



The Role of NGOs in Promoting The Right to Education of Child Laborers in Mandalay, Myanmar: A Case Study of MyME Project

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Abstract

Child laborers can be seen easily in every place of Myanmar. Through the complex phenomena such as economic hardship and lack of education the increasing number of child laborers threatens the future of Myanmar. Education may reduce the number of child laborers through means of enhancing development and spill-over benefits. NGOs create a platform in the transitional period to break the silence on forgotten children throughout the country. This paper aims to examine current situation of child labor and their right to education in Mandalay, Myanmar and to analyze the role of NGOs that help child labor to achieve their right to education. The research found that the creation of development opportunities for the parents in labor families can help children to achieve significant learning hours. The NGOs has the strength to reach to the grounded level, and the government can provide the best policy in addressing the issues of the right to education of the child laborers. Noticing the challenges faced by the NGOs will provide the way of how to address the issue, thereby reaching the goals of the best interest of the child laborers. This is the responsibility of all stakeholders, the NGOs and the government.

Keywords: *child laborers, NGOs, Right to education, Myanmar*

1. Introduction

There are two main reasons why there are too many child laborers in most developing countries. The first reason is poverty or economic hardship. Ortiz-ospina & Roser (2016) identified that “poverty at a rustic level is a cause and a consequence of child labor”. Children in rural areas generally have to help their parents with the farms and fishing business (THE IRRAWADDY, 2015). The second reason is lack of education because parents could not offer their children’s education. Most children in Myanmar could not go to school by reason of rising education costs and lack of enrollment as most families are unable to afford the costs of education fees (Zaw, 2016). Other barriers to school attendance include the widespread use of civilian forced labor and the serious ongoing recruitment of children; moreover, their motivation has its limits (Haydena & Martin, 2013). Unfortunately, in the regions occupied by ethnic minorities, where civil war has been raging for decades, parents who have never been able to go to school themselves do not always appreciate the importance of education for a child’s personal development (South & Lall, 2016).

Myanmar has also ratified the convention on Right of the child (CRC) in 1991 under the ruling State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) (UNICEF, 2012). According to Article 20 of Myanmar’s 1993 Child Law, “every child shall have the right to free basic primary education in state schools and the Ministry of Education shall implement a system of free and compulsory primary education”. The government’s policy is to provide free education for all children, but in reality, it is not. The government policy on free education cannot attract child laborers to school. The government has poor policies regarding child labor issues; meanwhile, stakeholders do not have enough strength to address the problem (Ortiz-ospina & Roser, 2016).

The second-largest capital and also the last royal capital of Burma, Mandalay, is the economic center of upper Myanmar (Asia Pacific Media Services limited, 2020). The growing excessive numbers of child laborers in Mandalay during recent years is related to international migration correlated to three factors. The first factor of international migration is movement of people from the delta area that was devastated by Cyclone Nargis in 2008 to Yangon and Hlaing Thar Yar Township, the first terminal of the Yangon-Delta Highway. Children of such families are more desperate to work as new settlers from rural to suburban

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settings, and many families face subsistence challenges (Zaw, 2016). The second factor is the hopelessness of those in rural areas who faced confiscation of land and lakes (fisheries) by big companies. Parents of such families send their children to the urban centers where the letter gets better job opportunities through the help of recruitment companies (THE IRRAWADDY, 2015). The third factor in creating a swollen supply of child labor is doubtlessly the mass migration from conflict areas near the borders to urban centers (THE IRRAWADDY, 2015). All these factors increase the number of child laborers in Myanmar. This research, therefore, studied the current situation regarding child labor in car service garage and teashops in Mandalay. Many children are forced to work long hours for little pay despite the fact that these children often lose their opportunity to obtain a basic education in Mandalay.

