

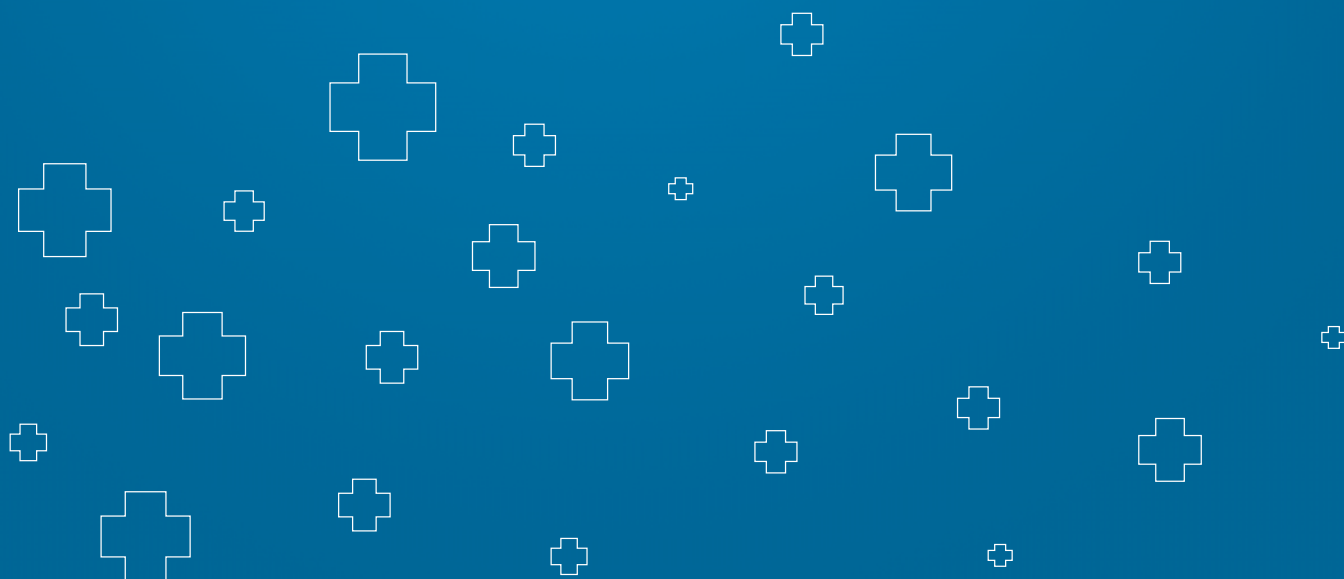
# VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT

Barriers Hindering the Access to Adult Education,  
with Emphasis on Vocational Training and Literacy


Kayah State Myanmar  
February 2018

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Prepared by  
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## Imprint

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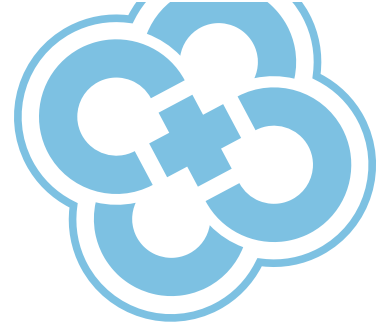
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## Acknowledgments

Herewith I like to thank the FRC team in Yangon and Loikaw for their kind and professional cooperation and support in doing the field research and preparations for this report. Without the committed perseverance and professional conduct of the team, the consultant's field work sessions as part of this Vulnerability Assessment would not have been possible.

The consultant thanks the Loikaw FRC team for providing helpful translation services. The team's professional initiative and coordination work significantly contributed to the successful enumerator training, the conduction of meaningful FGDs, and the necessary household interview sessions.

Ko Sai Linn Htet Aung  
Ko Andrew Ah Too

Ma Sa Sa Win  
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During January 22, 2018, to February 5, 2018, the enumerators listed below successfully conducted 254 HH interviews in 25 villages and three townships in Kayah State. Their outstanding engagement and willingness to become research assistants enabled the consultant to undergo this research. Our respectful 'Thanks' go to these following persons:

Ma Angela  
Ma Naw Sessna  
Ma Angelin  
Ko John Bosco

Ma Maw Htay Moe  
Ma Mary Paula  
Ko Saw Lwin  
Ko Khun Rawnary Sine

Ma Naw Purity  
Ma Alice Wut Yi  
Ko Saw Nay Aung



## Acronyms

<b>ADRA</b>	Adventist Development and Relief Agency	<b>KLCC</b>	Kayah Literacy and Culture Committee
<b>DoE</b>	Department of Education	<b>KnED</b>	Karenni Education Department
<b>DoL</b>	Department of Labor	<b>KNPP</b>	Karenni National Progressive Party
<b>FGD</b>	Focus Group Discussion	<b>KnWO</b>	Karenni Women Organization
<b>FRC</b>	Finnish Refugee Council	<b>KSWN</b>	Kayah State Women Network
<b>GoUM</b>	Government of the Union of Myanmar	<b>KSYN</b>	Kayah State Youth Network
<b>GTHS</b>	Government Technical High School	<b>TVET</b>	Technical Vocational Education and Training
<b>HH</b>	Household	<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
<b>JRS</b>	Jesuit Refugee Service	<b>VSLA</b>	Village Saving and Loan Association
<b>KBA</b>	Karen Baptist Association	<b>VT</b>	Vocational Training
<b>KII</b>	Key Informant Interview	<b>WV</b>	World Vision





## Executive Summary

This report delineates the research process and -findings of a Vulnerability Assessment conducted by Covenant Consult on behalf of FRC in January/February 2018. Collecting reliable and valid data about the region's state of vulnerability was the main objective of this Vulnerability Assessment. Therefore, the research design and methodology was carefully chosen in order to derive meaningful recommendations from acquired research data to professionally guide FRC's program planning for Kayah State. Within the framework of given resources and time availability, the Vulnerability Assessment covered a sample of 254 households from 25 villages in five townships. In fact, this research sample group represents nine ethnic groups that reside in Kayah State. The first pillar of the research was a structured survey that was conducted in all 254 households from those 25 villages located in 5 Townships. Additionally, 14 focus group discussions (FGDs) with rural youth were conducted in order to identify barriers for women and youth to access education, in particular vocational training and literacy training. The third pillar for acquiring information and obtain data from were nine interview sessions in total, held with key informants from CSOs, NGOs, and the GoUM. These threefold research sources built a comprehensive data base that provided the assessment project with a clearer picture of the current situation in surveyed townships. This pool of data represents general observations that contribute to an informed discussion about the levels of vulnerability in Kayah State, including a particular emphasis on vocational education and literacy.

Despite the fact that ethnic groups in Kayah State are not signatories of the National Ceasefire Agreement (NCA), Kayah State remains largely stable. And although Thailand still maintains two Karenni refugee camps in Mae Hongson Province with about 13,000<sup>1</sup> people in residence, incidences of conflict between KNPP and the Tatmadaw were reduced to a few cases over the past couple of years. Therefore, 'only' 33% of households reported to have suffered from violence due to ethnic armed conflict in the past. The most war-affected townships, however, are officially restricted areas and thus could not be included in this vulnerability assessment. During FGDs, participants expressed their desire for a successful peace process that yields into genuine peace throughout the entire region. In addition, leaders sha-

red their opinions about and suggestions for strengthening the peace process. Their voices articulated in unison the crucial need for community participation in the peace process. In particular, KSWN mentioned their concern about the fact that women are currently not much involved in the peace building process.

