Age:

- Male: 38 years old
- Female: 39 years old

Role:

- The majority of survey respondents were the business owner (78%) followed by manager (13%).

SIZE	TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT	LONGEVITY	GROWTH
57% of businesses have 2-5 people. 38% of female-headed businesses were a single employee in contrast to male-headed businesses which were more likely to have 2-5 people. The majority of large businesses were in G7: Mon state. G6: Hliangbwe had the smallest businesses (61% had one employee).	G7: Mon state offers the most diverse employment including all types from full-time to seasonal work.	Over 75% have been operating for more than 3 years – this is consistent across location and gender. G7: Mon had the greatest number of new businesses.	75% of businesses had not gained or lost employees. The most employee growth was in G7: Mon which reported that 24% of businesses had increased the number of employees.

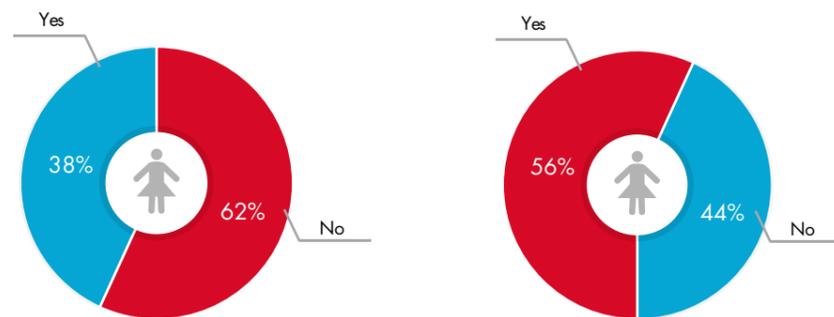
2. EDUCATION

GENDER	ETHNICITY
In Mon, males were twice as likely to have attended university than females. Both groups had a large portion of highschool and university graduates and only 1 business owner from each group that reported having 'no schooling'.	G7: Mon had the highest number of university-educated business owners at 49%, significantly higher than other groups. G6:Hliangbwe had the highest number of business owners with a middle school education or below (58%).



3. GENDER AND YOUTH

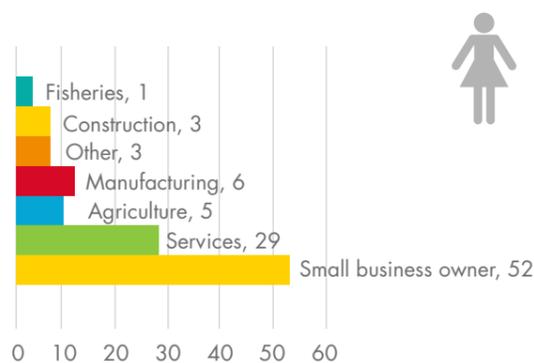
Businesses appear to be more inclined to hire youth than to hire women.



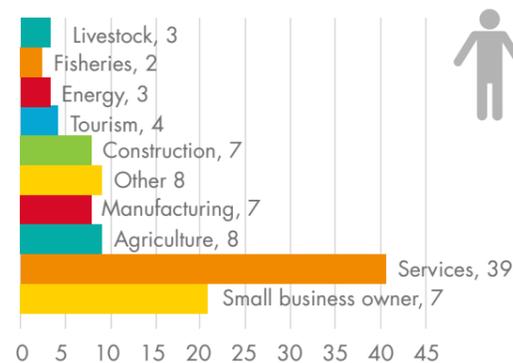
G6: Hliangbwe was far less likely to hire women (89% no) or youth (69%).

In contrast G7: Mon was far more likely to hire women (56%) and youth (78%).

4. SECTOR OF BUSINESSES



Graph1.16 Sector of work: Female

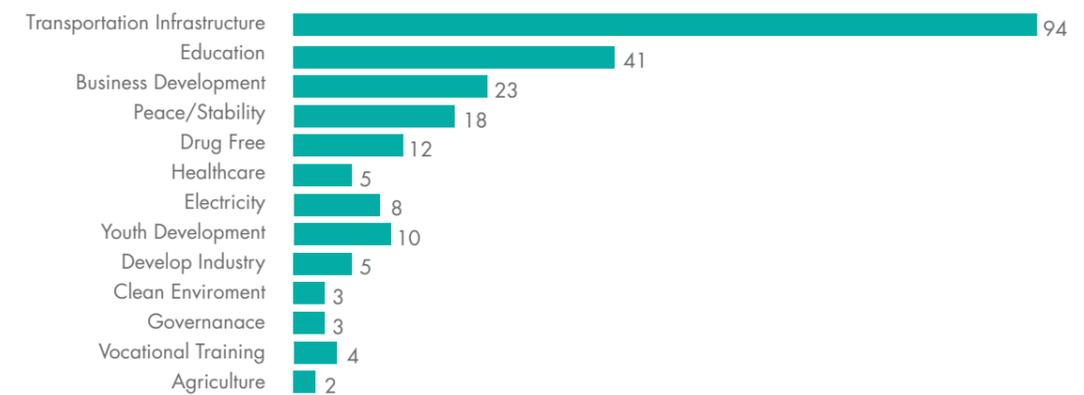


Graph1.17 Sector of work: Male

FINDINGS

1. YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES

When we asked young people what they wanted to change in their communities young men and women across all locations pointed to the need for better infrastructure including roads, bridges and canals. This was followed by better access to education, including building schools and libraries.



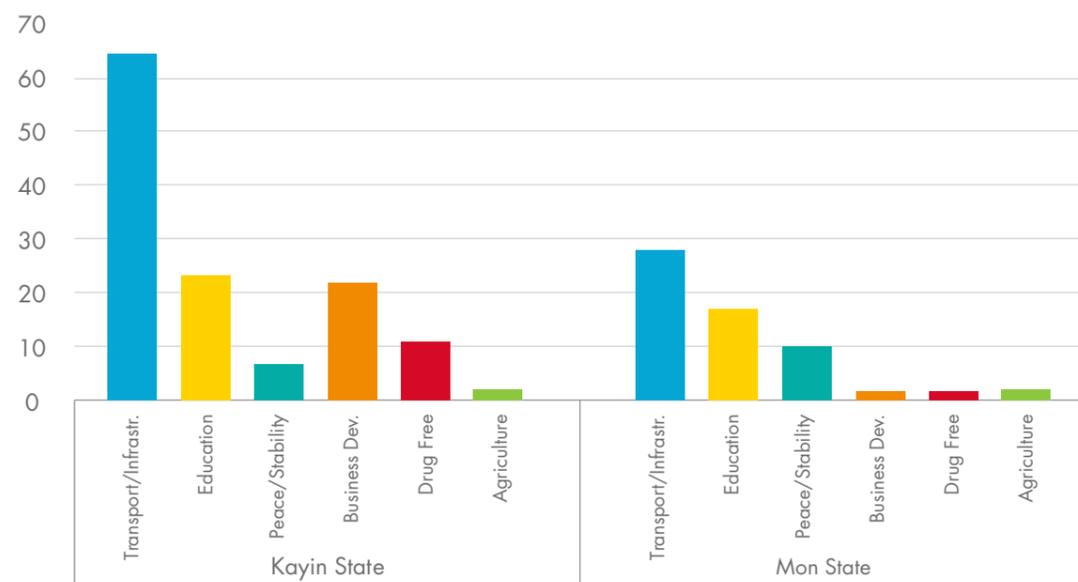
Graph 2.1. What youth want to change (overall)

The challenge of infrastructure and education are prevalent across the entire country, particularly with the high percentage of communities living in rural areas with low access to services. Kayin State, as highlighted earlier, has the 6th largest rural population in the country whereas Mon State is significantly more urbanized. The locations surveyed as part of this study, however, reflect the needs of rural communities and even in more urbanised states rural populations continue to be without basic infrastructure and education services. For example, the youth-led survey found that of those requesting education services 28 percent specifically requested to have access to a primary school, all of whom were from Kayin State.

Both Mon and Kayin State governments have listed infrastructure development in their strategic plans. In Kayin transportation and infrastructure is listed as the second state priority. In Mon infrastructure development is also listed among the top 6 priority sectors (order of priority not specified).^{xvi} Neither state, however, have listed education as an investment priority in their strategic plans.^{xvii}

Broadly speaking, as outlined above, young people across Kayin and Mon States identified infrastructure and education as priority needs. Beyond those two categories, however, other specific needs differed by geographic location, gender and age. At the state level youth in Kayin highlighted infrastructure, education and business development as their top three selectins while in Mon, while the first the third priority was peace and security.

Young women also unanimously listed infrastructure and education as the most important thing to change in their communities. Young men were much more likely to list the need for a drug free environment in Kayin state than their female peers and drugs were only mentioned by a few youth in Mon. Older youth (20 and above) - across both locations - placed more emphasis on business and industry development which appeared to be linked to their desire to for better, safer and more stable employment.



Graph 2.2 What youth want to change? (by state)

A statement released by the Mon State government is almost a mirror of the long list of challenges young people listed, however, the statement is notably missing a reference to education.

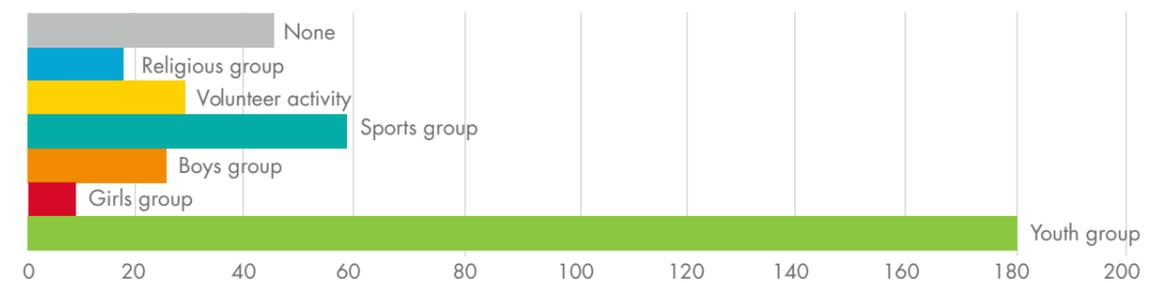
“The aims and objectives of the Mon State Government are: to restore peace and security, to improve transport infrastructure, to get electricity supply, to stop abusing drugs, to strengthen friendship among national brethren, to prevail rule of law, to promote socio-economic status of the people, to increase agriculture, to boost breeding, to promote tourism.”^{xviii}

While it is clear local governments recognize these challenges, they remain a defining factor in the lives of young people and are likely linked the high rates of migration in this region by youth (see migration section below).