Although Myanmar ratified the Convention on Rights of the Child (CRC), the rights of Myanmar children in general and child laborers, in particular, cannot be fully protected and upheld by the government. The international treaties, laws, and instruments, and the Myanmar Child Law call the right to education for all children under the theme of best interest of the children (ILO, 2020). After the Myanmar government has ratified the CRC, it has only weakly implemented its commitment on the right to education for all children. The roles of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are very important in this situation. Moreover, there is lack of NGOs to promote child rights effectively because NGOs are difficult to get permission from military regime. Working children are rarely able to attend school, although there is some NGOs effort to provide education to working children. The obligation of the government to ensure that the right to education is respected, protected, and fulfilled is not only a state concern. It is also the task of NGOs to promote and assist the full implementation of the right to education (Benedek, 2006). For the developing country like Myanmar, it is very a challenging situation to stamp out child labor issues.

Therefore, this research could contribute suggestions towards the reduction of child labor by exploring the assistance and cooperation of non-state actors. If the obligation to fulfill is neither comprehensive nor completed by the state, it is the concern of NGOs to support the right to education for children, especially for child laborers. Philanthropic groups and NGOs demand that the government promote a thriving society in order to enhance the equality of child laborers amongst children in Myanmar. In fulfilling the entitlement of child laborers' rights, these groups provide education as one of their approaches. With all of these reasons, it is very important for this research to study to help solve the problem of child laborers in Mandalay, Myanmar.

2. Objectives

- 1) To examine the current situation of child labor and their right to education in Mandalay, Myanmar
- 2) To analyze the role of NGOs that help child labor to achieve their right to education.
- 3) To propose solutions to the Myanmar government to solve child labor problems.

3. Definition

Child labor in this research is a person who is between 13 to 15 years of age and doing work that is depriving them of their childhood and work.

Mobile bus is a mobile classroom that traveling to the tea shop in Mandalay. The myME project initiative transformed old school buses into mobile classrooms. The volunteers from myME project ride mobile bus and travel to teach children who work at teashops. Children can join this class after they finished their work for a day. There are about five mobile classroom buses in myME project.

4. Laws in Myanmar related to child labor

In Myanmar, children can work legally under the 1951 Factory Act. The 1951 Factories Act stipulates that a child between 13 to 15 years of age is allowed working for a maximum four hours a day and shall not be permitted to work between the hours of 6.p.m. to 6.a.m. Moreover, it requires some medical certificate from doctors to show the children's status as strong and fit to work. The Child Law 1993 allows the children to work according to the 1951 Factory Act. Therefore, children are legally allowed to



work in accordance with the Child Law and Factory Act in Myanmar. In reality, however, children work more than what laws permit. Mostly, they work for more than four hours, and in some work places, their working hours hit twelve hours or more than half day. Meanwhile, their rights are stolen away from them by their work. They do not feel the happiness of child life. The pursuit of happiness in their childhood seems to fade away.

5. Materials and Methods

Qualitative research method was used in primary data collection. Qualitative approach was chosen for this research because it involves a small number of cases to be studied, and this would allow an in-depth description and understanding of the actions of the participants as well as assisting to decode, describing, analyzing and accurately interpreting the meaning of certain phenomena. Therefore, in-depth interview was designed by using opened-ended question to provide an opportunity for respondents to purpose their perspective and to understand a condition, experience, or event from a personal perspective.

Semi-structure interviewed was used to collected data. Approximately 9 participants were interviewed. There were five child laborers who live in Mandalay. These five child laborers are between the age of 13 and 15 as children who are over 13 years old are legal to work in Myanmar. The five child laborers work at tea shop as service providers, car service garage and vendors of snacks. These children are often losing their opportunity to obtain a basic education in Mandalay. Other two participants who are members of the International labor Organization (ILO) My-PEC program and the Myanmar Mobile Education Project (myME) were also interviewed. These two participants are myMe Founder and Director and Chief Technical Advisor in My-PEC project. They were chosen purposefully, on the basis of those currently implementing programs related to child labor. They also work on child labor's right to education and have experience in child labor issue for more than 5 years. One participant is government official who works in the Department of Social Welfare for more than 3 years. The last participant is a teacher of Non-Formal Education Program, who has experiences of teaching on mobile bus for more than 5 years. Each interviewee presented a different enriched data regarding child laborers in Myanmar.