The nine ethnic groups in Kayah State represent great linguistic diversity. There are at least six languages actively spoken. However, the language Burmese is used as a unifier and is the most commonly used for communication, apart from people's ethnic languages. There exists the long regional tradition in Kayah State to utilize the Burmese curriculum and textbooks in order to impart *Burmese* as major medium of school instruction. KII partners indicate that Burmese still remains 'foreign' to younger generations, although they are frequently exposed to Burmese through the school system. This basically means that school children do not practice Burmese on a regular basis outside of the classroom. In particular, youth from remote areas only acquire a basic command over Burmese language while their level of literacy capacity still remains too low for full comprehension of Burmese literature and communication practice.

The research data also revealed a relatively high percentage of people who never attended school. The household survey revealed that 27 percent of female members and 18 percent of male household members never attended school. Thus, it must be assumed that these people have a relatively low command over Burmese language actively spoken. This current reality limits the possibilities for ethnic youth in Kayah State to communicate with others outside their local communities but also their ability to participate in skill building, training, and upcoming job opportunities. While the above stated figures include all household members of the survey, it is most likely that an exclusive research focus on youth alone may reflect differing outcomes since Kayah State younger generations' school attendance went relatively high with the NCA from 2012. Or in other words, a decreased number of displaced people through less violent conflict incidences most likely led to a relatively high percentage of regular school attendance among young generations and thus led to an increase of basic literacy among youth from remote areas.

Vocational training is generally acknowledged as a primary means for increased and enhanced people's life skills and,

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<sup>1</sup> The Border Consortium (TBC), April 2017, *Monthly Population Report* (MPR).

therewith, sustained livelihood prospects. This conviction is exemplified through FRC's existing cooperation with a number of CSOs and the GTHS in Loikaw. The Vulnerability Study distilled further possibilities and necessities for an intensified cooperation between FRC and the government institution in order to update FRC's current short course program at GTHS. In a nutshell it can be said that the Vulnerability Study provided deeper insights and reflections on how FRC's existing cooperation can become complemented by recommendations on how to enhance and expand its existing educational engagement with youth from remote areas.

It is suggested to focus on two main cooperation pillars: First, on a continued and intensified cooperation with the GTHS. Second, on a continued and intensified cooperation with Women- and Youth CSOs who operate in Kayah State. In the cooperation with the GTHS, these activities can be considered: i) to develop a number of new and relevant short VT courses; ii) to conduct teacher training concerning their technical and even more importantly methodological capacity for enhancing student- and adult learning principles; iii) to translate training materials and manuals; iv) to promote VT through IEC materials; v) to improve inclusiveness measures as for example participation of youth and women from remote areas; and vi) to facilitate a strong link between GTHS and the private sector. The main focus should be given on the 'relevance' of training and marketable skills.

The second focus, which will be on cooperation's with Women- and Youth CSOs, may emphasize strengthening of their managerial as well as technical capacity. Deeper insights into current managerial and organizational capacity may be gleaned from a more detailed managerial- and organizational capacity assessment. Such insights can be utilized as baseline data. An organizational capacity assessment needs to include following areas: i) mission; ii) vision; iii) leadership; iv) policies; v) HR and staff retention measures; vi) finance system; and vii) assets and outreach capacity.

The distinct development inputs with a particular focus on women and youth that FRC might take into consideration are of crucial importance since the vast majority of the population in Myanmar and also Kayah State are young people. The age pyramid of the country shows a healthy structure

in comparison and contrast to Western countries. However, this age pyramid carries the challenge of offering meaningful education and training for young people who become potential contributors to the country's positive development. A great contribution can be achieved when youth have access to meaningful and relevant skill building activities that lead to jobs and income generating measures. The youth's access to purposeful skill building activities also represents a reasonable training ground for young people to attain a posture of making healthy life choices that not only benefit themselves and their level of resilience but also include a concern for the greater good of the community.

Increased levels of technical information and knowledge are related to inputs regarding to i) youth development theory and practice; ii) community development principles; iii) social and cultural change; iv) issues with addictions as important areas of capacity building. When organizational capacity gets enhanced in meaningful ways, CSOs may become more effective drivers for change. After a certain period of strengthening organizational capacity, the focus should be shifted towards outreach into remote communities. As the effectiveness of CSOs includes financial resources, it will be valuable if not essential to work out a project cooperation component that covers not only all necessary activity costs but also indirect costs.

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## Context and Situation

Since its integration into the Union of Burma in 1947, the Kayah State encountered decades of unrest. However, since the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) signed a ceasefire agreement with the Burmese government in 2012, Kayah State opened its borders and came out of former isolation from the influence of INGOs and business interests. Kayah State is the smallest of the states and regions of Myanmar, both, in a geographical as well as in a population sense. Due to its mountainous landscape and its variance in population density between Loikaw, surrounding areas, and remote villages, it has a very scarce and uneven distribution of both, economic development as well as access to basic social services. Crop farming is an important activity in both, lowlands and highlands. Mining and timber production are also important economic activities. In recent years, the government was able to achieve improvements at three important levels: infrastructure; education; and health care.<sup>2</sup>

The Kayah State has one of the lowest literacy rates of all states in Myanmar. This is due to its long-lasting armed conflicts between ethnic minority groups and the Burmese army on Myanmar's eastern border to Thailand and its relatively isolation and remoteness. Continuous violence, forced labour, and displacement disrupted family lives and children's opportunities to benefit from uninterrupted schooling. Nevertheless, forced displacement through armed conflict is not a common issue in Kayah State today. Contemporary Literacy research (Loikaw University) on the national level reveals a high level of literacy in all states. However, critical voices critique this perspective, saying that this result does not reflect rural communities..

People groups in Kayah State are comprised of nine ethnic groups with at least six languages actively spoken. In order to communicate among diverse ethnic groups, ethnic populations use mainly the Burmese language as the main language of communication. KII partners stated that Burmese became the unifying language between ethnic groups.<sup>3</sup> By and large, the Kayah ethnic education system has integrated the Burmese curriculum and textbooks into their school system. Against this background, it should be

noted that the education system is strongly influenced by the Myanmar government. This also means that 97% of the students who attend public government schools are exposed to Burmese as the language of instruction.

The nine ethnic groups of Kayah State are relatively small and the estimated figures of the four largest groups are as follows: i) Kayah with about 100,000 people; ii) Kayan with over 60,000 people; iii) Kayaw with around 50-70,000 people; and iv) the Gheba tribe with around 100,000 of which 80% live in Karen State. In order to teach the ethnic languages, three ethnic groups (Kayaw, Gheba, and Kayah) have started to design curricula and textbooks for Grade 1-3, containing up to five subjects to be taught in ethnic schools.<sup>4</sup> Due to further improvements in the education sector during recent years, there are now better chances for ethnic groups to contribute to ethnic language classes offered in public schools. This means that ethnic groups organize language teachers from their own group and let them collaborate with local school headmasters towards the achievement of ethnic language training in the rural school setting. This procedure became a necessity because the Culture- and Literacy Committee alone are limited in their capacities for organized ethnic language training at their disposal. However, these special arrangements may only come into existence when the economic situation of villages allows doing so.

