

Early Childhood Care & Development, Bilin (Myanmar) FY17 Annual Update

Project Profile

Project Goal	To increase the number and percentage of children accessing and completing quality basic education by establishing a strong learning foundation through quality Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) services
Geographic Area	Bilin (Mon State), Myanmar
Number of Beneficiaries	Approximately 120 children in 4 ECCD centres Approximately 68 community members & teachers who will participate in trainings & workshops

I. Project Background

Bilin Township in southeast Myanmar, over 200 km away from Yangon, is an agricultural township where the primary means of making a living for 90% of the population is through farming. However, extreme fluctuations in market value of their crops, poor agricultural inputs and weak financial support in the agriculture sector, makes their main economic activity, farming, difficult and unpredictable.



Income poverty data are not as yet available in Myanmar. However, the Integrated Household Living Conditions Assessment (2009-2010) conducted by UNDP, estimates 26% of the population in Myanmar are living below the poverty line. As Bilin Township consists of a largely rural, agricultural population living in a mountainous area, the poverty rates is expected to be equal or higher than the national average. According to the standards defined by UNDP, poor and fairly poor households are those surviving on less than roughly S\$35 per capita per month.

Bilin, as with the rest of Myanmar, lags behind other countries in education. Low quality of education and preschool enrollment rates have been identified as a major area of need.

Importance of early childhood education

ECCD attendance is shown to contribute to timely enrolment as well as an overall improvement in success at primary level. As adults, they have higher employment and earnings, better health and lower levels of welfare dependence and crime rates than those who don't have these early opportunities.



In Bilin Township, parents spend most of the day working in the fields or traveling across the neighbouring borders to Thailand in search of jobs. As a result, children are often left alone at home or in the care of elderly grandparents or older sisters/brothers of schooling age, where they receive little proper care or attention. Neglect at this age hinders the development of essential skills in children, including motor and coordination skills, communication and expression, spatial awareness and so on.

Lack of sufficient early childhood education facilities

At the start of the project, an estimated 48% of children five years old and below do not receive early childhood education in Bilin Township. There are 114 **ECCD centres in Bilin** but most of them are makeshift wooden buildings with thatched or zinc roofs. These centres are small with no play area for the children. **137 of the villages in Bilin are without ECCD centres.** Some children in those villages without their own ECCD centre have to **walk nearly an hour across treacherous terrain to get to the nearest ECCD** centre. Parents who do not have the time to take their children to the next village will choose not to enroll their children in school.

The rooms currently in use are also unsafe for children. These rundown and dilapidated facilities provide little respite from the elements, offering little ventilation in the heat and leaking when it rains. In some classrooms, even basic equipment like blackboards, cupboards and toys are lacking. The poor conditions of existing classrooms also deter parents from sending their children to preschool.

With the limited number of ECCD centres available, the number of children per class is more than the acceptable standard stipulated by the government.



Makeshift Bilin ECCD centre lack basic facilities for learning

Lack of emphasis on education by parents and community

Many parents who have not received education themselves are unaware of a child's right to education as well as the critical role that education plays in child development and in breaking the poverty cycle. Hence, parents might feel that working on the fields or to seeking employment is a better option for their children.

Lack of properly trained teachers and caregivers

An education is only as good as its teachers. However, over 40% of current ECCD teachers in Bilin have not received any formal ECCD training. Without quality teaching, the educational experience might be compromised and children might not be able to gain the functional skills they need to achieve their dreams. Parents will also be discouraged from sending their children to preschool if there is no evidence of significant learning benefit for their children.



2. Annual Progress Report (FY 2017)

To address the educational needs in Bilin, World Vision constructed four ECCD centres, each 33.45m² including a classroom, indoor/outdoor playing corners as well as water, sanitation and hygiene facilities such as water tank, water pump, generator and well.



Children dress up for Inn Pha Lung kindergarten opening ceremony celebrations



Nyaung Thar Yar/Kyee Pin kindergarten at its final stage of completion



Preschoolers in Chaung Pyant kindergarten explore the outdoor playground built by World Vision



Thayet Kone Kwet Thit kindergarten complete with a pavilion



World Vision provides children with snacks every month

ECCD Awareness Seminar

20 community members and authorities participated in a preparatory seminar introducing early childhood care and development and its benefits for young children.

Parenting Skills & ECCD Awareness Training

World Vision trained **7 facilitators** to conduct parent education sessions for mothers with children aged between 3-5 years old. **30 mothers** participated in the 10-module parental education sessions conducted by two facilitators.



Parental education facilitators training

ECCD Management Committee Training

19 participants consisting of **4 groups of ECCD management committees** attended a training course, where they learnt how to independently manage ECCD centres among other best practices.

17 community members participated in a toy making training, where they learnt to make indoor and outdoor playing facilities for the children



Toy making training

8 ECCD caregivers underwent a one-month training in teaching and caring methods focused on the importance of fostering strong, positive relationships between children and caregivers.

Sustainable community fund set up to support ECCD centres

1,000 chickens complete with chicken coop, feeding trough, water cups and chicken feed provided to ECCD community group to start a income generator from chicken rearing. Profit from chickens sold will go towards the community fund.

26 vulnerable families formed an agriculture and livestock producer group raising pigs and goats, and planting flowers. After a year, producer group members will pay back a specific amount for the animals or seeds they have loaned. Community group will use the fund to buy livestock or seeds to loan other vulnerable families. A small service fee will be applied for animals or seeds loaned, which will go towards the community fund.



Chicken rearing introduced as part of sustainable community fund initiative

Impact Story



Without an Early Childhood Care and Development centre in Thayet Kone Kwet Thit village, parents, like Mrs Daw Ar Par Lar, had to send their children to the nearest kindergarten over 3 kilometers away. The long hours spent on the walk to school took away precious time from work and puts a strain on the family income.

“I have to work for the daily income for my family. It takes time to send my children to the ECCD centre so I can’t send my children to school everyday,” said Mrs Daw. “Later on, I stopped sending my children to the school.”

With the new ECCD centre in her village, all her children can go to school every day. “I have more time to do my daily chores and work for income as it does not take much time to send my child to kindergarten,” said this mother of five.

Excited to contribute to the new ECCD centre they have been long waiting for, Mrs Daw and other villagers helped to put on some of the finishing touches on the building during the construction phase.

They also responded proactively to initiatives led by the ECCD Committee. “Sometimes, I go to the centre to talk to other caregivers and also give my time to support the teachers in taking care of the children in the ECCD centre,” said Mrs Daw. “(The) children look so happy as they play, read poems, sing songs and learn. I am also happy to see my children and other (children) playing and learning happily in the ECCD centre.”

“With funds from World Vision and the community’s contributions, we are able to get an ECCD centre and now our children have the opportunity to access learning and development services,” she said with a smile.