2. YOUTH PARTICIPATION PATHWAYS

Cultural systems, national systems and organizational structures can make it difficult for youth to participate in their communities, even in youth-focused programs. This is particularly relevant in cultures such as Myanmar where youth have a very specific role in the cultural hierarchy and traditional social values respect the wisdom and experience that comes with age. Cultural norms affect youth participation in political processes, the role of youth within civil society at large and the way parents perceive their engagement. Young women face additional cultural barriers due to societal expectations on them to maintain the household and care for children.^{xix}

When we asked young people if they were participating in youth groups or other community groups youth in both states reported to be very active in community-based activities outside of their school and work lives. Although this certainly varied by gender, ethnicity, geographic location and to some degree education, 82 percent of the 265 youth surveyed across all groups reported that they were participating in community-based activities. Most commonly youth were participating in youth groups - both males and females. Participation in sports groups, however was unique to, and dominated by, young men. In fact, not a single female reported participating in sports group.



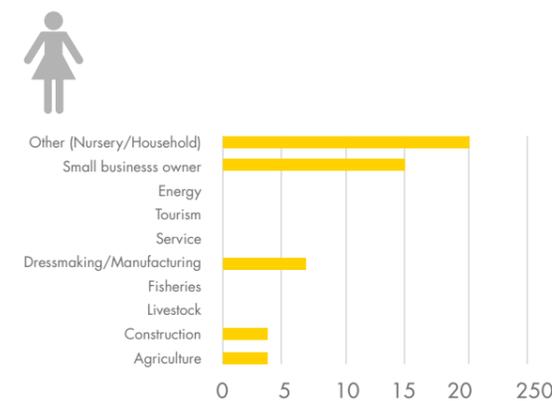
Graph 2.3 Group activities

The findings related to the 18 percent who reported that they were not participating in any activities are also insightful. Of this non-participating group, 76 percent were young women, with only 12 young men stating that they were not participating in any form of activity. Most of these young women were in Kayin state and reported to be working but they reported being ‘unpaid’. Whether young men were working or the sector of work did not appear to have a significant impact on male participation rates. Overall - for both male and female youth - those that reported to be working in seasonal, daily labour or part-time employment were more likely to be engaged in some form of group activity.

When asked why some young people don’t have time or space to participate in activities young people noted:

“Due to their struggle for their livelihood, they don’t have time to join the youth groups: they don’t have the connection/networks. Since these youth groups are voluntary and don’t get paid, they don’t want to work as free of charge; family members do not encourage to get involved..”

Kayin State, Focus Group Discussion, Mixed Group (male and female)



Graph 2.4 Female Youth Activities



Graph 2.5 Male Youth Activities

In terms of volunteer activities, young women expressed slightly more interest than their male peers; 92 percent and 80 percent, respectively. Youth from Mon State, interestingly, showed both the highest level of female interest in volunteering (94%) and the lowest level of male interest in volunteering (42%) across all groups.

“Some young people participate in community affairs but they are not appreciated... they [adults] don't respect the suggestions and opinions of young people. That's the reason the youth are participating less and less.”

Mon State, Focus Group Discussion, Young Women

3. YOUTH EMPLOYMENT: REALITY AND ASPIRATIONS

Employment aspirations across all locations were often quite different than the reality in which youth were working. Only 35 percent of the total youth surveyed were working only 15 percent were female. The majority of young men were employed in agriculture, in line with national trends and statistics for the country and the region. If you combine agriculture with livestock, it accounted for 48 percent of employment for young men, followed closely by construction. The majority of young women were employed in 'other' which included babysitting/nursery care, teaching and household work followed by small business owner.

Parental Aspirations

Across all locations both mothers and fathers desired respected, honorable professions for their children, including specific mention of doctor, teacher and engineer. Fathers also felt that a mechanic, for a young man, was a good job. Parents, and young people, both emphasized the desire for work that was well respected by the community and had a degree of status. All of the professions mentioned provide a safe and decent income, while working in safe conditions. Teacher was the most commonly mentioned as an honorable job that gives back to the community and was listed by parents and youth alike. It was more commonly emphasized for young women. Parents did not mention any of the sectors that youth were currently working as aspirational for their children. Fathers when asked about training (see below) did request specific support in agriculture and other sectors but when discussing aspirational employment agriculture, construction and small business development were not listed as priorities.

“Young people feel safe and dignified when they have a regular job.”

Young Man, Kayin-Hpa-An

Youth Perceptions

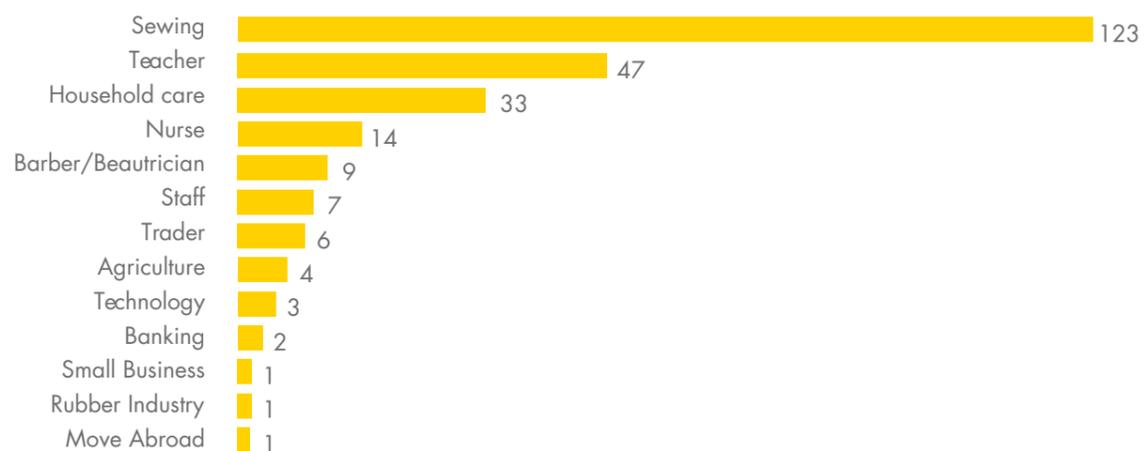
Desired employment by gender. When youth were asked what type of jobs were the most desirable for men and women the selections were very gendered. There were very clear female and male pathways to employment across all locations. For young women the options were very limited and focused on safety and flexibility. For young men there were a variety of options, all of which were situated outside of the home and often associated with some form of manual labour. When asked about hiring women, a key informant interviewee with an agricultural firm in Kayin State said that women would not be able to do the job due to the degree and conditions of the travel required. Staff frequently had to travel long distances and spend the night in a store room among a group of workers, all male. The interviewee felt that men could do this and indeed were expected to, but that women could not and likely would not want to.

“I would like to get the jobs with good income and safety. I want the girls to work as hair-stylist, owner of beauty salon, teacher, nurse and hotel employee. I want the boys to work as motorcycle mechanics, barbers and staff. Because these jobs are dignified and safe.”

Young Man, Kayin State



The most desired job for young women, from the perspective of both young men and women, was sewing, across all locations, far and above all other professions. Teacher and household care were next and this varied only slightly across locations. Household care was the second most popular choice for young men while young women prioritised sewing, followed by teacher and then household care. Agriculture was in the top 10 but with only 4 votes out of 251 and tourism - a growing sector in both states - wasn't listed at all but could fall under 'staff'. What women want to do were a direct reflection of what young women are already doing with the exception of small business which is listed only once as a desired profession and was the second most common type of employment. That being said sewing and beautician could both be classified as a small businesses depending on the context.



Graph 2.6 Youth Perceptions: Desired Profession Young Women

“The most dignified and safe jobs for girls are sewing, beauty salons, hotel staff and indoor work. Also working as a teacher is a good job. Sewing is a good job because you can work at home, work for yourself and be creative with your own designs. A beauty salon provides good income and you can rest when you need to because it is your own business. Working as a teacher is loved by all villagers because it is good for the community. Working as a nurse is also loved by villagers and it is safe.”

Young Woman, Mon State

“Teaching is a dignified job because teachers are respected by everyone. The retirement pension can be claimed after service term is complete.”

Young Woman, Kayin State

“Government, company and medical staff are good jobs because they provide a safe workplace and a stable job.”

Young Man, Mon State

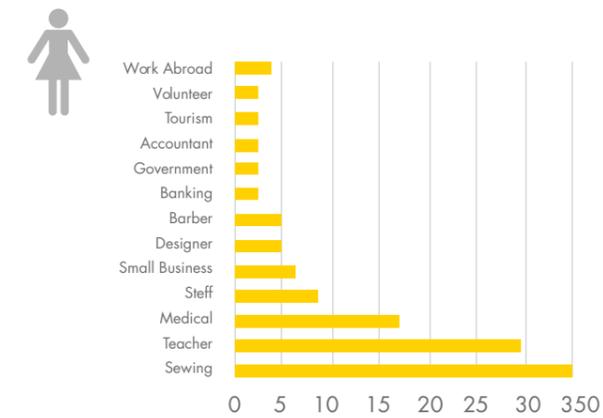
According to both male and female youth the most desired profession for a young man is to become a motorbike mechanic, followed by a teacher and then to work in agriculture. Interestingly, when only young men weighed in on aspirational careers for themselves motorbike remained in first place but it was followed by business owner and then agriculture. Teacher was the 9th more desired profession for young men - according to young men and the 2nd more desired by young women.