In recent years, the number of INGOs operating in Kayah State has increased to up to 15 organizations. Most of them also provide some sort of education or short-course vocational trainings while focusing on a variety of subjects, themes, and different target groups. There is a strong focus on livelihoods and agricultural training for strengthening the main livelihood sector of the state. However, the DoL identified other sectors for skilled labor of crucial importance, as for example the service sectors (Tourism) as well as the building- and construction industry.<sup>5</sup> In order to address this situation, the Department of Labor has created linkages between companies and High Schools to inform graduating students about job opportunities and prospects in these sectors.

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2 UNDP, Local Governance Mapping, 2015

3 KLCC, Focus Group Discussion on January 25, 2018

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4 KLCC, Focus Group Discussion on January 25, 2018

5 Loikaw Department of Labor (DoL), Focus Group Discussion on Jan 24, 2018.



Due to the Loikaw Department of Labor, there is a strong correlation between literacy and job opportunities. More efforts need to be undertaken to ensure that people from rural areas reach a sufficient level of fluency in the Burmese language. Despite the fact that Burmese is the language of instruction in most schools, people from rural areas are generally less capable to speak Burmese than people from urban areas. However, DoL stated that “illiteracy is not a problem because those people who have difficulties to speak Burmese will be able to catch up.” ‘Catching up’ seems to be indeed key in order to attain the status of skilled labor. DoL clearly stated that “skilled labor has significantly higher job opportunities than unskilled workers.”

Research data from Loikaw University even indicates that illiteracy in rural areas seems to increase due to the fact that rural populations primarily use their ethnic languages instead of practicing Burmese language, as it would be necessary to maintain or increase a certain level of language skills.<sup>6</sup> Loikaw University also communicated their observation that “the illiteracy rate in remote areas increases in proportion to a declining level of education.” Nevertheless, generally it can be stated that language capacities of younger generations are significantly higher than those of older generations. Or in other words, with a substantial amount of effort to creatively encourage school age children and youth to get engaged in Burmese language application skills, future job opportunities for youth from remote areas may increase considerably.

Women organizations in Kayah State, whose members participated as respondents in this study, expressed a high interest in developing partnerships with INGOs. These CSOs can be seen as valuable partners for change but need to strategically become nurtured and empowered to ultimately fulfil their mission. The three women organizations that were part of this research project were KnWO, KSWN, and KBA. All three organizations are led by young and inspiring women. Most women in communities are organized through one of these organizations. Regular community-based meetings and events are organized in order to advocate for women’s issues such as female participation in decision-making processes at the village level.

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6 Loikaw University, Registrar and Director of Training, KII, January 26, 2018.

A context analysis in Kayah State also needs to include new business opportunities, such as the sector of tourism. This is a sector that has received an increased level of attention by the government and the private sector. It is important to note that rural communities of Kayah State seem to be largely unprepared to deal with the expectations of Western tourists. The ITC tourism project that was implemented between the years 2014 to 2017 was a start-off for ‘Placing Kayah State on the Map’<sup>7</sup>. However, more strategic efforts need to be made for supporting rural communities to meet tourist standards and expectations and to better utilize their potential for income generation. There is little doubt about the fact that economic benefits that tourism may potentially bring to the communities need to be well facilitated. Therefore, it is necessary to prepare rural communities for receiving foreigner guests. The encounter between nationals and tourists as a positive experience (Eco-tourism) will lead towards enhanced livelihood opportunities. In this context, it needs to be recognized that the income opportunities for women may considerably increase since the catering system is largely managed by women. Thus, CSOs can play a significant role in training and preparing local communities to become agents of sustainability and inclusiveness for women since the catering system is largely managed by women.

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7 International Trade Centre (ITC), 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mo6nP0H48YI>

# ① Vulnerability and Resilience among Women and Youth

Physical, economic, social, religious, and political factors determine people's level of vulnerability and the extent of their capacity to resist, cope with, and recover from hazards. Clearly, poverty as a major contributor to vulnerability and disaster of any kind jeopardizes even the smallest development gains. Poor people are more likely to live and work in areas exposed to potential hazards while they are less likely to obtain the resources necessary for coping when disaster strikes. Secure livelihoods and higher incomes usually increase resilience and enable people to recover more quickly from stress and hazards. Equally, development choices made by individuals, households, communities, and governments increase or reduce the vulnerability risks. In Myanmar, there are a number of vulnerable groups as those listed below:

- › Displaced populations who leave their habitual residence in collectives, usually due to a sudden impact of threat, conflict situation, or natural disaster. This is a coping mechanism, undertaken and with the intent to return;
- › Migrants who leave or flee their habitual residence to go to new places and often abroad in order to seek better and safer perspectives;
- › Returnees – former migrants or displaced people who return to their homes or try to find new destinations within the country;
- › Specific groups within the local population who became marginalized due to their ethnicity or religion. These people/families are excluded and left in destitute; without access to land and withheld from social services and/or access to skill-building initiatives;
- › Youth suffering from neglect or abuse, pregnant and nursing women, unaccompanied children, widows, elderly people without family support, and disabled persons;
- › People who are enslaved to all kind of addictions, or other health limitations due to inappropriate life choices and lifestyle;
- › People who are illiterate, and/or without proper identification/documentation (ID card, Form 10);

In a crisis situation, people from these groups may be affected in more or less intense or even differing ways, depending

on people's social status, family responsibilities, gender role, religion, or ethnicity. At this point it needs to be mentioned that people can also be resourceful and resilient in crisis which plays a crucial role in recovery and prevention from any type of abuse or exploitation.

More research needs to be undertaken in order to analyze gender roles and other contributing factors to resilience. Such expertise and knowledge is necessary in order to better understand to which extent women and/or youth who might be generally considered as 'vulnerable' ultimately prove to be quite resilient. Resiliency factors can be manifold. However, for people who fall in one or more of the different categories of vulnerable groups as listed above, may tremendously benefit from the support of community, family stronghold, religion, and ethnic identification as these parameters play a crucial role in building resilience.

## AGE GROUPS

18-25	11%
25-30	9%
31-40	29%
41-50	30%
above 51	22%

In the context of assessing the vulnerability situation among women and youth in Kayah State, the discussions with the female leaders from KNWO and KSWN and the Loikaw-based youth organization KSYN provided a comprehensive background about their work and their perspectives on and experiences with the situation of women and youth in Kayah State. Interviews with these women provided detailed information about areas of vulnerability as well as potential areas for future interventions to be considered by FRC. Furthermore, voices from the youths were captured through FGDs. FGDs were conducted in 14 villages. With 45% female and 55% male participants, the FGD participation was relatively gender balanced.