To protect participants privacy and safety, participants will be called Participant A, B, C, D and E. Only participants who allow to mention their name will be mentioned their name in this research.

6. Results

The results of the interviews include four parts which are (1) the demographic characters of children; (2) the role of the NGO; (3) the role of Ministry of Social Welfare in Myanmar and; (4) challenges of the NGO.

6.1 The demographic characters of children

Child Laborers have become ubiquitous in Mandalay in recent decade. Being a hub of economic activities, Mandalay offers opportunities for people to search for jobs, both skilled and unskilled labors. Teashops, restaurants, car service garage, small and medium-sized factories, small industries and house-farms in Mandalay use child labor either openly or quietly. The general profiles of the child laborers cover four characteristics namely the age, the place of origin, the family status, and the accommodation. The data comes from the five children (two girls and three boys).

The age of child laborers involved in this study are between 13 and 15. The age of 13 is the minimum working age in Myanmar legally. Two out of five children showed as seasonal workers, such as seller of bird food and seller of flower on the sweet (depending on the seasons). The other three participants engaged in non-seasonal jobs such as teashops and car service garage at the time of interviews. For the place of origin, most of the child laborers live in newly satellite townships of Mandalay, and some of them migrated from the rural areas. Two participants who are working at teashop lived in a village of Chin State and Mandalay Region and worked in the agricultural sector with their families before they migrated to



Mandalay. For family status of child laborer, participants come from big families. For accommodation, there are two types of participants: those living with their related family and those living with colleagues. The first group lives with their related family in the newly satellite townships of Mandalay. Two teashop boys belong to the second group, and they live with their colleagues at their work and the teashop owner's house. For incomes and working hours, Myanmar children involve in a variety of works regardless of age and gender. Five participants engage in a variety of works carrying the burden of economic hardship. In terms of working hour, both children work more than 12 hours starting from 5 am with no weekends or holidays. Employees can send back all income which are MYK 130000 per month to their related families. For Educational Attainment of Children, the majority of participants have a low level of education, and some did not finish the primary level. Myanmar education system has 5 years in primary level starting from Grade 1 to 5.

Through the data of five participants in this study, working as a child labor and attending classes are strongly correlated one another. Children worked while they gave up their education. The attractiveness of education to these children is not enough to enable them to attend the schools. Even if they wish to go back to school, the situation stops them. To sum up, the child laborers are far away from the education.

6.2 The Role of the NGO

This section reports the qualitative findings based on the NGOs in Mandalay. NGOs include international and local NGOs namely the International labor Organization (ILO) My-PEC program and the Myanmar Mobile Education Project (myME). The ILO and the myME are conducting child labor projects in Myanmar. Interviewees include myME Founder and Director and Chief Technical Advisor in My-PEC project. The data shows all about what the role of the NGOs are and the process of the myME project implementation. These roles consist of the partnership role and the implementer role.

Based on the finding results, the first partnership links the NGOs to the government at the national level. As the second partnership role, the myME builds relations with the main supporter of the project. The Norwegian-based mobile operator named Telenor Myanmar supports the myME project starting from 2 November 2014 as part of its corporate social responsibility. The third partnership role is connected with the international agency. The last partnership role is focused on the stakeholders of the child labor issues. This group consists of the parents or the guardians of the child laborers and the employers. This type of partnership is challenging. But once it is successful, it will lead to sustainable progress. All types of partnership are important in implementing the project of the NGOs. In networking era, the isolated movement delays the goals of the NGOs. In line with the growing trend of the NGOs, the partnership role also takes a large share in the roles of the NGOs so as to meet up with the goals, the output and the outcome.