KAYIN STATE	MON STATE
1. Motorcycle	1. Business Owner
2. Agriculture/Teacher	2. Rubber Industry
3. Construction	3. Agriculture

Aspirational professions for young men were quite similar to their current work, with a few notable differences. The most notable difference is the preference for motorbike repair which was not listed among current employment. Additionally the absence of livestock which was the second most common type of work was not listed at all. Overall agriculture remains highly desired, however it is not even in the top 3 most desired professions in Kayin state and yet it dominates in Mon state. Lastly, construction also appears to be less desirable, although man young men reported to have been working in construction.

When we asked youth what job they wanted for themselves, as expected, the jobs mirrored what they had listed above with some interesting exceptions and expansions. First of all, young people listed over 100 different professions. Some interests were very focused and linked to a particular field, such as online banking service manager, air-conditioning repair, or artificial intelligence teacher while some were more general, like sewing or teacher.

Among young women aspirational jobs did not change - most women wanted to work in sewing or teaching, but new additions included medical (inclusive of nursing) and working as staff at a company. Small business - of which many young women are currently employed - also became more popular.



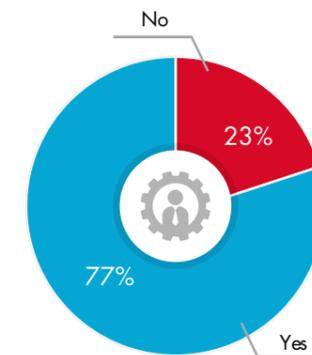
Graph 2.8 Desired Female Youth Activities



Graph 2.9 Desired Male Youth Activities

Motorbike repair remained a top aspirational job for young men in Kayin State - and will also be a popular training request - but very few young men surveyed are actually employed in this sector. Additionally agriculture was absent in Hpa-An but reappeared in Hlaingbwe and had always been prominent both in terms of current employment and aspirational employment for young men.

The majority of young people felt that they were able to get the jobs that they wanted within their community, with young women being slightly more optimistic at 89 percent than young men at 79 percent. The

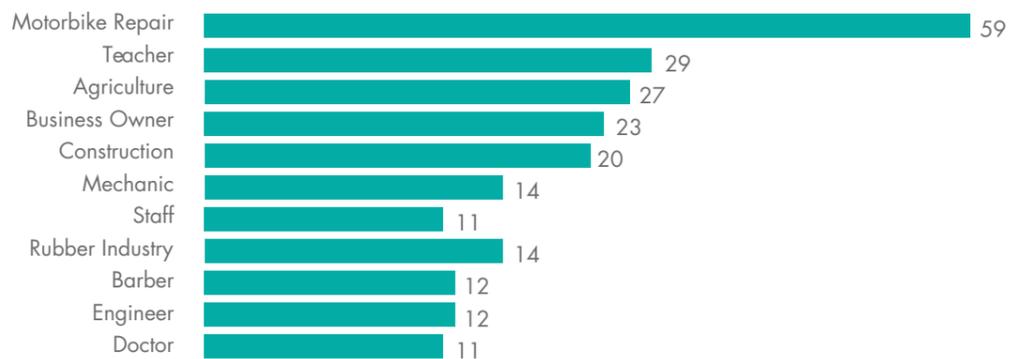


Graph 2.10 Youth Perceptions: Are you able to get this job?

exception, however, was young men in Hpa-An, Kayin State. This group demonstrated the lowest confidence in desired job acquisition, with only 58% feeling confident they could get a job in their desired field. It is worth noting that this group was most interested in motorbike repair, a sector in which they were not already working. Additionally, with the number of training providers available in Hpa-An this sector and the small businesses that have developed as a result could have saturated the market, making it more difficult to set-up new motorbike repair shops.

For young men, interestingly, technology showed up in the top three professions overall. It hadn't been listed before either as current profession or something that was desirable for men and women in the community. However, when examined at the township level young men had very different employment aspirations for themselves.

Kayin: Hpa-An	Kayin: Hlaingbwe	Mon: Thanbyuzayat
1. Motorbike repair	1. Technology	1. Small business
2. Barber	2. Motorbike repair	2. Mechanic
3. Small business	3. Agriculture	3. Rubber Industry



Graph 2.7 Youth Perceptions: Desired Profession Young Men

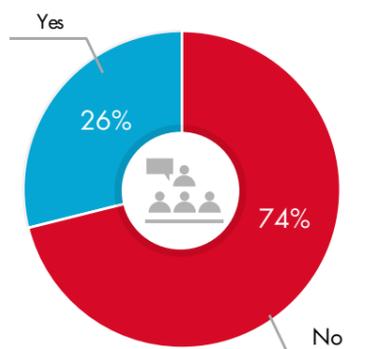
4. YOUTH TECHNICAL SKILL DEVELOPMENT: ATTENDANCE, ASPIRATIONS AND OPPORTUNITY

Young people clearly placed considerable importance on education as a viable and positive pathway in their development. Very few, however, referenced vocational training as the most important need for their community, although a handful of youth, representing all townships surveyed, specifically requested vocational training opportunities as the one thing that they wanted to change. This sentiment is highlighted by a recent World Bank report, which notes that 'only 10 percent of Myanmar people have supplemented their education with technical training.' This low rate of participation in vocational and technical training, likely linked to access, is in spite of the report further stating that such training is important for longer-term economic development.**



Vocational Training Attendance

Low participation rates were reflected in the survey - only 26 percent of young people had taken (or are currently taking) a vocational training course of some kind. When asked why youth were not attending courses youth highlighted lack of transportation, lack of training locations, associated costs of participation and parental permission to attend. A young person in Mon was applauded by his peers during the focus group when he said that “all classes are only in downtown in Than Phyu Zayat township, Mawlamyaing township and Yangon township,” making it impossible for young people outside of those areas to access these courses regularly. Training is also limited in Kayin where six out of seven TVET schools are offering the training courses only in Hpa-an.^{xxi} Other barriers cited included lack of interest and the lack of basic numeracy and literacy to access even the basic level courses.



Graph 2.11 Youth Participation in Vocational Training

As youth grew older participation rates gradually increased, with the highest attendance rates between the ages of 21 and 24 (35-40%) and the lowest between the ages of 15 and 17 (0-10%). Participation also varied significantly across geographic location and gender. In Kayin State (both Hpa-An and Hlaingbwe) young men were much more likely to have attended a vocational training course than young women. In contrast in Mon State young women (50%) were significantly more likely to have attended vocational training courses than young men (14%).

STATE	KAYIN STATE		MON STATE
Township	Hpa-An	Hlaingbwe	Thanbyuzayat
Female	Dressmaking	Dressmaking only	Dressmaking
Male	Welding & Construction	Auto Mechanic	Computer

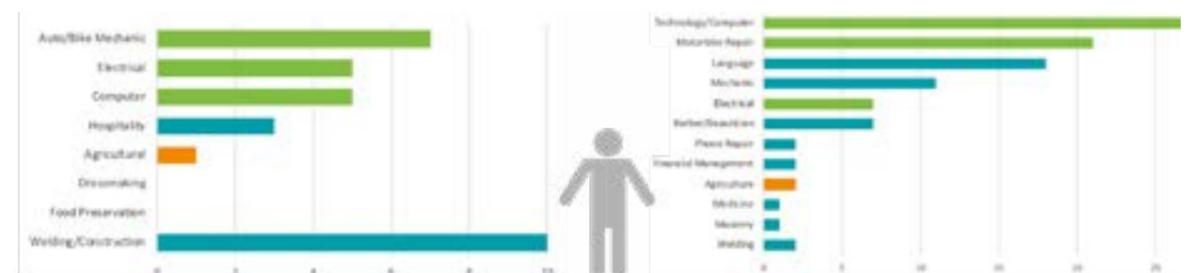
Attended and Desired Vocational Training

The assessment also looked at which types of training the youth had attended, as well as identifying aspirational training that they wanted to take. Across all locations young women attended very few courses - and offerings were considerably fewer than young men. The courses attended were quite aligned with desired courses. Across all locations young women had taken dressmaking more than any other course. In fact in Hlaingbwe (Kayin State) women reported having only taken dressmaking courses. Other courses taken by young women included computer and hospitality with a handful of young women reporting to have taken agriculture, food preservation and electrical courses. However, when asked about what other courses they might want to take dressmaking was still by far the most popular but they were also interested in language courses followed by beautician, medicine (nursing) and life skills. Only one woman from Kayin reported to have taken an agriculture course and not a single female reported desired to take courses in agriculture or related work as noted below.



Overall the most young men reported to have attended welding and construction while in contrast this was notably one of the least desired training requests. Construction wasn't listed at all and welding only had requests from a handful of young men. Auto/motorbike mechanic was the highest course attended and was the second most requested course across all locations. Ultimately young men wanted more courses in language and computers. Only one young man had attended agricultural vocational training in Mon and agriculture was requested by only 2 young men, both of whom were from Kayin State, Hlaingbwe township. Neither of them had ever taken a vocational training course before.

In terms of desired training young men and women similarly prioritised computer/technology skills and languages – a popular choice for both young women and young men. English was the most desired



language course youth also requested Korean, Japanese and other regional languages. The emphasis on language and computers is consistent with national trends and business demands, particularly in more urban centers. The recent TVET System Review found that computer and general information technology (65%) and foreign languages (57%) were the most desired skills for business development in Myanmar.^{xxii}

Vocational Trainings and the Market

Overall, the vocational course offerings available are limited by a number of factors making the pool very limited and also very gendered – factors listed below:

1. Vocational training providers offer a limited selection of courses for young people overall and there are even fewer offerings available to young women. In an interview with the GTHS Director in Hpa-An GTHS before 2009 the school had significantly more course offerings. Today, however, there are few courses because of teacher availability and the need for graduates to find work placement upon graduation. For example, the school previously had computer training but that had been stopped because only 20 percent of graduated youth were finding employment - even though computers is a transferable skill.

