MYANMAR EDUCATION CONSORTIUM
PHASE 3 PROGRAMME STRATEGY BRIEF

Brief overview of the Phase 3 Programme Strategy of Myanmar Education Consortium (MEC)

What is the Myanmar Education Consortium (MEC)?

Myanmar's education system reflects the country's history of conflict. Educational performance in rural areas, particularly conflict-affected areas, lags behind the national average. The existence of conflict has had severe adverse effects on education access and quality. There are also inequalities in education for children whose first language is not Myanmar, including a lack of learning materials and supportive environments for learning in their mother tongue and the failure to recognize complementary education systems. In response to current challenges and inequities, the Myanmar Education Consortium (MEC) was established in 2013 as a multi-donor program to support the provision of education services for marginalized, under-served children, particularly focusing on children in ethnic states and regions. MEC is currently in its third phase, running from 2021-2025. Housed within Save the Children International, MEC is governed by a Steering Committee composed of the representatives from the donor agencies and the SCI National Director.

Ethnic and monastic education systems are the most substantial non-government education providers in Myanmar, collectively providing education for a total of over 720,000 children[1], predominantly from the poorest and most conflict-affected households and areas in Myanmar. MEC places a focus on strengthening complementary education systems with an aim to support durable improvements in the quality of teaching and learning for children attending schools operated by ethnic and monastic complementary education systems. Across Phase 3, MEC continues working with selected education providers to strengthen their capacity to deliver and sustain good quality learning opportunities for hard-to-reach children and promote gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI)[2] in education. Applying an adaptive approach that recognizes the complex and fluctuating environment in which the program is being implemented, MEC provides funding, coordination, technical assistance, and research support to maintain and promote continuous improvement of education services and facilitate a supportive operating environment[3] for ethnic and monastic education. Through its partnerships and by supporting the adoption of improved Mother Tongue-Based Multi-Lingual Education (MTB-MLE) practices, MEC will continue to contribute towards affirming and promoting ethnic languages and cultures, as well as increasing participation of ethnic and monastic education actors in the discourse around inclusive education.

---

1 This estimate represents approx. 300,000 children enrolled in monastic schools and at least 420,000 children attending schools managed or supported by ethnic education providers (including EAO Education Department-managed schools, community-run schools, schools under mixed administration and some government schools supported by ethnic education providers).

2 Gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI) is used as a term to refer to all potentially marginalized groups, ensuring they are included within education and are given particular consideration in MEC and partner's programming.

3 Note that this can include various forms of system recognition and support for complementary education providers irrespective of the wider implementation context that may be affected by a variety of complex social, political and environmental dynamics.

PROGRAMME THEORY OF CHANGE (ToC)

The MEC Phase 3 ToC articulates the intended process of change and provides the framework against which the need to flex and adapt is mapped, understood, and measured. The ToC also functions as an accountability tool by outlining what can be attributed to and expected of MEC.

Designed to recognize the fluidity of the current socio-political context in Myanmar, the basic premise of the ToC is that:

If MEC collaborates with selected complementary education providers to maintain and strengthen their education systems through a systems approach that includes a focus on:

- quality learning in line with students' needs,
- resilience to continue delivering services regardless of challenging circumstances, and
- coordination with and support from a broad base of stakeholders,

Then these complementary education systems will be able to provide hard-to-reach children[4] with the education they need, ultimately resulting in improved learning and well-being outcomes.