In the implementer role, the myME deploys the project around the child laborers and their education. This step begins the initiative of the project and helps the project implementers and the teashop owners to know each other. The output of this step is the teashop owners' knowledge on what the project means for them, the children and children's future. The second step includes the exchanging of the information and the shaping of the project idea. In the third step, myME also has to report to the fund supporter or donor on the progress of the project. Then, the myME implementer plans the developing syllabus and detail class schedules with the teachers of the myME. This step builds the trust among the children and the myME implementers and the teachers. The last step in the process is the implementation of the project. These four steps describe the general process of the myME project while entitling the right to education of the child laborers which has been barely attended by the other NGOs. By understanding the process of the myME, the NGOs sectors should promote the policy and advocacy work of the right to education of the child laborers. The implementer role and the partnership role add values in the participation of the NGOs. The myME also tries to put in all the roles as mentioned above and operate at the area where the child laborers cannot access their right to education.



6.3 *The role of the Ministry of Social Welfare in Myanmar*

The Department of Social welfare (DSW) under the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement works with NGOs and United Nation agencies. They work together for child rights and child protection, as well as working with other government departments. As mentioned by an officer Daw Win Shwe from Department of Social Welfare that “the Myanmar National Plan of Action for Children has developed measures for action in four focus areas: Health and Nutrition, Water and Sanitation, Education and Child Development, and Child Protection” (Shwe, 2020). This means that children are provided with essential social care and protection through institution-based and community-based programs under the Department of Social Welfare.

According to local needs and situations, the contribution of social services has been made by the Non-governmental organization (NGOs) with the collaboration of community. At present, with the encouragement of the government, there has been abundance of NGOs in Myanmar; moreover, one of the important components of the welfare services, the elderly services, are also provided by INGO/NGO mainly (Myanmar Ministry of Social Welfare, 2016).

It is difficult to recognize what the welfare ideal of Myanmar currently is. The country is within the transition stage from military rule to the multi-party election in 2010. The general constitution is already drawn but specific policies and rules will be founded within the newly elected government. Thus, people hope that there will be a correct model for Myanmar welfare within the hand of the new civilian government. Government and NGOs/INGOs should join hand in hand with each other to fulfill the right to education of the child laborers.

6.4 *Challenges of the NGO*

There are five challenges for the NGOs in fulfilling the right to education of the child laborers.

The first challenge is to get the availability of the qualified teachers. Myanmar education system has used the teacher-centered approach for a long time. Most students and teachers are quite familiar with the teacher-centered approach with the “parrot learning” system that retards the analytical thinking ability. Thus, the qualified teachers are really critical, and the more projects expand, the higher the demand for the qualified teacher becomes. There will be the imbalanced number of teachers per students in the future.

The second challenge is financial challenge. The financial challenge is crucial to sustainability of the NGO. Without enough funds, the long-term implementation of the project for the child laborers will be questionable. The way the myME provides education is free in terms of the direct cost, the indirect cost and opportunity cost. However, a small NGO needs the sufficient fund to run as a free education provider for a longer term. Thus, the project of the NGO depends on the donor or supporter to run their project.

The third challenge is the challenge that the Myanmar child laborers have troubles on the “age argument”. This argument constructs the barriers to all-inclusive education to all child laborers. The law enforcement in the age determination of a child or a child laborer should be considered in the provision of educational opportunities among the child laborers. Thus, the laws have conflict on whether a 15-year-old or 16-year-old is child or youth. This conflict causes confusion for the advocacy and campaigning of the NGO towards the child laborers.

The fourth challenge is establishing the quality of education and reintegration into the formal school. The challenge in this sense is whether the education provided by the NGO to the child laborers is really effective in line with the truly quality of education. The founder of the myME admitted that reaching the quality education is really challenging. Reintegration to the formal school is more or less limited for the child laborers. However, the NGO should create the platform for the children who have strong motivation to go back to school. Negotiation with the stakeholders and application to some scholarship programs for the continuation of the education should be a short-term solution.



