

Over the last four years of implementing the Conflict Area Support for Education to Learn (CASE2Learn) programme, an overall lesson is that the EU has demonstrated its principled stance in support of the people in all areas of Myanmar, and its commitment towards contributing to a peaceful, inclusive society for sustainable development in Myanmar. Through its mid-term evaluation of the CASE2Learn Project in March 2023, it learned that developing a structured/programmatic approach to capacity and organizational development of partners (beyond simply providing workshops and individual training in financial management), will better promote the sustainable long-term capacity of RISE as a network and its members.

Through the CASE2Learn action, the EU also now fosters the inclusion of different ethnic and minority groups in the process of federal nation-building following the coup, addresses inequalities in education provision and performance, models an effective conflict-sensitive approach to supporting the education sector, demonstrates that balanced support across and among a wide range of ethnic education providers is possible and necessary during this transition period towards an eventual education model where all provider's perspectives will need to be accommodated.

Moreover, the dialogue with ethnic education providers in the framework of the CASE2Learn has highlighted additional key aspects below:

1. Forming a relationship with ethnic education providers takes time, and trust is essential;
2. Recognise and respect their in-depth knowledge of local needs, expertise, social capital, bonds with communities, and outreach capacity;
3. Avoid competitive funding mechanisms which cause fragmentation among ethnic education providers and ensure a common approach to provide support to ethnic education providers;
4. Recognise those ethnic education providers with fewer capacities and support their willingness and efforts to work collaboratively and equitably;
5. Many local ethnic communities inevitably prioritise security over development in the current context, which can impact significantly the extent to which SAC and/or conflict-affected areas can be reached with education services;
6. EU visibility rules need to be carefully considered in a context where this might expose partners to higher risks or compromise their access to communities;

Another important lesson is that localisation is working; there is a significant increase in potential absorption capacity in local CSOs/non-state actors⁴⁶. This includes ethnic education providers, and partnerships are in place to grow this potential. Since the coup, the localisation agenda has taken on much more importance. Newly established and existing networks of local CSOs/non-state actors have demonstrated their potential during the last four years, and more donors are supporting these networks. Women's organisations are key actors given their long tradition of providing services to communities which were not covered by government services, and their work in the promotion of human and civil rights⁴⁷. With the ongoing capacity building of CSOs/non-state actors, the local absorption capacity is anticipated to grow, and therefore, new potential opportunities for support will materialise.

While CASE2Learn clearly contributes to increasing the beneficiary population's resilience to shocks and pressure and there is realistic expectation of the continuation of partner's dialogue platforms on ethnic education policy, the key challenge in the current context of conflict is to retain trained teachers and keep ethnic schools open, which will be difficult for beneficiaries without external financial support. Only a few communities would be in a position to support their own teachers and sustain access to the most marginalised children. And community-level sustainability plans have not been developed yet.

In addition, the technical and financial capacities of RISE organisations vary significantly and external support for most is still needed. It is therefore essential to also provide training to partners on fundraising and develop a fundraising strategy with different donors. The Conference on Ethnic Education of February 2024 was a milestone event in ethnic education. It was co-organised by the Myanmar Education Consortium (MEC), ADRA and RISE, and brought together more than 200 participants including ethnic education providers, representatives from the EROs and their governance structures, and some trusted members of the pro-democracy movement. This conference covered many of the key result areas in this Action document and was of vital importance in kick-starting cross-sector coordination among education service providers and developing a broadly agreed agenda on key education reforms needed. It also represented a critical opportunity to enhance coordination and cooperation between MEC and RISE, as two major stakeholders in delivery of ethnic education. In the longer term, organisational approaches need to achieve complementarity with a view to engaging in a policy dialogue around education with ethnic organisations and their governance structures.

⁴⁶ Based on the Lessons Learned and Recommendation from the 2023 Evaluation of LIFT (Livelihoods and Food Security) fund which the EU also supports

⁴⁷ Country Level Implementation Plan CLIP Myanmar