The overall aim or impact statement for MEC is that hard-to-reach children access education services that meet their learning and well-being needs. The ToC overall outcome statement - MEC's partner education systems are able to deliver learning opportunities to hard-to-reach children - underscores MEC's systems approach to strengthening complementary education. This approach recognizes the need to look at the complexity of education systems and their operating environment as a set of inter-related parts that when managed coherently, is stronger in its delivery. Outcomes focus on three distinct but interrelated characteristics of education systems that outline the core areas of MEC work: robustness and relevance of the education model; resilience in continued delivery; and recognition and support.
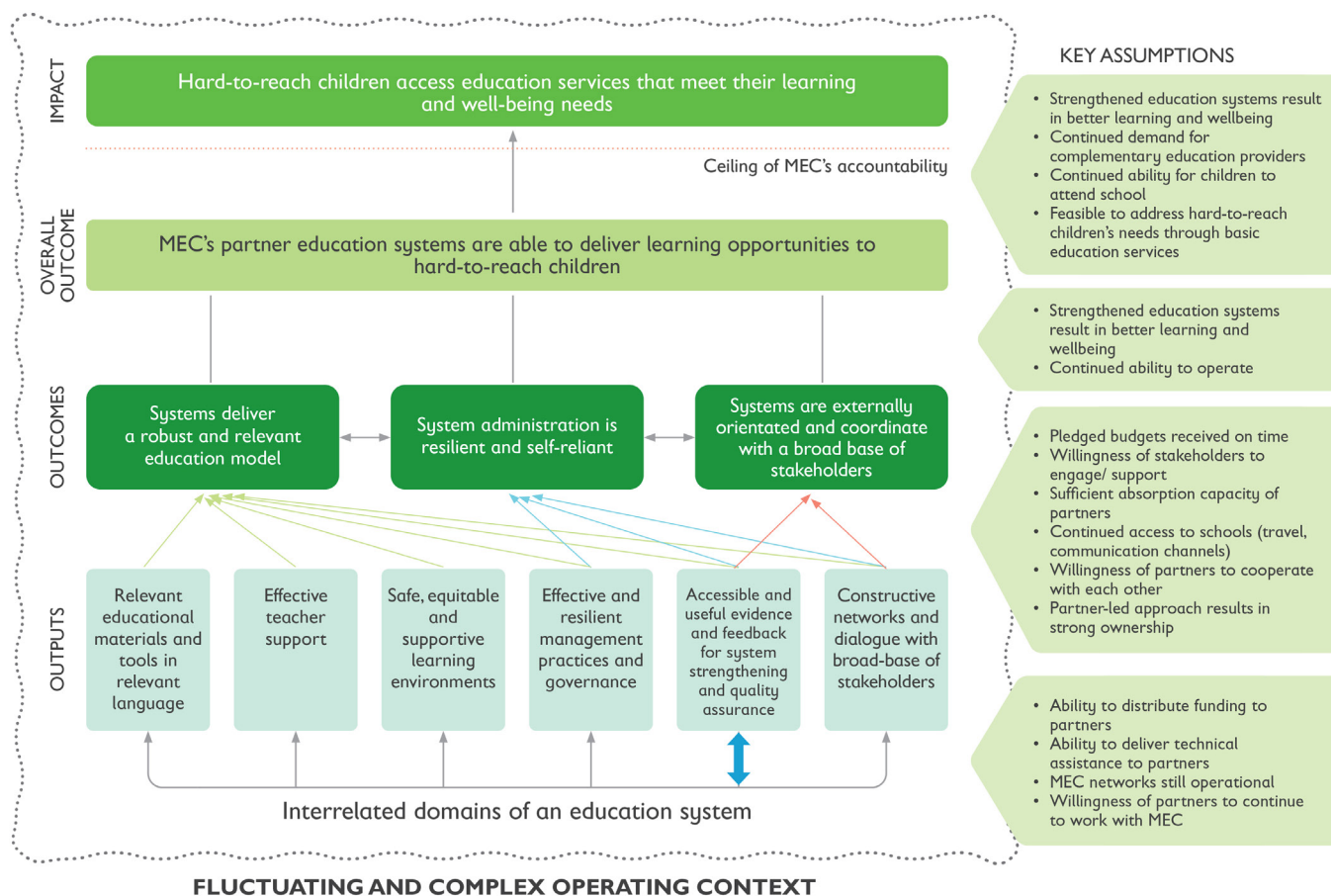

Figure 1: Myanmar Education Consortium Theory of Change

Desired outputs reflect core, inter-related domains within an effective education system. MEC supports partners to implement activities that together deliver across all outputs.