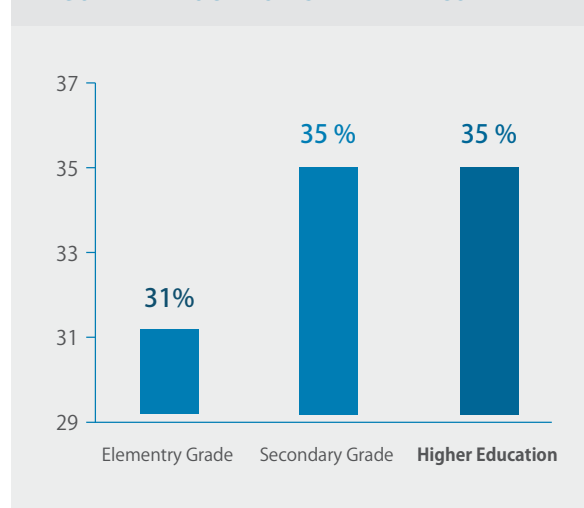
## 1.1 YOUTH<sup>8</sup> AND VULNERABILITY

The youth in Kayah State are challenged at many levels. Apart from acquiring literacy and numeracy, the current education system does by and large not prepare young people for the job market. In FGDs with Kone Thar Village leaders, it has been highlighted that even for graduated youth, unemployment remains quite high. After completing school at any level, graduates have to undergo further training to become successful job applicants and contributors to the family income. Hence, the Myanmar government promotes a modern learning society<sup>9</sup> while palpable changes in communities create immense pressures for young people. They simply need to ‘function’ and contribute to family livelihood securities. However, an education system that currently does not prepare the youth well for their present and future role in society stands in sharp contrast to high expectations of youth performance in society. Many poor households invested their trust into the education system. Evidence for this reality can be found in research data about household expenditure. Out of 254 HHs, 42 % took a loan for educational reasons, followed by loan taking for livelihood/agriculture with 74 %.

However, the hope of many families that after graduating from Grade 12, new pathways would open up for higher education and academic learning in the university has often been pushed to the margins. This is related to many causative factors. One reason for this are increasing costs for education. In addition, the youth are still victims of the long internal conflict in many ways. Young people often experience broken family relationships, neglect, addictions, and abusive family settings that reinforce their risks for increased vulnerability. Often, community structures and certain traditional ways of life do not promote the adaptation towards a ‘modern society’ as the government is promoting for. According to Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS), “Alcohol is traditional”. JRS says, “Youth do not know much on building healthy relationships and waste their lives with traditional practices, like drinking in

company of others.” Therefore, 86 % of the youth in FGDs indicated that alcohol and drugs are a problem. Youth regularly participate in cultural events in the communities (83 %). However, research participants express a felt need for a better integration of regular cultural and religious events into the social changes currently taking place. Next to other factors that will be discussed in upcoming sections of the paper, it should be noted that these few points already mentioned contribute to early school drop-outs and help to explain why Elementary and Secondary schooling as well as Higher Education completion lies under 50%.<sup>10</sup>

**FIGURE 1: EDUCATION STANDARD COMPLETED**



During research sessions, voices from the youth challenge existing social power relations and traditional practices. Their comments and critiques included the lack of support by village elders and cultural and traditional views that do not give priority and the right to the youth to explore by themselves. A lack of trust has also been mentioned, which became evident through barriers towards innovative ideas and initiatives. All of these mentioned factors can fuel tendencies towards increased frustration, questions about purpose, and increased levels of drug abuse and addiction.

<sup>8</sup> ‘Youth’ definition in Myanmar: Due to KII partners and various organizations, people between 16-35 years are officially considered as ‘Youth’.

<sup>9</sup> Jackson, R. UNESCO Bangkok: <http://www.unescobkk.org/education/>

<sup>10</sup> Higher education is considered from Grade 10 onwards.

However, what seems to be of crucial importance is how the youth define their greatest need. They strongly articulate that they desire to contribute to the family income. This is reflected in data that represents relatively low school/university enrollment of youth (Female 18%, Male 23%). Those youth who are not currently enrolled in school are either helping their parents (25% female, 27 % male) or are engaged in farm work (56 % female, 41 % male).

Other KII partners highlighted that, next to other reasons, early school drop-out is often related to children's engagement in families' farm business. KLCC stated, "the school dropout rate is high, only 5/10 students finish Grade 11. Child labor is needed in livelihood activities. This is the key causative factor of high school dropout." On the other hand, KSYN informs us that "parents need less help in farming because agro-technology sets workforce free."

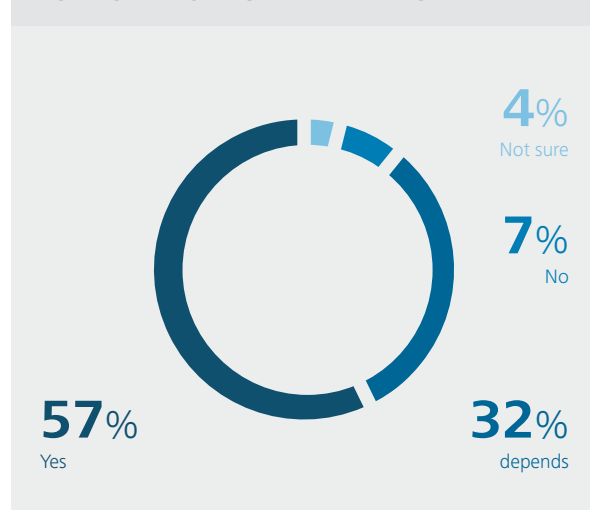
**"Parents need less help in farming because agro-technology sets workforce free."**

outside township to receive training while 32% of respondents answered this question with "it depends". It can be concluded that approximately 90 % are willing to attend educational training when general obstacles like financial challenge, transportation, shelter, and food scarcity can be overcome. Still, the main cause that hinders 53% of those who left school after Grade 6 to continue with further education is rooted in financial difficulties.