International Organizations (short-courses) ²	GTHS (long courses)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • House wiring • Dressmaking/Advanced Sewing • Steel and iron welding • Haircutting • Motorbike repair 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building (construction) masonry, carpentry, bricklaying • Electronic - TV, socket, radio repairs. • Electrical – wiring, motor repair (water machines) • Auto machine – motorbike repair. • Machining – welding, cutting iron

2. Courses being offered must be accepted and supported by the community - and particularly parents. Parents are frequently the deciding factor in what courses their children will attend. To ensure and build community buy-in organizations survey the community which can lead to perceptions of what is valuable rather than what the market needs.
3. While agencies and partners align courses to state or national growth sectors, these assessments are frequently not reflected in local and rural realities. While electrification or construction might be the state priority, due to their location in rural areas or education skills ,young people - even with training -are not able to access higher paying sectors because jobs are going to migrants from other communities – particularly the Irrawaddy region (in both Mon and Kayin) who have higher skills.
4. Lastly, communities have very gendered expectations of employment and the courses being offered are a direct reflection of this. For young women the work arena is so limited that the primary entry point is sewing and dressmaking activities that can be done at home. In GTHS courses in Hpa-An, for example, only 5-10% of youth attending are female.

2: Some examples, this does not include a complete list of course offerings available in Mon and Kayin State



Vocational Training in Agriculture

As noted above in the list of desired and attended training priorities agriculture is notably not listed for young men or young women. Given the high number of youth employed in this sector it is important to understand the desirability of this sector as highlighted below:

1. The jobs available in agriculture are either low-paying daily labour (and thus don't require a particular skill) or are technical / managerial and require certifications and higher levels of education. As a result, for youth with little/no education, short-courses and vocational trainings will have a limited impact on the level of earnings, especially for those lacking the skills, education and experience necessary to access the jobs with higher earning potential.

“ It is mandatory to have a qualification from Agricultural Institute (Degree), they must speak Kayin language as they will also have to travel to villages. ”

Key Informant Interview, Agriculture Inputs Company

“ Along with a degree in agriculture youth need interpersonal skills to work with shops, professional experience and problem solving. ”

Key Informant Interview, Agriculture Inputs Company

2. Agriculture sector is shifting and is not seen as stable. The majority of interviewees when asked about the agricultural sector noted the current instability and shifts in the sector, making it less and less appealing for employment.
3. Trainings available are limited and were often cited as 'not effective'. There are very few vocational training actors providing agriculture training. Training offerings are generally provided to 'farmers' rather than a course-offering around a particular skill development i.e. small engine repair. Most trainings are delivered by the Ministry of Agriculture and when asked why vocational training providers aren't working in this space they said work with Ministry was challenging and does not target low-skilled youth.



“ Although the government shares technology and training it is not effective for application. ”

Key Informant Interview, Kayin State

Perception of Effectiveness

When asked why youth selected these courses and the effectiveness of vocational training, responses varied across locations and the type of courses offered. In the focus group discussions youth from Kayin (G5 & G6, male and female) were far more positive about the follow-on opportunities associated with vocational training. They saw vocational training as a step toward employability. They felt that youth who attended courses would be able to find work as a tailor, barber/beautician, mechanic or electrician. Some young people highlighted that courses support household savings and provide the potential for future employment.

“ If they know how to sew, they don't need to go to the tailor and that can save both time and costs. They can sew their own clothes to their taste and can also make money.”

G6: Kayin, Hlaingbwe, FGD Female

In contrast, youth in Mon (G7, male and female) felt that vocational trainings were too short and youth are not able to apply their skills in the real world after the training and that they require more advanced training. Sewing was somewhat of an exception, however. Youth felt that if you were able to make a dress then you could “make a good amount of extra money” and are able to work in their spare time, in their home. This was only if they had the skill to design and make a dress, which often also requires more and advanced training. They felt that motorbike repair was another example of a skill that required additional training to be effective but they noted that basic training could be useful for resiliency in the home. Overall, however, youth felt that they needed additional training to be able to make an income and be competitive.

Despite the differences of opinions regarding the effectiveness of the training, youth from both Kayin and Mon highlighted the importance of these courses as a way to build skills and engage in positive activities rather than to become engaged in drugs or other more negative pathways. Additionally, all groups emphasized the importance of building skills to find jobs within their communities so they do not have to go abroad to find work.

New Course Ideas

Additional ideas were shared by youth in a focus group discussion settings below:

“ Courses about fertilizer, introduce new rubber technology training, entrepreneurship for farmers, a fire-fighting- farmers need this skill.”

Male, Mon State

“ Advanced mechanic courses that teach youth how to work with the computer systems in cars or motorbikes would be useful and will help people living inside of the village.”

Male, Kayin State

“ Nursing assistant training for young people that have middle school to high school education would be useful and could address the huge gap at the community level in the healthcare system. Also jobs related to medicine and production of natural medicinal products.”

Mixed Group, Mon State

“ New farming technologies and techniques - particularly related to managing crops in summer months.”

Female, Mon State

Interestingly, the majority of new courses recommended in the focus group discussions were focused on agricultural opportunities and new technologies however in the survey young people did not reflect a desire for agricultural courses.

5. YOUTH SOFT SKILL DEVELOPMENT: DEMAND AND OPPORTUNITIES

There is extensive international research demonstrating that youth require a hybrid mixture of soft, hard and vocational skills to succeed in the workplace in the 21st century.^{xxiii} A report published by a group of donors in 2017 – USAID, Mastercard Foundation, and the ILO argued that life skills development should focus on the five sets of skills - positive self-concept, self-control, communication, social skills and high-order thinking (which includes problem-solving, critical thinking and decision-making).^{xxiv} In this section we are using a broad definition of life skills to include life skills such as communication and leadership and the skills young people need to navigate their lives and their careers such as financial literacy.

The majority of young people had not taken life skills due to the same availability and access challenges listed previously. There were not any considerable differences across location or gender - overall 80 to 85 percent of all young people had not participated in life skills training. However, during focus group discussions youth frequently mentioned the importance and need for life skills to access employment and below is an outline of the life skills courses taken.



PART II: YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PATHWAYS

1. EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS

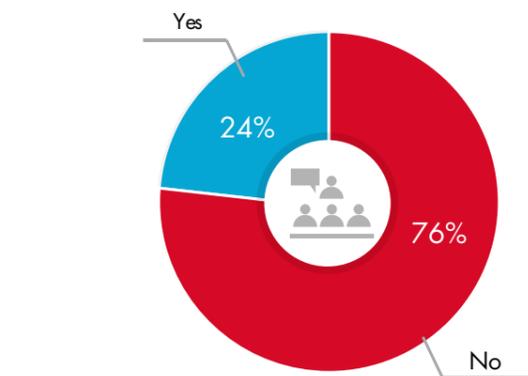
Youth face many challenges accessing employment in Myanmar and the relatively high unemployment rates in Kayin (7.5%) and Mon (6.2%) compared to 3% nationally make finding and keeping jobs even more difficult.^{xxv} According to the ILO, one of the most important determinants of youth employment is the strength of the economy measured by changes in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and youth unemployment rates are considerably more sensitive to changes in GDP growth compared to adults - making them more vulnerable in a shifting economy.^{xxvi} Among the youth surveyed across all locations only 34 percent were working - the type of work specified was mostly paid labour and most youth listed they were working full-time, this did not vary significantly by gender or location.

Regarding the views of business owners in Kayin and Mon States, they emphasised the need for hard-work and communication. In Kayin State all male and female-headed businesses prioritised hard-work as the most important life skill followed closely by communication. In Mon State all businesses listed communication as the most important followed closely by hard-work and teamwork. In focus group discussions with youth in Mon State the girls group highlighted the need for concentration, patience, attention to detail and punctuality. Boys from Mon highlighted interpersonal skills.

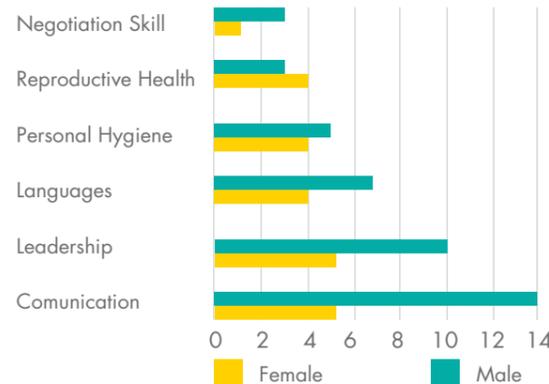
“Being educated is not everything. It is necessary to have interpersonal skills and to establish friendly relationships between one another.”

Young Woman, Mon State, FGD

Access to financial literacy training and life skill development was very low. This lack of financial understanding is particularly visible when discussing the value of small business development and the foundational financial risk and opportunity associated with starting a business. Some young people recognise the need for business skills, however, financial management (and similar types of business skill development) was a very low priority in terms of training needs across all locations.



Graph 2.14 Life Skill Training Attendance



Graph 2.15 Life Skills Courses Attended



Graph 2.16 Desired Life Skills: Businesses

Graph 2.17 Financial Literacy Training Attendance

In terms of payment most youth reported moderate income levels. Only male respondents reported to have high income levels and both groups reported to have only a small number of unpaid.