---

4   The term hard-to-reach children refers to children who face barriers to learning: including but not exclusively barriers relating to language, ethnicity, remoteness, politics, income, conflict, gender and/or disability.
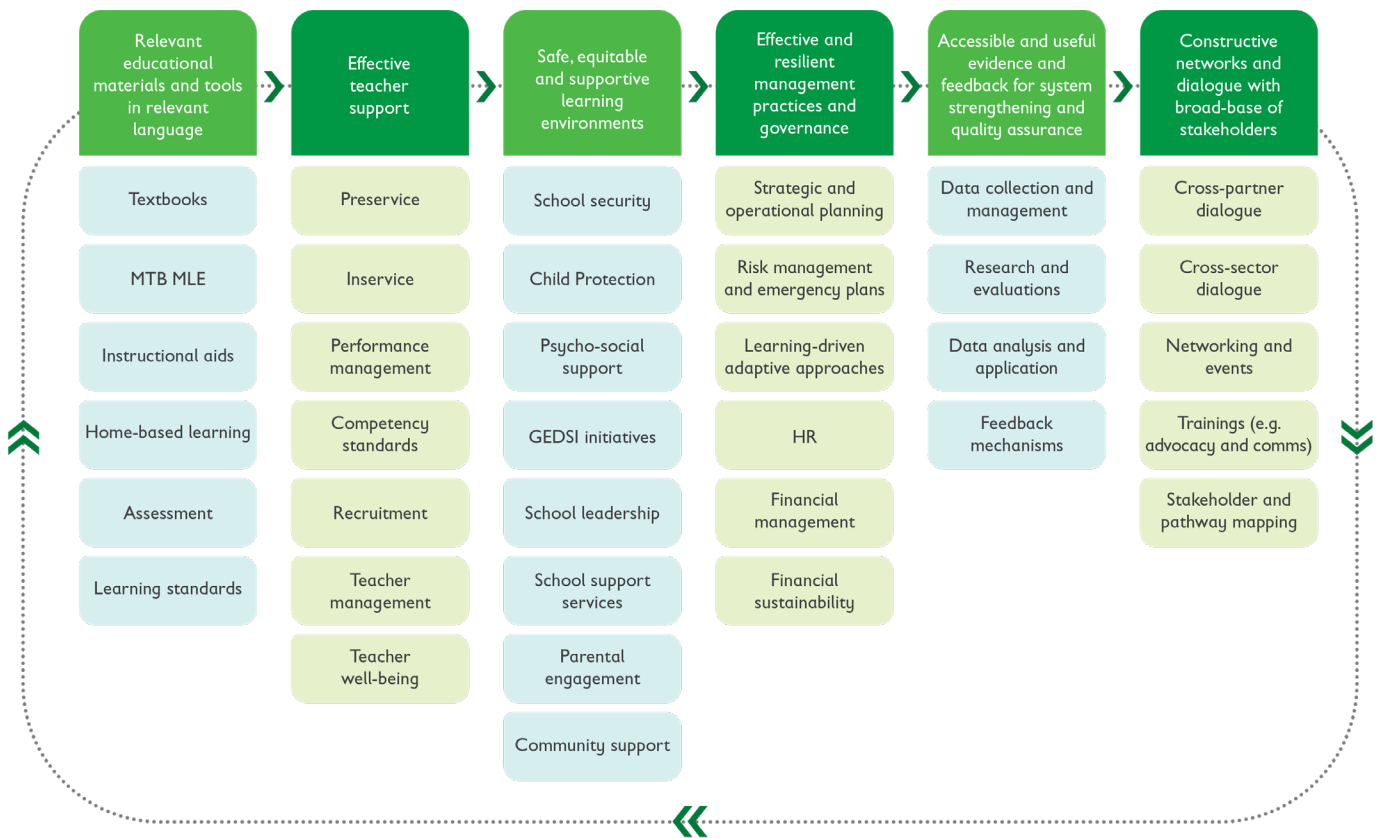
Figure 2 - Domain areas of an effective education system