The last challenge is working hours of child laborers. The Myanmar child laborers have time limitations and they are also overworking. The Factory Act 1951 stipulates that the working hour of the children should not be more than four hours per day. However, when the law enforcement is ineffective, no child laborer works shorter than four hours based on the collected data. Thus, the NGO should advocate the acceptable working hour that leads to the mutual benefit.

All in all, the child laborers are challenging to entitle their right in every aspect of the education in term of above challenges. However, the approach that the myME innovates is better for the child laborers in Myanmar, comparing to the previous zero status of the education for them. To sum up, the collective actions of the government and the NGOs, and the NGOs themselves are necessary to fulfill the right to education of the child laborers.

7. Discussion

7.1 *The situation of the child labor in Mandalay*

In Myanmar, teashop is a part of Myanmar culture. Tea shops can be seen on every corner of the street in urban areas and everywhere in Myanmar. There are many tea shops available along the sidewalk, which exist either at the inner city or outskirts of Mandalay. Many children in rural areas drop out of school and migrate to cities to find jobs to support their families. They help their families by taking jobs in Teashops. Teashops in Myanmar are operated by children who have no opportunity to go to school. In both urban and rural areas, every tea shop has a child working as a waiter, tea makers and cleaner. The researcher interviewed with five child laborers in Mandalay included two teashop boys, one apprentice at car service garage and two vendors of snacks.

Through the collected data from five participants, the child labor phenomenon becomes more obvious. Adult family members, especially parents, make decision regarding how children' time will be allocated between leisure, schooling, household chores and income activities (Haydena & Martin, 2013). That would say that family and parents are the center of the fact that causes child labor. Based on the findings, this study discusses current situation of child labor by using two influential factors including the economic factor and the social factor.

In economic factor, findings loosely related to economic inadequacy of the family are as follows; poor education of parents, employment or unskilled labor of the parents and all child laborers as well as the participants' struggle to fight their economic hardship. Their daily earnings are approximately within the range of MMK 3000 to MMK 5000 (about 60 Baht to 100 Baht).

From interviewing, the results showed that there are three situations for the participants comprising the troublesome family situation, the low level of education of each family member and the low parental skill level. Three participants out of five had the troublesome family situation which became a major reason for a child to be a child labor. Based on the findings of child laborers' interview, Participant B is the best example for this area. She dropped out of school because she felt that she has the biggest duty to support her family. Thus, the troublesome family situation creates the economic hardship and leads to low education for the children. The family preferences to work or education, and the level of education of each family member are correlated to one another. Both lead to some detrimental effects within the family. It is the fact that low level of education of parent creates a poor value on education, and offspring have some high risk to get no education in their future. Education level of parents is very important. For example, Participant B cannot continue to attend the formal school. She dropped out after passing Grade 4. Her father worked as a trishaw driver and later changed his work at a construction site. In fact, her father drink alcohol and her mother usually love gambling. They neglected their children, their education, and their feelings. Thus, children bear the duty in such kinds of families, and they have to work when they were young. Most of child laborers are related to these three situations which may lead to the circle of poverty. These three situations have the similarity with previous finding that the child faces a perpetuate poverty in terms of the poverty trap (Zaw, 2016).



As a result, the child will have little or no education. When these children grow old, they have a high tendency to be unskilled labor because of lack or little education. It means they will have low-paying jobs, and sometimes they will work in dirty, dangerous and difficult situations. These results have similarity to the research findings of the Irrawaddy (2015) that identify that formal fees are only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the true cost for the parents to send a child to school in Myanmar. Therefore, their children have a high tendency to become child labor.