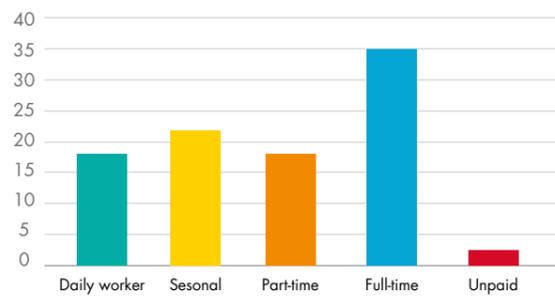
When we asked young people what challenges they faced when seeking employment across all locations both young men and women highlighted the need for more support and mentorship. Overall 46 percent of all young people said they needed support followed by lack of skills (23%). No one listed discrimination or gender issues as an employment challenge and security was only mentioned by a handful of youth. This could be around the sensitivity of reporting these challenges and the comfort level in explaining and gathering this information by youth facilitators, however it is an interesting finding as it could demonstrate a lack of understanding or access to these issues.

Young women overwhelmingly pointed to a lack of mentorship and support as their primary challenge (57%) - no other categories came close. For young men however, while lack of support ranked as the top challenge (41%), lack of skills was close behind (31%). In Kayin State, in both Hpa-An and Hliangwe, listed lack of support (44%) and lack of skills (28%) as their primary concerns. In Mon half of young people listed lack of support as their primary concern followed by 'other' at 25 percent. Other consisted of 'I don't know' and 'I already have a business'.

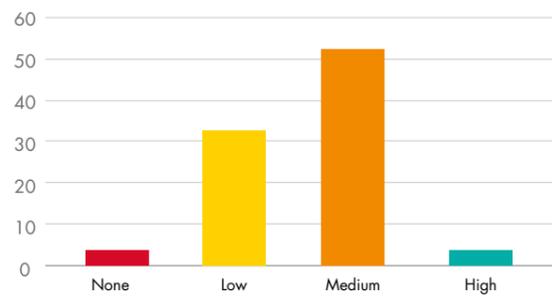
Across all locations and among young men and women lack of documentation was an issue, while not a dominant concern it was consistently around 10 to 12 percent of young people in each location. In terms of documentation youth referenced that this has become more of a problem in urbanised areas where businesses were asking for civil documentation and also certifications for access to employment.

Documentation is affecting access to employment in the more urbanized areas, at the town level, not the village level. The remote rural areas do not need any documentation because in urban areas jobs are asking for mandatory documents to make sure the employees are 'good employees or not'. - Young Man, Kayin State

To better understand youth barriers and opportunities to employment we asked youth who had taken vocational courses about their experience post-training. Upon initial reflection the follow-up looks very positive with 95 percent of youth reporting that they had engaged in some form of activity that supported better livelihoods outcomes.



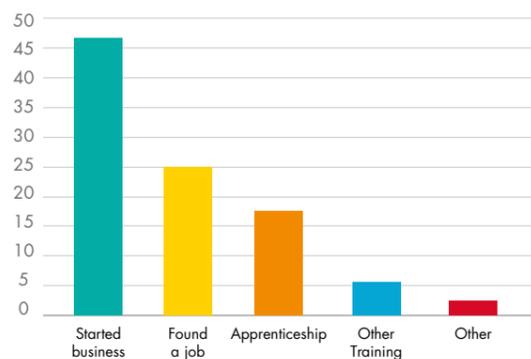
Graph 2.18 Type of Work



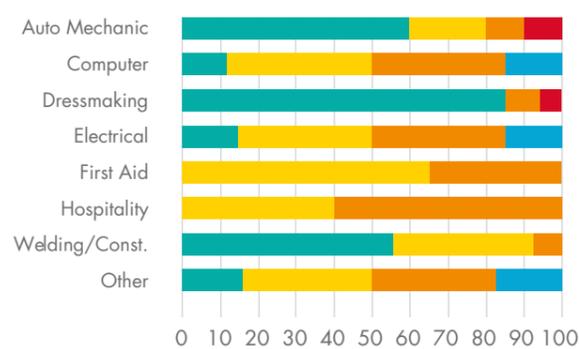
Graph 2.19 Level of Payment

After the vocational training in Kayin State women were far more likely than their males peers to attend additional trainings, while males were more likely to have 'found a job'. This could be attributed to the types of training available to young women versus young men. For example, because the majority of young women are taking dressmaking and will be working alone, at home, and they need very specific skills to be able to be marketable. Young men, in contrast, are taking a variety of other trainings and they are more likely to be able to work in a shop and build their skills through their work. In Mon State women were far more likely to 'start a business' (71%) than their male peers (20%).

The majority - 72 percent of young people - listed that they had taken or had access to more than one activity post-training. For example, 83 percent of young people who reported taking an apprenticeship also reported that they had found a job or had taken another training course. The most common combination was apprenticeship and found a job. Courses specific outcomes are listed below.



Graph 2.20 Pathways to employment post training



Graph 2.21 Vocational Training and Employment



We do not know the quality and longevity of the activities post training. However, through the focus group discussions young people did share their experiences and opinions around pathways to employment post vocational training.

“The trainings that youth attended could not make enough income because they are only short-term and cannot be applied in the real work. Youth require more training.”

Mixed group, Kayin State

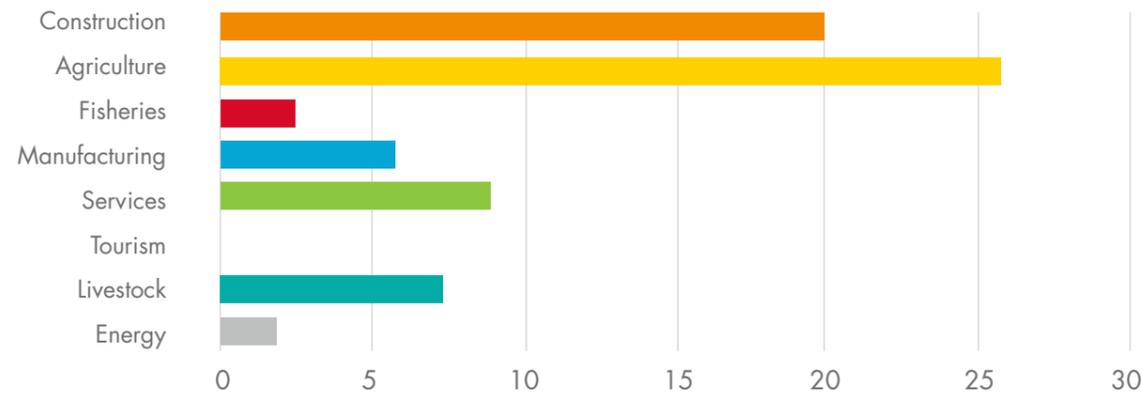
“The community thinks that because they have finished vocational training such as sewing course, beautician training, electrician training, mechanic training and phone repair courses that they will get a job but what they have learned cannot be applied well in real life. For example, a friend of mine took a mechanic training with the ambition to run a motorcycle repair shop - but after 3 months of training he cannot apply what he has learned in real life.”

Young man, Mon State

A labour market assessment in Kayin found that young people who work in auto/motorbike repair and metalwork, after receiving vocational training, only stay for a few months or less which is not enough time for them to become skilled workers. The same report highlighted that program graduates were rarely able to set-up shops in their villages because most dressmaking, motorbike repair and other similar services are available in nearby urban areas where there are more options for consumers.^{xxvii}

2. SECTOR ORIENTATION AND A LOOK AT AGRICULTURE

Nationally, the agricultural sector accounts for 36 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employs a majority of the workforce – mostly in low-income labour, low-skilled labour.^{xxviii} The GDP of both Kayin and Mon reflect these trends as well - with agriculture accounting for 35% in Kayin and 32% in Mon, followed by Industry (24%/39%) and Service (41%/48%).^{xxix} Youth survey participants that were working also reflected these statistics with the majority of young people - mostly male - working in agriculture in both states, only in Hpa-An township (Kayin) were youth more likely to be working in construction. This likely reflects the work opportunities in Hpa-An town which constitutes 56 percent of Kayin’s GDP.^{xxx}



Graph 2.22 Employment Sectors

According to the World Bank more labor-intensive sectors (agriculture, construction and manufacturing) have stronger effects on poverty alleviation by increasing absolute income - which aligns well with the current conditions in Kayin and Mon State.^{xxxi} However, according to key informant interviews, agriculture in particular has a deficit of decent work opportunities - particularly for youth - and currently produces the worst paid, worst conditions and least protected job opportunities. There is potential, however, in agriculturally related value chain activities - such as machine repair, tractor and equipment drivers, fertilizer production/training and distribution - but these jobs depend on an investment in the sector, introduction and uptake of technology and new ways of working.

Nationally sector growth is coming from energy, construction, manufacturing, tourism and information technology.^{xxxi} This is also mirrored in both state’s investment strategies below:

KAYIN STATE Investment Strategy	MON STATE Investment Strategy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture • Transportation • Construction • Rental Fees and other services • Communication • Industrial & Electrical Power 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture • Fisheries • Tourism • Trading • Manufacturing • Infrastructure Industry



While development across these sectors exists in both states young people are still struggling to access employment. A labour market assessment by the Adventist Development and Relief Agency in Kayin found that there were development and employment opportunities in garment factories, hotels and shopping malls which could provide job opportunities and employability to the youth in Hpa-An and Hlaingbwe townships but these businesses were not hiring local youth. The study found that employer expectations were too high and local youth did not have the appropriate skills. In key informant interviews with some hotels in G5: Kayin, Hpa-An hotel staff said that very few people working in the hotel industry were from surrounding villages and many people come from Hpa-An town or people from Ayeyarwady region who were already in Hpa-An for training. The Adventist study highlighted that mobile phone service and sales shops, shopping malls, banks and hotels in Hpa-an township required that candidates possess qualifications such as university graduate or matriculation, English proficiency, and relevant work experience.^{xxxi} Additionally, there was a shortage of industries in Kayin State overall which could provide opportunities for low or semi-skilled workers.^{xxxi}

AGRI-FOOD SECTOR FOCUS

Given the prominence of agriculture this assessment looked closer at the conditions and opportunities within the agricultural sector for young people.