PROGRAMME DESIGN

Developing meaningful partnerships, based on mutual benefit and trust, is central to MEC's programme design. MEC's partnering takes full advantage of the roles, knowledge, skills, reach and experience that each partner and MEC offer each other. MEC strives to ensure mutual respect across all partnerships and leverage partners' experience, knowledge, leadership and existing resources to achieve better results. Partners influence decision-making to support positive changes and promote sustainability. MEC currently supports both ethnic and monastic education systems and may consider expanding to support other forms of community-based education provision in the future. Supporting ethnic education has the potential to reach many of the most disadvantaged girls and boys in Myanmar, including those at risk of dropout. These systems, operated by different providers across many ethnic states and regions, primarily serve children who don't speak Myanmar as their first language, typically offering instruction in their mother-tongue. The monastic education system is the largest and longest-standing non-government provider of education in Myanmar and one which reaches many of the poorest children, from both Buddhist and non-Buddhist communities of many ethnicities and across a large area of the country.

Programme Priorities

The programme is designed to support 'systems-strengthening' with a view towards improving the overall public administration of basic education service delivery in selected partners. This includes working with partners to identify the most critical needs within each partner's institution that ultimately result in children being able to continue learning, complete quality basic education, and achieve improved learning. In alignment with MEC's partner-driven, iterative approach, the detailed set of interventions are determined by the partners based on their specific needs, priorities, and resources available. MEC applies a participatory approach to support and implement a greater focus on child safeguarding and gender, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI) across all partners and MEC's own implementation activities. In addition, the programme design places a specific focus on providing broad based capacity development for mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) as a complementary strand to the systems strengthening work. The programme also places a key emphasis on promoting a more enabling environment for complementary education providers to implement education services. This includes developing and maintaining coalitions for joint advocacy and support.

Reach & Scope of the Programme

MEC partners reach over 300,000 learners (49.6% boys and 50.4% girls) attending more than 2,500 basic education schools each year of this program with a focus on KG+12 grade levels. The primary geographic focus of the program is on ethnic states and regions and this currently includes Kachin, Shan, Kayah, Kayin, and Mon States, and some parts of Bago and Tanintharyi Regions. The programme design is intended to be highly flexible and responsive to changes in the social and political environment, to ensure that programme strategies address specific barriers to education in each area, and to allow for growth according to the pooled funding available. As such, the reach and scope of the programme is subject to change. New partners will be added within the first year of the phase.

Types of Partnerships

1. Systems Strengthening Partnerships (SSPs): Ethnic Basic Education Providers (EBEPs) that represent an education 'system' and are supported across a range of domains to deliver relevant, effective, and quality basic education services

2. Broad Based Capacity Development Partners (BBCDPs): local organizations supported by strengthening their knowledge and skills in planning and developing strong MTB-MLE programmes

3. Technical Assistance Partners (TAPs): local organizations that provide specific technical expertise to support advancement of MEC's goal; and

4. Strategic Alliances (SAs): Formal and/or non-formal strategic alliances with other organizations, institutions, universities, and/or the private sector that maximize support to MEC partners and strengthen coordination on areas of strategic relevance and interest.