The social factor is one of the perpetuating factors in the child labor phenomenon. In Myanmar culture, parents are one of five worshipped figures after the Buddha. As children, they owed the parents and the teachers who are meant to be intimate parts throughout their life to nurture the children to be good person. For children from better-off families, there is no harm; but children from poor families suffer. After the push and pull factors, which mean economic hardship and the farms, the children find work finally. Eventually, a high number of children in Myanmar are joining as the rack of child laborers. As a result, the pervasiveness of child labor across Myanmar becomes a tradition that has been accepted by society. The way they react to the society is distinctive from the other children, and this can lead to damage in their social relationships and their social participation. Moreover, it was found that most of the child laborers are deeply buried in poverty. Thus, the parents' situation of child labor is about distress and insecurity. Compared to the other children, they had many bad experiences and histories. This result was in line with the agreement about the collapse of incomes and living standards that have had serious social and psychological consequences on families, engendering feelings of shame, confusion and marginalization leading to social problems (Ortiz-Ospina & Roser, 2016).

The above social factor can perpetuate poverty among Myanmar child laborers in line with the economical factor. If poverty is the core reason for child labor phenomenon, then the ignorance of justice by the society and cultural and traditional significance may attribute and perpetuate the child labor. These two factors increase the numbers of child laborers in Myanmar. Moreover, it is clear that the multiplicity of discrimination becomes an obstacle among the child laborers to access their rights to education in Myanmar. Thus, next section will discuss the right to education of child labor in Mandalay through the collected data.

7.2 Right to education of child labor in Mandalay

According to the entitlement of human rights, the government or the State has the core responsibility to fulfill the rights of every citizen. It emphasized that to help children towards their right to education, the government has a full obligation to keep the children in schools by providing good quality education. In a developing country like Myanmar, the proportion of children out of school is directly correlated to the number of children engaged in work (UNICEF, 2014).

Therefore, education should be free, government-funded, and effectively served with the infrastructure and trained teachers to support the delivery of education. Moreover, education should be provided with non-discrimination to all, especially to the marginalized groups. Although the government provides compulsory primary education in Myanmar, it was found that there are still dropouts and non-attendants because of poor infrastructure and teachers. These results are similar to previous findings that rural children suffer from these problems seriously. There are approximately two primary schools in three villages in a rural area (the Irrawaddy, 2015). In this situation, children take time to go to schools, and they go from one village to another for their education.

The result showed that the government has spent only a small budget for education. The government expenditure on the social sector including health and education is only 2.3 percent of the country's GDP before the fiscal year 2012-2013. Predictably, this figure is low compared to other countries; for example, the expenditures of social sectors in Cambodia and Thailand are 5 and 8 percent respectively (The Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, 2016). Besides the low spending on education, the government has mismanaged this little spending in terms of building new universities for political purposes. Therefore, the budget for the education sector is insufficient to provide quality education in terms of the formal, informal and vocational way. This result in line with the argument about the obligation of the



government to ensure that the human right to education is respected, protected and fulfilled is not only a state concern (Benedek, 2006).

Furthermore, it was also the fact that another considerable thing under the governmental characteristic is internal migration that is related to economic, social and governance. Based on the finding, Mandalay as the hub of economic activities offers job opportunities. The internal migration is a movement of people from ethnic conflict at Shan State, Rakhine State, Mon State and Kachin State and the devastated Cyclone Nargis in 2008 to Yangon and Mandalay. Children of such families are more desperate to work as new settlers from rural to suburban, and many families face challenges on subsistence. For example, Participant D and Participant E represent this type of movement. The second characteristic is the hopelessness of those in rural areas who faced confiscation of land and lakes (fisheries) by big companies. Parents of such families send their children to the urban centers where the letters get better job opportunities through the help of labor brokers. Findings indicated that the government factor is the swollen supply side of the child laborers which is the result of the mass migration from the conflict areas. All these factors increase the number of child laborers in Myanmar.

It can be concluded that Myanmar's child labor is inevitable as Myanmar is a developing and poor country. However, the government and the society should create opportunities for the child laborers in order to access to the rights to education. The economic situation pushes the children into the labor market while the social factor perpetuates child labor and creates the hurdles to get back access to the right to education. To be effective and efficient actors in provision of education to the child laborers, the myME and some similar NGOs need to know their challenges. Trying to overcome the challenges is also a part of the process to accomplish the right to education of the child laborers.