“According to the World Bank the agriculture sector has the potential to play a more important role in expanding Myanmar’s job opportunities through the development of rural value chains and around the production and processing of higher value agriculturally-based commodities. One option would be to develop agro-value chain jobs that feed into (creating backward linkages with) or emanate out from (creating forward linkages with) primary agricultural production. A second option would be to shift current agricultural production toward higher-value products for internal or external consumption. Both these options are attractive for Myanmar.”



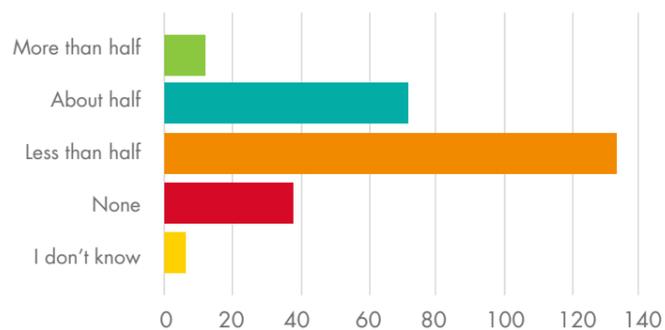
Global experience has shown that the food industry can offer good jobs and income opportunities for both rural and urban populations as countries develop. Therefore, the ability of the agriculture sector to provide better and more sustainable jobs will be crucial for Myanmar's development.^{xxxv}

While agriculture appears to offer a wealth of opportunities it also brings with it plenty of challenges including issues of low productivity, lack of formal work, exploitative labour conditions, low capacity of workers and farmers, lack of formal organizations and outdated financial policies.^{xxxvi}

Potential of Agriculture

Agriculture appears to have considerable potential but also faces a lot of challenges, particularly for young people who are just entering the market. Additionally, among youth surveyed agriculture was not high on the list of aspirational employment or related training. Young women didn't even list agriculture and for young men references were very limited. However, when we asked young people and families about ideas for new trainings agriculture was one of the most prominently featured sectors (see above).

Of the youth that participated in the assessment 30 percent reported to be working in agriculture and if you add animal husbandry this number jumps to 40 percent. Of those working in agriculture 88 percent were male with the majority from Mon State (60%) followed by Hpa-An (26%) and Hlaingbwe (14%) in Kayin State. Interestingly, of those working in agriculture only one person reported to be unpaid. Most young people, working in agriculture, reported to be seasonal workers (52%) followed by full-time workers (40%).



Graph 2.23 Overall Perceptions of youth employment in agriculture

Perception of youth employment

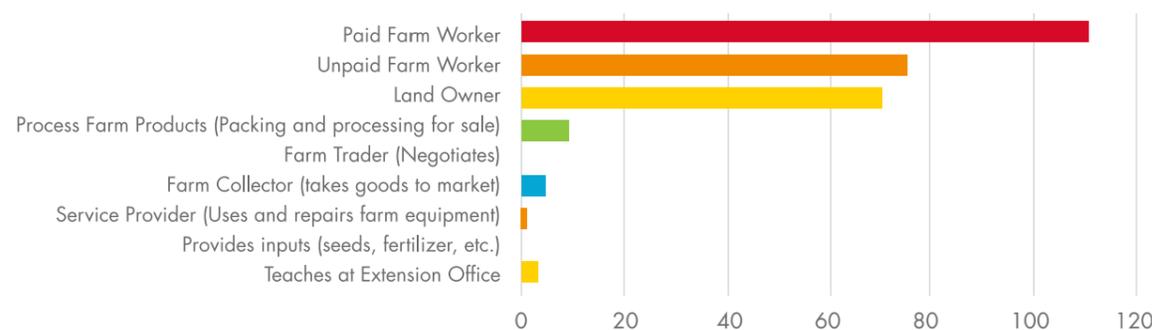
While there were high levels of young men working in agriculture in Mon state young people (both males and females) in Mon generally thought that less than half of young people were working in agriculture. While in contrast in reality there were lower youth participation rates in agriculture in Hlaingbwe (Kayin State) with only 14 percent of young men reported to be working in agriculture but youth perceptions of agricultural employment were higher that 'about half'.

What types of work?

The majority of youth surveyed felt that young people were working as a paid or unpaid farm workers, or were landowners working on the family farm. The types of work associated with these positions is generally manual labour that is seasonal or part-time and is often physically demanding. These perceptions that jobs in the sector are in entry-level and require heavy labour are aligned with key informant interviews and likely the experience of youth in rural communities. Many of the youth surveyed at the village level have low education levels and the upper tiers of the agricultural sector i.e. teaching at an extension officer or working in seed inputs requires higher certifications than young people cannot access with a primary or even middle school level education. The Central Agricultural Research & Training Center also reported that agriculture is not largely viewed by the youth as a viable business or employment option because youth only know agricultural work as subsistence farming and they do not have the technical skills to advance to different opportunities within the sector.^{xxxvii} The most important point here is that youth with lower education levels do not have access to more decent and safe work within the sector because they do not have the education to access certifications that appear to be required in this field.

“ Youth need an undergraduate degree, most workers here are local and have qualifications from Bridge Asia Japan vocational school training.”

Key Informant Interview, Input Company, Kayin State



Graph 2.24 Employment in agriculture

The majority of parents also did not think that youth were interested in agriculture - and parents did not list agriculture as aspirational employment for their children. However, as noted above, fathers did have a variety of recommendations for specific agricultural courses that they wanted to see available from vocational training providers.



“ Few young people help in agriculture. They are not interested and do not participate in agriculture or animal breeding. They want to work in companies, factories and industries. There are options in agriculture like mechanical plowing and dehusking that would be faster but they cost more.”

Father: Hpa-An, Kayin State

“ Farming and land cultivation are only harvested once a year resulting in low income and because of that, the youth are not interested in it. People want to get secure jobs which ensure daily income. The youth are participating in agriculture less. Mostly, they work in the hotel industry.”

Mother: Hlaingbwe, Kayin State

“ Youth don't have tolerance and patience to work in agriculture sector.”

Kll, Kayin State

The majority of young people who felt that youth did not want to participate in agricultural work understandably referenced the poor environmental conditions, low pay and hard work associated with existing agricultural practices.

“ I want young people to have jobs that are less tiring and more profitable, rubber tapping is exhausting and the wages are low.”

G7: Mon State, Thanbyuzayat, FGD, Male

“ Young people don't participate much in agriculture, [they participate] only when the parents ask them to. Agriculture is exhausting and they would have to work in the hot sun and rain.”

Male, G7: Mon State, Thanbyuzayat, FGD

“ Youth are not interested in agriculture because you have to go out in the rain, sun and it doesn't pay well.”

Male, G6: Kayin State, Hlaingbwe, FGD

“ Youth don't want to work because it's too physical and tiring and not guaranteed regular income.”

Female, G5: Kayin State, Hpa-An, FGD

Emphasis on Agriculture.

Surveyed youth did not place a high emphasis on agricultural training or jobs, as noted above only one young man had taken an agricultural training and only young men requested a very limited number of agriculture-specific courses. In terms of employment young men did express interest (see desired employment) in both Kayin and Mon. In Kayin State agriculture was listed second after motorbike repair and in Mon State small business was followed by rubber cultivation and agriculture. Interestingly, many of the small businesses listed were also linked to agriculture value chains - including grocery stores, rice shops, etc.

However in focus group discussion settings - when asked about new ideas and training - youth did bring forward quite a lot of training ideas that would advance agricultural practices in their communities. Fathers were more inclined to request training support for their children in agriculture, particularly around introducing new technologies.

“ It would be better to give agricultural trainings around new technologies - for example pest control techniques.”

Father, FGD G6: Kayin Hlaingbwe

Young women, however, did not list agriculture among their top priorities. Agriculture is predominantly seen as a male dominated profession - however youth also noted that with the introduction of new technologies there may be more opportunities for young women. Additionally, agriculture-related work opportunities for young women were often very much linked to gendered stereotypes in that women cook and men do manual labour.

“ When they do work in agriculture boys usually manual labour and girls do packaging or processing jobs.”

Key Informant Interview, Mon State

“ Girls can make sweets from durian which is a good opportunity, more to girls.”

Key Informant Interview, Kayin State



“ For girls agriculture opportunities are in home gardening and livestock.”

Key Informant Interview, Kayin State

“ It depends on the crop whether boys and girls roles are different. For hilly regions, there is tea and coffee so at harvesting and growing, same for all household members, going together as a group boys and girls or girls can go alone (in sex disaggregated) groups as well”

Key Informant Interview, Kayin State

Additionally there were security-related issues in which girls should not travel too far, or to dangerous places.

“ The key important thing here is the distance. Since lands can be far away from home it is hard to send girls away to do the farming. In this case girls will do household chores. They will only help with the paddy if it’s close to their house.”

Key Informant Interview, Mon State

“ Rubber cutting is not safe because you have to travel long distances. It must be done at night. Although most women are doing this it is not safe for them.”

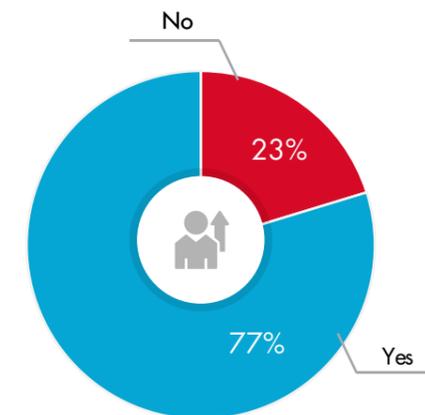
Key Informant Interview, Mon State

Overall agricultural opportunities appear to provide considerable opportunities for young people in both states if focused on the provision of safe and decent work. This means focusing on the introduction of new technologies, diversification of crops and other agricultural value-chain opportunities that do not require a high-level of education.

3. SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT: ENTREPRENEURSHIP PATHWAYS

A recent in-depth study looking at youth employment outcomes found that entrepreneurship promotion interventions were correlated to larger effect sizes, relative to skills training programs, and that they appeared to be the most successful interventions.^{xxxviii} In summary, focusing on small business development has had better employment outcomes than skills training alone because it is focused on creating jobs.

Creating jobs through small business development, then, seems like a positive pathway to address youth employment challenges, particularly due to the high concentration of small businesses and the desire young people have expressed to start-up their own businesses. Across all locations, 77 percent of youth wanted to start their own business. This was slightly higher for young women (86%) than young men (67%). However, upon further examination promoting business start-up, while there is considerable potential, needs to be firmly grounded in market opportunities, proper mentorship and training that support ideation and business strategy development as well as access to financial resources to support growth.



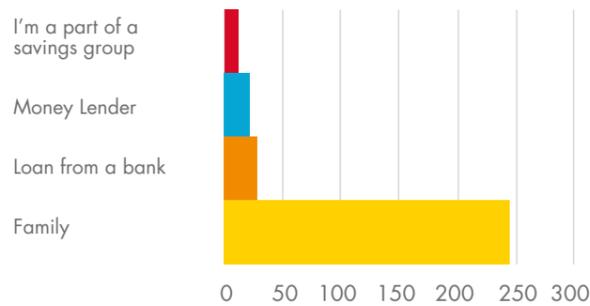
Graph 2.25 Desire to Start a Business

Young people have very limited exposure to different types of businesses and little awareness around what type of business is successful, and why or why not these businesses are successful. Studies show that business start-up can be a challenging endeavour and not everyone is cut out for it. Additionally, there are considerable environmental factors that require consideration before promoting entrepreneurship programming. Affecting factors may be different due to context but include things like access to finance, stability of the economy, trade agreements, foreign investment, infrastructure and legal systems. A study by GIZ finds that “entrepreneurship is more likely to be successful if undertaken by an entrepreneur (a person that has an idea, capital and likes to take risks); happens in a conducive eco-system and when the start-up is well adapted to market realities

(among other factors).^{xxxix} To develop this type of ecosystem for young people to start new initiatives considerable work needs to be done to introduce new ideas and concepts, provision of basic financial literacy, access to finance and business mapping skills – all delivered with ongoing support and guidance.

For example, when youth were asked - if they were to need to borrow money for a business where would they go youth listed family as the one place they would go for a loan. While this is to be expected it simply demonstrates the need for intentional programming dedicated to developing networks and skills for young people to understand the implications and opportunities related to business development from how to work with and access financial service providers to who the best service providers are for their particular venture. While studies have found that individuals with vocational training are twice as likely to be an owner of a micro enterprise than those with no such training, young people require more than vocational training to become business owners.^{xl}

The need for mentorship and ongoing support is critical to support youth in business ventures. Young people shared - as part of the youth survey - that their greatest challenge to accessing employment was the lack of mentorship and guidance. This is particularly relevant in the context of business start-up. Many of the



Graphs 2.26 Youth: Where to get a loan

businesses surveyed said they would be willing to provide guidance and mentorship for young people who were interested to start up their own venture - which is promising - yet many of these small businesses would benefit from mentorship and support as well.

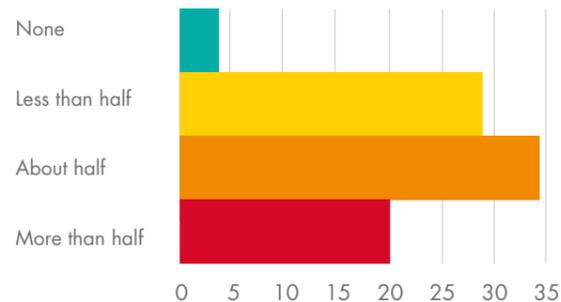
4. MIGRATION AS AN ECONOMIC PATHWAY

Myanmar has become the largest migration source country in the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS). The Government estimates that there are 4.25 million Myanmar nationals living abroad and up to 70% are based in Thailand, followed by Malaysia (15%), China (4.6%), Singapore (3.9%) and the USA (1.9%).^{xli} Myanmar's youth bulge plays an important role in the migration flows of the region as other countries such as Thailand and Singapore are in need of younger workers as their populations age.^{xlii}

Out-migration is particularly high in southeastern Myanmar due to the close proximity to Thailand, decades of conflict-related displacements, and other localized push factors. The migration rates are so high that the population pyramid in southeast Myanmar takes a noticeable plunge after the age of 15 when young people start to go overseas for work. An in-depth IOM study found that Mon and Kayin account for some of the highest out-migration rates to Thailand with Mon state accounting for 27.2% of the migrating population, followed by Kayin at 21.5%.^{xliii} Migration also serves recipient countries by filling labour shortages and contributing to economic growth. In Thailand migrants constitute over 10 per cent of the total labour force, and their work is thought to contribute between 4.3 to 6.6 per cent to the Gross Domestic Product.

As part of the youth-led assessment young people asked their peers if they thought a lot of young people were migrating from their communities. From their responses it is clear that they are highly aware and even experiencing high migration rates within their families and communities. The Figure below is a snapshot combining all 3 groups inclusive of Mon and Kayin state. Only 3 percent of young people felt that youth migration was not taking place in their communities while more than twenty percent felt that more than half of the youth population had gone overseas.

When examined at the township level 55 percent of young people from Hpa-An Township felt that more than half of young people had migrated from their communities.



Graphs 2.27 Perceptions of Youth Migration

When asked who migrates the responses were quite mixed and shifted by location. Most respondents felt that the majority of migrants were youth but there were differing opinions as to whether migration patterns were mostly male or female. Overall youth reported that the split was slightly more male (53%) than female (47%) - only youth in Mon state reported higher male migration rates at 62 percent.



“Women have more chances to get a job overseas, working as a housemaid.”

Young women, Kayin State

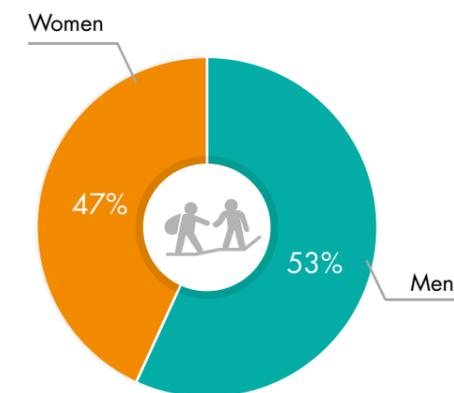
“Yes, people are leaving the village to go to other areas, they are mostly male youth.”

Young men, Mon State

“Girls usually go to Bangkok to work and the number is more than boys. Domestic migrants are mostly girls. For example, they move to Hpa-an, Yangon, Hlaingbwe.”

Mother, Kayin, Hpa-An

When we asked why youth migrate the majority of youth felt that it was due to economic reasons - better income and more work opportunities - although family pressure came in second. Interestingly, of those that listed 'other' the majority said that they were migrating because they were LGBT (Lesbian,



Graph 2.28 Who migrates?

Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) and presumably they were leaving because they were more accepted in Thailand than Myanmar. Young people also highlighted that youth go overseas - to Thailand - to gain training that they can't access at home as well as for employment purposes.

“Anybody can get a job easily by migrating, skilled or unskilled. It is no problem if you migrate you get a job. The salary is higher compared to here so youth are eager to go there. In Thailand in one day is you can make 15,000 minimum here is you can make 5,000 at most and is seasonal.”

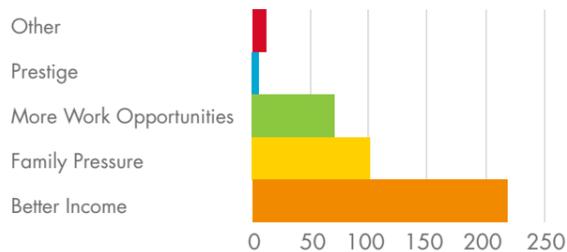
Kll, Kayin State

“Youth go to Thailand for the learning and job opportunities. Other areas have more variety of learning opportunities and offer more advanced topics. Also the salary is higher and they can make more money.”

Young men, Mon State

“They migrate to Thailand to get vocational training, there is a cycle repair training in Bangkok.”

Father, G6: Kayin Hlaingbwe



According to a study commissioned by LIFT most migrants work in the same occupation abroad than they did before they left home. The major employment sectors by gender can be identified as follows

Graph 2.29 Why do they migrate?

MALE	FEMALE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction • Other manufacturing • Agriculture and husbandry • Garment production and sales • Fisheries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domestic work • Garment production and sales • Fishery related • Construction • Other manufacturing

For migrants and their family members, employment in Thailand supports increased standards of living and poverty reduction in their home countries, however it also contributes to brain drain and loss of the workforce in Myanmar. According to IOM up to USD 2.8 billion in remittances is sent home to families through formal channels and that figure rises to as much as USD 10 billion if informal remittance flows are also taken into account.^{xliv}

Not only are there opportunities to support youth to invest in new business ventures in their home country, there may be opportunities for them to share what they have learned. Regardless of whether you return and invest, youth programming can benefit through connectivity and ideation exchange programming to support new business development back in Mon and Kayin state.



It should be noted, that while migration will likely continue to be an economic pathway for many young people it is incredibly risky, and is particularly dangerous for young people. So any type of exchange or programming that links works with young people and employment needs to also build in awareness training around the associated risks of migration to ensure young people have the resources and information that they need to make safe, informed decisions.

5. GENDER LENS

Gender played a defining role in this youth-led assessment from the beginning – starting by ensuring equal representation of male and female youth facilitators. A thread throughout the entire analysis demonstrates consistency – across all locations and contexts - young people’s opportunities were defined by their gender. While the local context is extremely important and certainly has an impact on the most relevant skills, sectors and employment opportunities - gender very much mattered in what was available to young people and what they desired for their future.