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

Key aspects of programme management and planning, such as programme governance; partnership approach; monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL); Value for Money (VfM); policy and advocacy; guidelines for integrating gender, disability, and social inclusion (GEDSI); child safeguarding; fraud mitigation; risk management; detailed activity plans and budgeting are established and agreed to by the Steering Committee. The programme's MEAL framework, inclusive of a results framework outlining key indicators for each level of the ToC and an M&E plan, is used by MEC to continually monitor progress, performance, context and value for money.
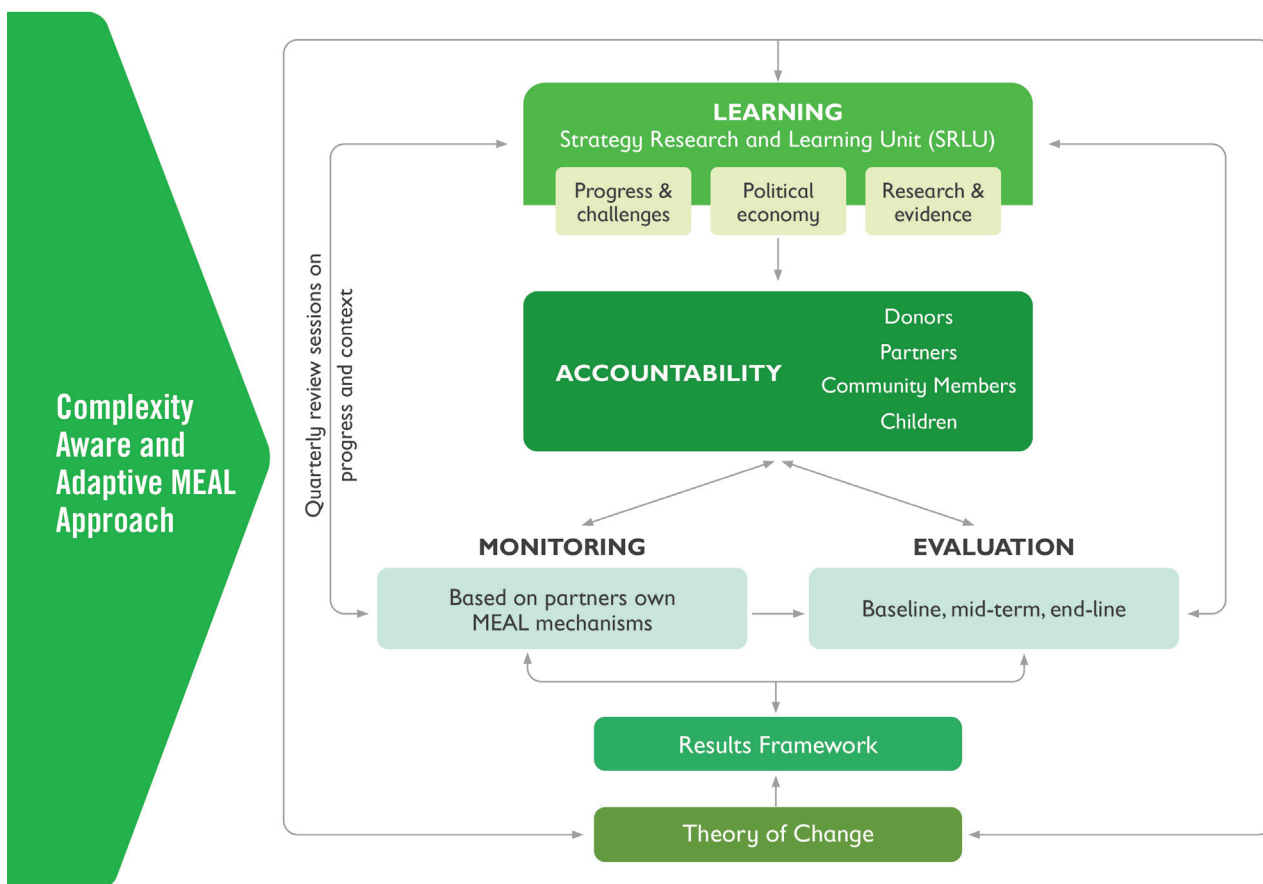
Figure 3 MEC's Phase 3 MEAL Approach