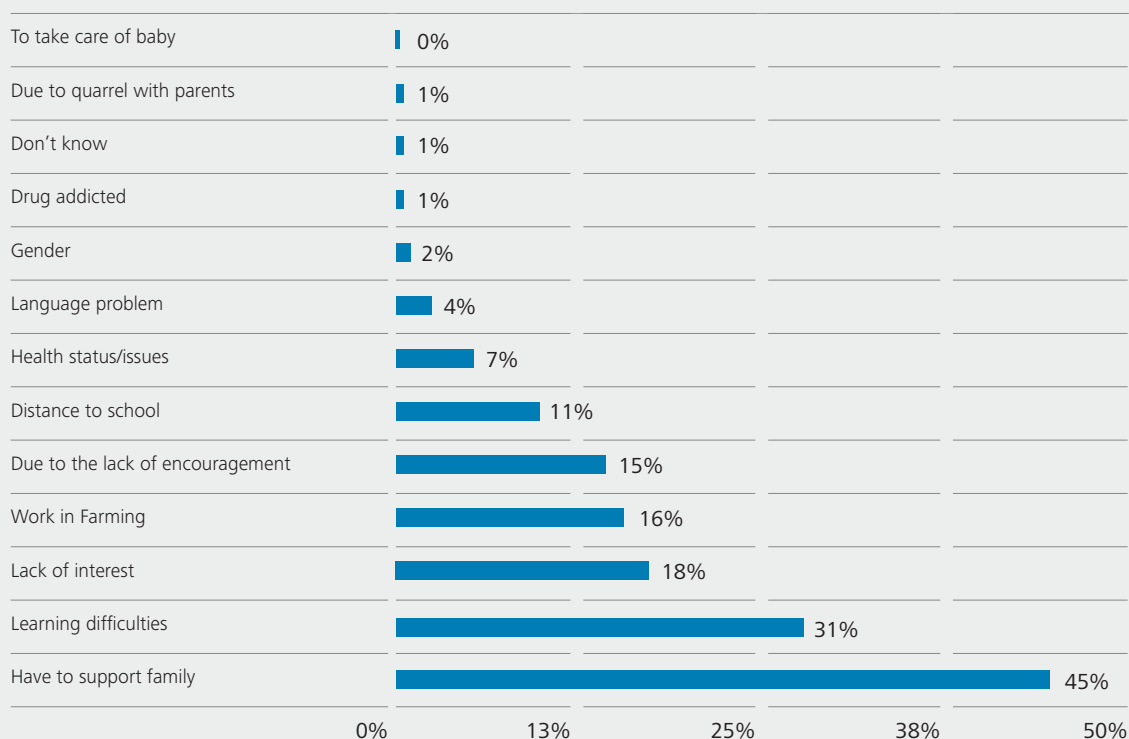
Another 32% indicated 'no interest' in further education. One assumption from the data is that the lack of 'relevant' education seems to be a more consistent experience among these students. Thus, it would be presumptuous by parents and educators to interpret 'lack of interest' as either a lack of a student's capacity or "difficulties with learning," as has been indicated as one reason for students' dropout from school in youth age in the HH survey. However, economic as well as other reasons have also been mentioned.

Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) mentioned that "VET is very much needed in the area; there must occur a shift in current education trends towards more meaningful and relevant education. Many of the youth do not see hope for the future." This particular perspective of the current educational situation underlines the importance of development psychological understandings of human development, saying that developing minds in teenagers and youth are curious when they become engaged in meaningful ways. Teenagers' willingness to learn can generally not be negated, as KLCC emphasized: "Most students are capable to master higher education, but many parents cannot afford it." When the youth's particular learning needs are clearly identified and become linked to purposeful learning, vocational training can become the entry point for meaningful skill-building and thus meet students' educational

**FIGURE 2: WILLING TO GO OUTSIDE OF TOWNSHIP TO RECEIVE TRAINING**



More than 82% of young people indicated that job opportunities are rare, if available at all. Further education as the solution to this deficiency is one common consideration of parents. Therefore, 57% of HH members are willing to go

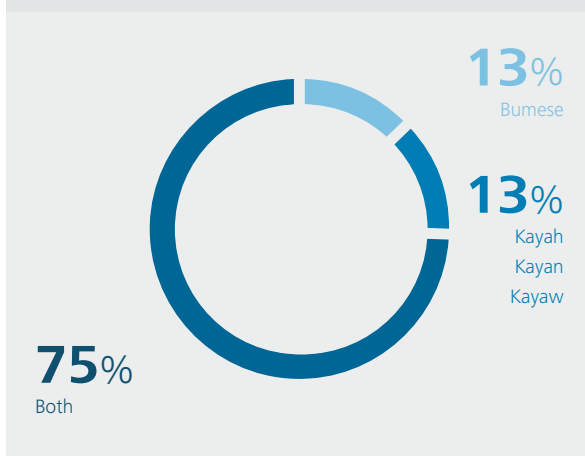
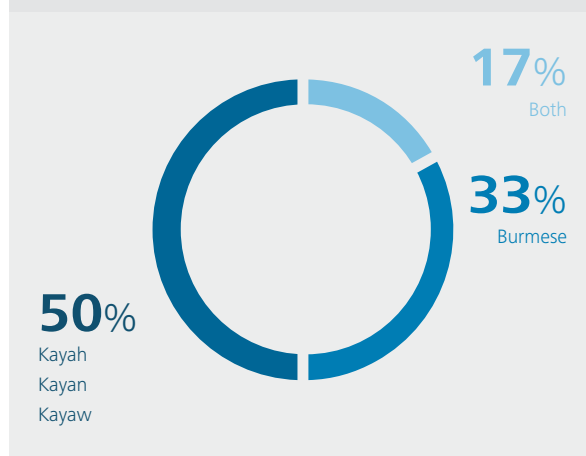
**FIGURE 3: REASONS FOR DROPPING OUT OF SCHOOL**

needs. Vocational skill-building bears the potential to fill the current educational gap. This issue shall be further discussed in section 4.1 and 4.5 of this report.

The great need to support young people and focus on resilience is therefore manifold. Youth development research shows that building developmental relationships with young people is the most influential thing adults can do to help them succeed. However, Loikaw University admits that “teacher capacity needs to continuously be built up. This is the greatest challenge as the government lacks clear strategies as well as funding.” These gaps are a possibility for civil society organizations to build smaller community groups and provide not only knowledge-based input but mentoring and coaching relationships. Whether the burdens of life come

from the hardship of poverty, stresses of war, conflict situations, or other forms of violence or chronic neglect, the single most common finding is that children who end up doing well have had at least one stable and committed relationship with a supportive adult. CSOs in this context can be supported in learning about principles of child and youth development in theory and practice and understand that relationships are at the heart of what youth need to experience in order to grow, thrive, and build resilience. There is little doubt that young people carry great potential for contributing to the process for identifying solutions to problems in their communities.

11 Roehlkepartain, Eugene, et.al. *Relationships First, Creating Connections that Help Young People Thrive*, Search Institute, 2017

**FIGURE 4: LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME****FIGURE 5: LANGUAGE IN VILLAGE MEETINGS**

people carry great potential for contributing to the process for identifying solutions to problems in their communities.

In regard to literacy, it seems contradictory/contradictive that KII partners reported that many rural youths often do not use the Burmese language outside of their classroom while young people in FGDs mentioned that 75% of the youth do speak Burmese and their ethnic language at home. However, FGDs also indicate that a group of 12% uses Burmese as the only language of communication at home.

This relatively low percentage demonstrates that a larger portion of ethnic youth practice ethnic languages at home while it can be assumed that those youth that are encouraged by their parents to study language in order to enhance their language skills (91%), also use the language at home (12 %). Or in other words, young people who are actively supported by parents to improve their Burmese language skills are also likely to find a home environment that invites children to speak Burmese. These observations also confirm that resilience is at work when otherwise vulnerable youth receive support and encouragement from adults.

Although the education system is largely Burmese-driven, 92% of FGDs participants do not have friends who speak any other than their own ethnic language. Only 8 % are involved in

bi-lingual friendships. Bi-lingual village meetings only occur in 17 % of all cases. Ethnic languages are used in 50 % of all village meetings and Burmese language is used in 33 % of all cases. Despite oral language skills, the access to written materials (books, etc.) is limited. In total, 75% of the youth mentioned that they do not have access to literature and/or find reading appealing. Thus, it can be assumed that the non-availability of literature may cause young people losing interest in reading.