7.3 Challenges of the NGOs helping child labor to achieve their right to education

There are five challenges for NGOs to help child labor to achieve their right to education. The first challenging situation is the fact that one project is insufficient enough to cover almost 200,000 child laborers, and thus the cooperation or coordination of the government or other NGOs is important. It was found that the number of child laborers is very high although there is no accurate data. The coverage area of the myME project only emphasizes on Yangon and Mandalay. In this regard, the myME alone is not enough to provide the education to the child laborers. In line with the expansion of the project area, the demand for qualified teachers will be high. Thus, the functionality under the availability will have some trouble in terms of the coverage schools and qualified teachers. NGOs perform a variety of services and humanitarian functions; bring citizens' concerns to the government at the community level (Yaziji and Doh, 2009). From this point of view, the myME should improve its partnership role with the government or other NGOs to provide the quality of education. At this point, the NGO sector related to the education of the child laborers is imperative to grow up and needs to cover more child laborers.

The second challenging situation is the point that the long term for providing free education can face financial constraints. Therefore, this finding is not much in agreement with past studies which have shown that free and compulsory primary education will promote all-around correct thinking and a good moral character contributing towards the building of the Nation (Haydena & Martin, 2013). As they provide the education which needs long term supportiveness, it was assured that there will be some risks for the child laborers such as the mid-way stopping of the project or postponement of the project due to financial barriers. According to the collected data, the agreement between the myME and Telenor Myanmar is only one year. When the project stops, the education of the child laborers will also halt. As a result, the different aims between the donor and the NGO in running the project sometimes lead to deviation of the local people's needs, and the effectiveness of the funding money should become questionable despite huge fund support.

The third challenging situation is the minimum age of child labor. The international standard recognizes the children as persons who are under the age of 18. However, in Myanmar, the Child Law 1993



recognizes the child as a person below the age of 16 (The Article 2 of child law 1993). Thus, when the NGO provides the service to the community, the youths who are between the age of 16 and 18 will become hard to get supportiveness. The minimum age of a child to work is stipulated as 13 years old, according to the Factory Act 1951. Some NGOs have the projects specialized in either child trafficking or child soldiers under the umbrella term of child labor. It is leading to various works and hampering collective action against child labor.

The fourth challenge, the reintegration into formal school is also an important factor for child laborers. It was also conferred that the evaluation of quality education is somewhat difficult. These results have a similarity to the previous finding that quality education is child-centered, and by using education, children can handle the problems of what they faced in reality (UNICEF, 2012). Thus, quality education is difficult to measure. The NGO should create a platform for the children who have strong motivation to go back to school. Negotiation with the stakeholders and application to some scholarship programs for the continuation of the education should be a short-term solution.

The last challenging condition is about working hours of child laborers. According to the collected data of myME, they proclaimed that their running project tries to adapt to the child laborers. They take the break time of the child laborers to open the class through the negotiation process with the multiple stakeholders. The NGO should be aware of the right to play of the child and launch the negotiation process with the children and the teashop owners to their education. As a result, the child labor inspectors, the NGO staff and the child rights practitioners will face difficulty in accessing the child laborers. Thus, if the child laborers opt to attend regularly in the non-formal classes, working hour is an important factor, and the NGOs should handle the care in this challenge. The Law should be amended for the best interest of the child laborers, and at the same time, the application of education is truly adaptable.

The NGO still has limitations and challenges in implementing the child labor rights to education project although they have the strength to reach the grounded level of community. Furthermore, the poor law enforcement with regard to child labor hampers the NGO's activities in promoting and protecting the right to education of the child laborers. To sum up, the collective actions of the government and the NGOs, and the NGOs themselves are necessary to fulfill the right to education of the child laborers.