Culture and safety

Opportunities available to young men and young women were tied directly to cultural norms and preconceived notions of what is a man’s job and what is a woman’s job. Young men were expected to do physical labour and young women should do light work. Additionally, safety and security were defining factors as to whether a job or training was accessible to young women.

“Between girls and boys, jobs requiring physical are done mostly done by boys, for girls they can help, for example, with cutting rubber to get liquid and picking up corn, these are jobs with less physical effort.”

Key Informant Interview, Kayin State

“ This is mostly according to our culture and traditions. Males do not allow females to undertake this work. There are some girls at a household level that fix their own home roofs. But according to culture and traditions girls must be protected from risky jobs.”

Key Informant Interview, Kayin State

Limited Opportunities

Young women had considerably fewer opportunities in terms of employment and training than their male peers across all locations surveyed. In terms of formal vocational training young women were the least likely to be enrolled in the government technical high schools, and they rarely apply because the courses offered are in male-dominated sectors (i.e. construction, welding, etc.). Preferred and attended short-courses for girls were very limited and reflected the role of women in the home, likely linked to motherhood and family responsibilities as well as safety and security - including dressmaking (most common), food preservation, soap making and snack making - all very gender specific.

During a key informant interview it was emphasised that girls do not attend vocational training because they prefer to ‘attend normal school because it leads to more protective employment.’ In summary, vocational training is mostly attended by young men because young men are supposed to get a job and manual labour is deemed acceptable for them.

Parents

Parents play a defining role in the lives and career opportunities for their children - both young men and young women. However, when it comes to young women parents are ‘the most important’ people to engage to support opportunities for women, according to key informant interviews and focus group discussions with young people. If parents do not want their daughters to engage in a particular training or career they have the ability to control and limit their access to different opportunities.

“ The most important thing for female employment is parents. Parents are the most important. If parents understand and have knowledge about safe and decent work their daughters can do with their parents will support and encourage them.”

Key Informant Interview, Mon State

Agriculture is a male dominated sector, from training to employment

Young men were far more likely to work in agriculture than young females and, if youth perceptions are correct, they mostly work in low-skill/low-pay jobs. The belief that men perform hard labour while women do not, however, harms young men, creating a potential barrier to those looking to take short-courses and dive into new careers, such as motorbike repair shops, which would benefit from more skills and support. Agriculture, if properly developed as a sector, could offer pathways out of low skilled work. At the moment, however, there is no middle tier of agricultural work and most jobs are either low paying daily labour or higher level careers that require certifications, education and experience. This higher tier of employment is currently restricted for many youth who lack the formal certifications or who have not attended the longer-term vocational trainings. Although agriculture is dominated by men, and young women did not list it among their top priorities, youth noted that with the introduction of new technologies, additional opportunities may be created for women in the future.



Hiring Practices/Education

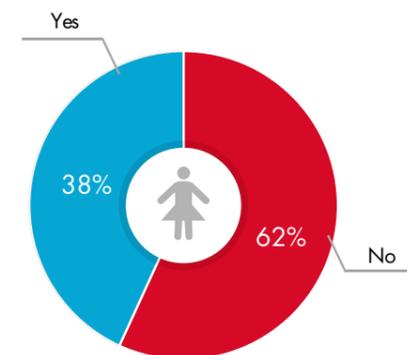
Interestingly when employees were required to have higher education levels the jobs tended to become less gendered. This cannot be true for all sectors but certainly was the case in places where the jobs were deemed as safe - such as hotels, shopping malls, grocery stores. If youth had the same level of education employers were less likely to hire according to gender stereotypes.

“ Higher jobs such as cashier and waitress are equal male and female. Overall, however, they hire more males.”

Key Informant Interview Tourism Sector - Mon State

“ A cashier and a waiter can be male or female.”

Key Informant Interview, Kayin State



Graph 2.30 Hire female employees

Hiring practices overall however tended towards hiring men across all sectors. Of the businesses surveyed 62 percent did not have any female employees.

These gendered opportunities might present some interesting opportunities and considerations for the future. As it is unlikely that stereotypes will disappear anytime soon, it is important to look for opportunities within these stereotypes to advance employment for both young men and



young women. In many of the interviews with businesses companies highlighted that women were better at finance and were very good at attention to detail. Even when asked about training courses a few young women asked for accountant courses and financial literacy so there is an opportunity to build these skills as they are likely more accepted by the community and can provide more opportunities to young women.

“Women are better at finance - all of our finance staff are female.”

Key Informant Interview, Mon State

“Females are better at paying attention to numbers and more organized, and the boys are more suitable to carrying things to customers.”

Key Informant Interview Tourism sector, Kayin State

“Cashier is only female and mostly waiters are male. They prefer hiring single people so they can work overtime or in an emergency so they can be available to give spare time.”

Key Informant Interview, Kayin State

Overall both young men and young women are affected by the narrowly defined opportunities that they have access to in terms of employment and training. Ultimately, It is important to consider that while identifying new technologies and increased skills for youth that both young women and young men should benefit by securing safe and decent pathways to employment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Young people do not follow a linear path from education to employment. The one thing that is consistent for youth is that they all have different experiences and forces that inform their lives. As a result, technical and soft skill development should be linked to pathways for young people to explore new opportunities, apply and build knowledge and skills for the future.

BUILD PARTICIPATION AND YOUTH LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Working with youth to become owners and leaders of programming is not only good for their development it also supports sustainability.

Build cascading leadership models for young people. Ensure that programs provide young people with leadership and paid opportunities within the program to grow and serve as role models for their peers. This is not only critical to program sustainability it can also expand the reach of the program and ensure programs are working and expanding at the community level.

Incorporate youth-led projects and initiatives that address community needs. Young people want to be engaged in their communities and they have expressed deep frustration with structural challenges they are from roads to electricity. Incorporate youth-led projects as a graduation component of training programs that allow youth to focus on the issues that matter to them and employ the skills they have learned.. Consider providing training supplements and activities that align directly with community needs when possible.

FOCUS ON EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES AND PATHWAYS

Vocational skills are only part of the puzzle, and knowing how those skills fit into the local market will make them actionable and define the actions organizations can take to facilitate employment and educational opportunities.

Build market knowledge and skills. Young people and communities need to have a better understanding of the market and how different skill sets link to opportunities. Provide youth with a market overview before selecting courses and continue to give them more information about the context and future opportunities. Continue to engage youth in market-related scoping activities, when possible.

Provide mentorship and options for youth. Overall, youth need to understand their context and have options to take meaningful next steps for their lives. Studies showed that in low-and middle-income countries, measures that provide multiple services and programme components to youth lead to better outcomes and participant profiling, monitored programme participation and incentives offered to programme participants and service providers are key determinants of success.^{lii} In summary, one size does not fit all and programs that offer support services and guidance and linkages to different pathways better serve young people.^{liii}

Support a small business development ecosystem and introduce agricultural value-chain opportunities. Increase technical skills, business and management skills, financial literacy skills, and social skills for young people to support better small business development. Consider business development in agricultural value-chain activities. Supplement business training with connectivity to new business models in other countries and leverage the cross proximity to Thailand and high migration channels.



EXPAND ACCESS AND SUSTAINABILITY

Lack of access to vocational training is one of the biggest impediments to attendance - according to young people. This is due to transportation infrastructure challenges and the overarching lack of services in rural areas.

Introduce and leapfrog with new technologies. Identify opportunities in all trainings to introduce new technologies relevant to that particular field, if even at a basic level. This could mean using a computer or phone during the training or could mean having open training hours with new equipment in the center or within the community. In light of the lack of infrastructure there is an opportunity to 'leapfrog' the traditional development pitfalls and take advantage of technological innovations to scale in Myanmar. With the wide adoption of smart phones as an indicator that the population is willing to embrace new technology opportunities. Myanmar is a great fit for learning from other countries' mistakes and implementing innovative solutions.

Partner with local actors. Local partners are already offering training in remote areas and are able to access hard-to-reach locations. One of the biggest challenges in Rakhine is the rural-based population and lack of access to training and resources. Decentralising programming and building rural presence in partnership with local actors will not only expand reach but will build relationships with communities and across communities.

Engage parents and manage expectations. Make sure that expectations and outcome of training is clear for young people and their families and whenever possible work directly with parents to support youth to access courses, and shape opportunities. When working with parents and youth make sure that the objectives of programs are clear and enlist parents in support of program outcomes, as partners.

EXPAND SKILLS TRAINING AND LINK TO LOCAL AND REGIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

If it were easy everyone would do it, understanding how vocational training fits into the complex web of the education sector and links with a shifting economy is hard to do and requires constant mapping and re-mapping in partnership with experts and the community. It also requires making connections where they might not already exist.

Expand courses to challenge gender norms. While some youth came to a specific course to learn a specific skill, youth often youth attended whatever courses were available as they were all seen as providing value to their education and employment opportunities. There are opportunities then, to introduce courses that are perceived as 'male' or 'female' to the other sex, for example cooking and food preparation for young men and electrical wiring for young women. Additionally girls and boys should be receiving cross-cutting courses to build their technology and soft skills. As computers and technology become integrated this will build capacity of both boys and girls.

Identify low and semi-skill employment opportunities - consider opportunities in agriculture. In Mon and Kayin state many semi-skilled jobs are demanding higher skill levels for employment including certifications that are often very inaccessible to youth from rural areas. As a result it is important to identify pathways that youth from low education levels and rural communities can access and courses and skills that can facilitate access. Through the lens of safe and decent work outcomes introduce short-courses that build specific agriculture and livestock skills that can generate income. Where possible partner with private sector actors who are promoting new technologies to develop skills. Course format does not need to be only a short-course, could be workshop based, tool or technology oriented. Courses could include agricultural methods including crop diversification and improved farming techniques, fertilizer application, to name a few.



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