#### Identification cards

Most young people in the surveyed townships and villages do not have any issue with ID cards and have achieved registration and issued ID cards. Only a few individuals mentioned some problems with identity documentation. However, it does not seem to be a systematic issue. Regarding workforce registrations, the government (Loikaw Department of Labor) is supporting people with labor cards that allow them to seek work throughout the country.

### 1.2 WOMEN AND VULNERABILITY

Community-based women organizations are essential institutions that offer space for women to learn, to share mutual empowerment, and to work on strategic planning for advoca-

cy to promote decision-making structures at community - and state level. In terms of training needs, women organizations expressed interest in developing business and marketing skills, knowledge about value chains, and general livelihood trainings with particular emphasis on agriculture techniques. In more urban areas, other subjects of interest were mentioned such as 'fashion and design' and 'advanced sewing' training.

### Reasons for Illiteracy

The actual literacy level of women particularly in rural areas is another important topic to comprehend. Despite vast differences between communities, it was mentioned that illiteracy among women in some rural communities is high. In particular, the illiterate level among rural women above 30+ years of age is much higher than in urban areas. KNWO also indicates that "illiteracy is an issue that mostly affects women above 40 years of age." The interviewed KII partners indicated the crucial need for working in these areas and mentioned following root causes for women's illiteracy: i) low self-confidence; ii) lack of family encouragement; iii) parents' preference of boys over girls when financial resources for paying school fees are scarce; iv) missing middle-schools in the area; v) remoteness; and vi) teachers' expectation to receive 'donations' while security becomes an issue of increasing importance. Already at this point in text, it is worthwhile to recommend that these points should become reconsidered and reflected on in the current approaches of CSOs.

### Power Relations

Women Organizations also shared their views about power relations and the position 'voices' of women are given. They either become entitled to be of significance or they are refused to bear any importance in daily lives and decision-making in rural communities. Traditional settings like rural communities often exclude women from decision-making processes and many women feel like having 'no voice'. The 'traditional' concepts of male dominance are strongly embedded and well maintained through groups of elders in these communities. However, over recent years women have formed 35 VSLAs that are nurtured by some of the locally operating women CSOs. In order to expand and promote the VSLA idea to all communities, further technical and promotional support is desired.

The VSLA concept is perceived as a powerful instrument because it empowers women's voices while they experience success by using their natural skills and attitudes for livelihood purposes as seen in "disciplined saving activity." Other technical know-how is necessary for addressing the very basic livelihood needs of families in Kayah State. Women CSOs also mentioned interest in learning English to better acquire and utilize information and literature of interest. KNWO reports that existing community groups (saving group, etc.) are often a result of NGO work with communities. However, women do not necessarily participate in decision-making processes (i.e. VDCs). Men's argument against women's participation is often related to security issues of women. Women should not be in leading roles because a leadership role would include work in the evenings and at nighttime.

Within the current peace process, the representation of women is low. Driven by the goal to increase the involvement of women in the peace process, KSWN is working on advocacy for women's affairs on the state level. For participation of women, KSWN claims women's participation at all community- and state levels. The intermediate goal is that 30% of participants are female. However, so far, advocacy towards these goals have been done with little success. Therefore, it seems to be of significant importance to work out support mechanisms through which the CSO KSWN gets enabled to increase negotiation capacity and confidence in addressing women's issues at the respective state department level.

Additionally, the above-mentioned CSO is aiming to increase their strategic planning and management capacity. In this context, women organizations can become essential supporters and agents of change in places where learning women are increasingly seeking means to get engaged in decision-making processes at community level. Initiating this change requires negotiation capacity and self-confidence. The male-dominant structures need to become convicted that it is simply smarter to include the 'other 50%' of the population in decision-making structures. With an approach that may include firmness, persistency, kindness, and patience it can be assumed that this is likely to be achieved as communities are more and more challenged with seemingly 'unsolvable' problems.

## “Youth do not know much about building healthy relationships.”

### Security Concerns

Women respondents indicated that the level of security is an increasing issue in communities. While most female youth indicated they would feel secure on their daily walks, about 36% mentioned they feel insecure and 9% do not feel secure at all during night time. Due to discussions with KII partners, security issues of women are on the rise and proportionally correspond with increasing levels of drug abuse and migration. With a focus on youth, JRS sees a major problem in the misuse of drugs among the youths and male adults. While the government does not control sale quantities of alcohol in shops, youth are not protected as they are in Thailand. There is lack of understanding about the hazards involved in using drugs. Drugs are a threat to the community and family structures.

### Social Support Structures of Youth

The ways social support structures in communities are perceived by youth reveal interesting insights. When the question was asked “Who is the first person you ask for advice or support when you have a big problem,” 32% would consult relatives while another 44% of respondents said they ‘don’t know’. This somehow indicates that community cohesiveness tends to be rather weak. This phenomenon is in line with the observation that lack of trust typically characterizes war-affected communities. This situation also generally confirms JRS’s observation that “youth do not know much about building healthy relationships.” This strongly relates to the cultural custom of drinking alcohol together with peers. In a nutshell, this means that healthy relational bonding is often substituted by addiction-related experience of community and friendships.

The roles women hold in rural communities are tightly knit with traditional practices and belief systems. In one FGD

conducted with village leaders, one male leader expressed his strong conviction that women should be caretakers of the house and of children. Other male participants strongly agreed by giving verbal applause for this statement. This strong and unambiguous feedback reflects the realities women face in most communities and households. The research findings underline this perception and reveal that women and girls are carrying the most workload for cooking, buying food and groceries (85%), and child and elderly care (79%).

Only farm work and husbandry is shared more evenly between household members, including children. Due to these day-to-day multiple responsibilities of women, chances to participate in skill building and training becomes a challenge and a pressing issue of time availability (see 4.1). In this context, KSYN provides a poignant summary of women’s fate in Kayah State: “There are no equal chances for women, especially when it comes to leadership.”

## “There are no equal chances for women, especially when it comes to leadership.”





## ② Key Findings

### “There are never fair chances for female youth to participate in education.”

The findings in this study are extracted from three research sources: i) KIs from nine organizations; (ii) structured household surveys with information from 254 households; and (iii) FGDs with 14 youth groups and 167 participants (f=99, m=68) from five townships in total. The information for this Vulnerability Assessment has been gathered from 25 villages located in Loikaw, Demoso, Shadaw, Hpasaung and Hpruso Townships. The HH interviews were conducted by trained enumerators who are able to speak the ethnic languages and are confident with handling structured questionnaires. Ethnic language enumerators were able to communicate in Kayah, Kayan, Gaybah, and Kayaw languages. Key respondents in the HH interviews were married working adults. The male/female ratio was quite gender balanced. About 63% of respondents identified themselves as ‘the head’ of the household. 81% of them were in the age of above 30 years. Nearly all interview participants held an ID card or the ‘Form 10’ registration.