7.4 The appropriate solutions to solve child labor problems in Myanmar

There are three solutions to solve child labor problems. The first solution is that the parents should have more knowledge and learn more skills. Parents should be given not only awareness to be able to be conscious about the consequences of child labor but also adult functional literacy. In order to meet the proposed outcomes, all funding agencies related to livelihood programs, education programs and even human-right based programs need to pool their resources, and all development practitioners should create operating procedures for awareness strategy to make the vicious cycle of poverty. At the same time, the government should create more job opportunities that will alleviate family poverty.

The second solution is ensuring the quality of education of child laborers and promoting free basic education or vocational education. In order to sort out the challenges imposed by this situation, the important step that should be done by the ministry of education is strict enforcement of free, compulsory and quality education for all children till 15 years of age. Children with access to free, compulsory and quality education have little options but to study so the occurrence of child labor will be reduced.

The third solution is pursuing the right to education of child laborers. The government has the main obligation to fulfill the rights to the education of children in Myanmar. The NGOs should also advocate and support the activities of the government related to its obligations. All children deserve the right to education, and the government should cover its obligation to all children through the means of availability, accessibility, acceptability and adaptability. According to finding results, Myanmar child laborers have obvious difficulties in pursuing their rights to education. Although the child laborers deserve the rights to education described by the international treaties and conventions that are signed by Myanmar,



the group cannot enjoy the rights to education. The obstacles for the child laborers to enjoy their rights to education are related to the phenomenon of child labor. The government and the NGOs should understand the phenomenon of the child laborers if they respect child labor's rights.

Another plausible way is non-formal education, such as myME and My-PEC, with flexible study schedules so that the child laborers will have a basic literary for future skilled vocations. Every organization should come up with updated information on who and where they are currently supporting because some of them are overlapping in terms of geographic location. After that, they should have a list of children who are not currently going to formal school and recruit non-formal school teachers who really know the context of poor children and their street work nature and are capable to teach them.

8. Conclusion

The right to education activity is not a strategy implemented by the only NGO. The collaboration with the government, the NGOs, the stakeholders are necessary to assure the education of the child laborers. Dual policies approach that intends to break the linkage between child labor and poverty and provide effective education policy to child labor can tackle the issue of these forgotten children. The myME is an example to further advance in this context. But without the supportiveness of the policies by the government, the NGO cannot implement their project up to the full potential.

As for the government, they have to take the nationwide survey for the accurate data of the child labor and also the problem analysis. Law enforcement is critical, and some conflicting law related to the children should be amend. Although Myanmar ratified the Convention on Right of the Child (CRC), the rights of Myanmar children in general and child laborers in particular cannot be fully protected and upheld by the government. In this regard, government of ratifying countries encourages the cooperation within the international community to eliminate or reduce the number of illiterate children especially in the developing countries. Thus, the government should provide compulsory education for primary school-aged children in reality and increase the education budget with the effective allocation of resources. Finally, the government should ratify the ILO Convention No.138 the Minimum Age Convention for the child laborers, and there should be close coordination with the international agencies and NGOs to tackle the issue. Furthermore, the government should create development opportunities for such labor families.

As for the NGOs, in conducting the child labor projects related to education, good governance and resource mobilization are essential. NGOs play an important role in raising awareness and improving attitudes towards child labor by sharing knowledge with some stakeholders such as parents, employers and guardians. NGOs should build the child-friendly schools in line with the international standards. Conceptualizing the right-based approach to education, they have to integrate child labor especially in the urban and suburban areas into their project agenda. More NGOs should participate in this project, and they also have to analyze their existing education programs that run for the poor children in the urban and suburban slum areas. Good monitoring and evaluation are necessary to know the efficiency and effectiveness of the projects in order to avoid the misallocation of the donors' funding.

As for the stakeholders, cooperation is quintessential. Employers should follow the rules and regulations regarding the use of child laborers. Furthermore, for the parents or guardians, the best interest of the child should always be the priority regardless of the parental situation. Awareness-raising is important in this regard, and the media should also promote the fact how education is important in a child's life especially for a child laborers' life. Finally, the commitment of all stakeholders is indispensable to fulfill the right to education of the child laborers.



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