#### 2.1 EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR WOMEN AND YOUTH

Access to education is a critical point for women and young people throughout Myanmar, particularly in remote areas. In this research, CSOs and other interview partners have expressed their concerns about limited access to skill building for women and youth. Traditional practices and worldviews still remain dominant and often keep young women in roles and responsibilities that do not allow them to either continue with their studies or undergo non-formal and skill-building education. These notions are confirmed by a village women from Daw Ta Ngu, who is the leader of one women group. She says, “There are never fair chances for female youth to participate in education.” KSWN highlights the main obstacles for participation in trainings: “language barrier, low self-confidence and esteem, and homework.” HH survey re-

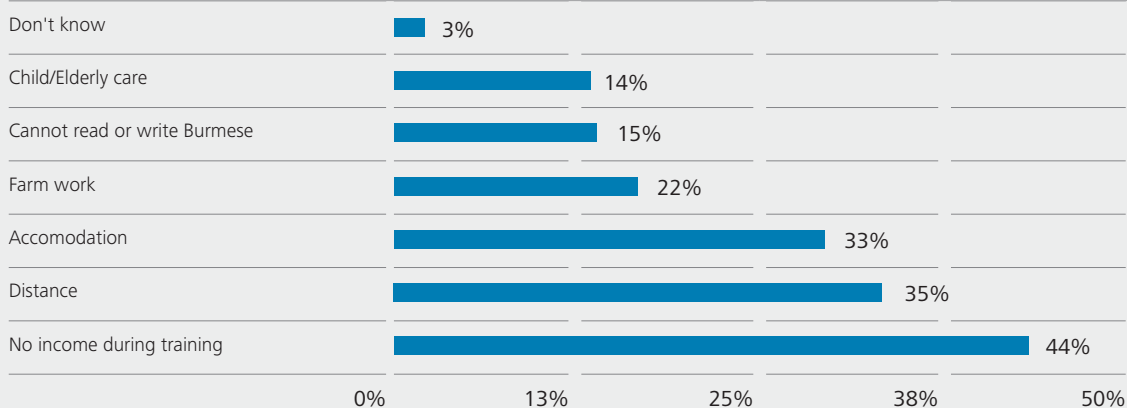
spondents do see obstacles for youth and female HH members in training program participation (57%).

Since Myanmar opened its geographic borders, the availability of consumer goods in rural communities brought new business opportunities as well as new consumption patterns for rural villagers while tensions for women who find themselves between tradition and modern influences become even more intense. Traditional cultures are now also challenged by the flood of information that is available on mobile phones. People all too often become victims of fake news to an unknown extent. This additionally challenges vulnerable people groups because their level of education and literacy is generally limited.

#### Training Barriers

There are a number of barriers identified by women and youth for their participation in training which is further described throughout this section. The literacy level of people is a specific issue that deserves thorough attention. However, limitations in literacy are neither a main reason nor a major limiting factor for participating in vocational training because Burmese is the main language of instruction in schools and because many youths developed bilingual skills over time. Other reasons or factors that limit youths’ and women’s participation in vocational training are more dominant such as missing income during training sessions, distances to the training venue, trans-

“Awareness sessions for communities and parents, giving explanations about the benefit of VT, offer the possibility of working with translation, if needed, and the promotion of valuable benefits of mobile trainings.”

**FIGURE 6: BARRIERS FOR YOUTH AND FEMALE HH MEMBERS TO PARTICIPATE IN TRAINING**

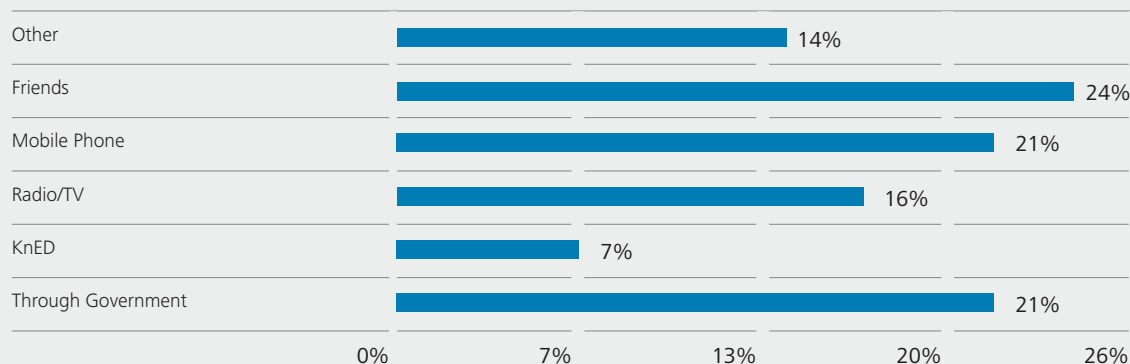
portation, secure accommodation, and women's involvement in farm activities, homework, child- and elderly care.

Many people and families in rural communities struggle for survival and face the challenge to make ends meet on a day-to-day basis. Therefore, families' focus on literacy and/or education as well as training is often not in the foreground. It seems to be of essential importance to support youth through transportation, food assistance, and shelter in order to increase students' participation in training and schooling. This is one key finding from FGDs. KSWN suggests options to overcome these obstacles: "Awareness sessions for communities and parents, giving explanations about the benefit of VT, offer the possibility of working with translation, if needed, and the promotion of valuable benefits of mobile trainings."

According to KSYN reflections, youth may also feel unfamiliar and disoriented in more urban areas due to their lack of urban exposure. They are concerned and afraid of "getting lost" unless proper care is assured. Additionally, in FGDs, village leaders mentioned that "training makes only sense when there is a chance for becoming linked to start-up grants or job opportunities. Many people lack the vision for investing time and resources in training that might not eventually lead toward better job perspectives and career prospects." It has

"Training makes only sense when there is a chance for becoming linked to start-up grants or job opportunities. Many people lack the vision for investing time and resources in training that might not eventually lead toward better job perspectives and career prospects."

also been found that people above 30 years of age often do not consider themselves as 'eligible' to show interest in skill-building. People also expressed the notion that training would only be useful when it is connected with a job opportunity. HH interview participants also mentioned that information about training opportunities often do not reach rural

**FIGURE 7: EXISTING COMMUNICATION LINES**

communities or come in rather late. Communication lines as currently existing are manifold. Still, rural areas often experience information gaps.

Research data also reveals time availability constraints among youth. Most interviewed HH members indicated full-time availability for training (58%) while 35% of respondents indicated only part-time availability. The key obstacles are mentioned above. Also, an overall 77% of the HH interview partners indicated their interest in skill building training while 57% would be willing to participate in a training program at township level. Prioritized training topics are i) advanced sewing skills; ii) preventive health care; iii) agriculture; and iv) a few other craftsman skills. According to the TOR of this research project, less than 1% of the youth received any vocational skill training yet. Young people in rural areas have very limited chances to participate in any form of industrial-, mechanical-, or primary sector-related training. VT is usually provided by three players: NGOs, the government, and CBOs/CSOs who often partner with INGOs.

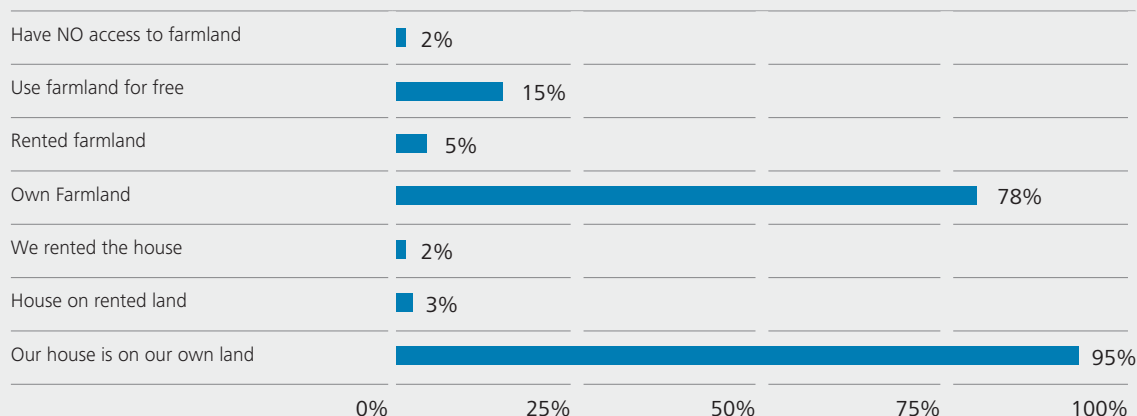
## 2.2 FOOD SECURITY

Food insecurity either experienced periodically or chronically, is strongly linked with an increased level of vulnerability.

Likewise, food insecurity often leads to malnutrition that can affect peoples' overall health status, people's human capital workforce, and livelihood security. Although most people have already lived in their communities for more than 10 years (76%), communities had to invest time and efforts into managing and stabilizing their livelihoods because they were once told by the government to settle in these areas (52%). The research also revealed that most families had never experienced forced displacement. However, 31% indicated that forced displacement had been experienced once. This happened during the late 90s. Despite the fact that the research did not look deeper into the issue of food security, it can be assumed that the above-mentioned factors ensured the absence of chronic food insecurity. Only a smaller number of households reported food insecurity during lean seasons. This data also gets confirmed by the research finding that 78% of households possess own farmland while 95% have built their houses on properties of their own. Only 2% indicated not having access to farmland at all.

## 2.3 INDEBTEDNESS

High levels of non-productive debts set livelihood assets at risk while repayment schedules may reduce essential investment capacity. Additionally, high levels of existing debts

**FIGURE 8: TYPE OF LAND**

can reduce the ability to access additional credit. Household indebtedness in rural areas is an issue of vital importance. Household indebtedness significantly contributes to vulnerability. Research findings revealed that 65% of women were in control of the household expenditure while 74% indicated they borrowed money in the previous year. The main reasons for taking a loan were related to agriculture production (74%), children's education (42 %), and health issues (25 %). A third reason was food insecurity (25 %), primarily during the lean season or times of crop failure.

The level of household indebtedness is one significant indicator that allows making assumptions about the extent of potential investments to be done in the e.g. sector education. During the previous year, about 60% of households invested up to 500,000 Kyat and 12% up to 1 Mio. Kyat. That is often the reason that households are continuously indebted to some degree. When children are in school, particularly participating in higher education, the economic burden for parents is considerable. Any other additional financial challenges (e.g. health issues) may threaten families enormously. One KII partner mentioned that community structures often lack sustainability measures. Generally speaking, there are no saving practices in place while it is more 'traditional' practice

to borrow money. Certain sets of 'traditional' practices play a significant role and may decide over the question whether families live in a state of poverty or affluence. In a nutshell, this realization can be summarized by the simple phrase 'culture matters'.

## 2.4 SOCIAL PARTICIPATION & DECISION MAKING

Poverty and vulnerability is often closely linked to power relationships. In other words, poor people often face the challenge of feeling powerless on a quite substantial level of their life experience. In this context, persons with more influence in decision making may hold stronger negotiating positions about livelihood related factors such as fair pricing and land- and asset use. The level of social participation is linked to decision powers. Social capital such as community cohesion, family strongholds, and commonly agreed upon (life-promoting) values and customs can foster the capacity to deal with shocks and stresses in times of difficulties and adversity.

Decision making in villages is largely male-dominated by the group of elders who hold the power and direct village activities. FGDs with Kone Thar Village Youth revealed that youth



**FIGURE 9: HOUSEHOLDS AND THEIR LOANS**

are 'unhappy' with the lack of possibilities to speak-up or contribute in community. None of them ever participated in village meetings of any significance, in meetings where important decisions were made. They only participated in some religious meetings where community festivals were planned. Youth group members also said that village leaders do not speak on behalf of the youths nor give youth opportunities to express their issues, opinions, and concerns. This seems to be a rising potential for conflict within communities. Bottom line, village elders do not give opportunities and chances for young people to participate in significant decision-making processes. It seems to be an important issue that youth need forums and places where expression of ideas and 'learning together' can happen in a meaningful manner (see recommendation 18). More data from the household interviews indicate limited participation of youth in village affairs. Youth participation is limited to planning cultural- or religious events where workforce is needed or other important information i.e. about health is shared.

As already mentioned earlier, existing community groups (VDCs, etc.) often conduct meetings in the evenings. Men's argument against women's participation is often related to

security issues of women. It is argued that women cannot take leading roles because a leadership role would include work in the evenings and at nighttime. Many men would not allow their wives to go out and participate in meetings. Therefore, creative and innovative ideas to further ensure security measures for female village leaders are high in demand once they are elected.

## 2.5 STATE OF LITERACY

People's level of literacy and numeracy significantly influences livelihood opportunities and improves the future of everyone in society. Basic skills in Reading and Writing effectively include basic Math skills. In this context, literacy is critical to economic development as well as individual and community well-being. For ethnic youth and their future prospects in particular, it is critical to develop the ability to communicate (speaking, reading, writing) in Burmese language in order to perform well in jobs outside of the rural community. As mentioned earlier, the economy and social life in Myanmar is profoundly changing and the future of young people largely depends on their ability to effectively communicate. This also applies vice versa: the economy of the society gets enhanced when the youth have a sufficient command over their language and literacy skills. Effective literacy (functional literacy see Rec. 7) skills and language fluency are door openers towards advanced educational and employment opportunities, so that people are better enabled to fight poverty. In a more and more complex and rapidly changing technological world<sup>12</sup> it is essential that chances for the youth become optimized in order to expand their knowledge skill levels and to keep up with the pace of change that began to govern rural areas of Myanmar. Examples from other parts of the world provide evidence that a 1% increase in literacy levels would raise labor productivity by the factor of 2.5<sup>13</sup>. This might be

12 Green revolution" – introduction of technology in agriculture requires literacy. Youth that is able to read instructions which are in Burmese language are bringing an essential skill to the family skill portfolio.

13 Project Literacy: <http://projectliteracykelowna.org/about/the-importance-of-literacy/>

come a significant contribution not only to family resilience, but also to the country's GDP<sup>14</sup>

Literacy has also an inbuilt 'well-being' component as adequate literacy skills enable the youth to better communicate with government officials or health professionals, who are mostly Burmese speaking staff in the urban offices and health centers. Personal anecdotes can be shared about youth who are fluent in Burmese language and thus significantly help their families to improve their livelihoods (using written information, communicate via text messages with vendors, better understand and analyze market information, or function as translators for their parents, etc.). The ability to properly communicate with health staff can be lifesaving when i.e. parents are aging and are in need of medical care.

Illiteracy among the youth (16-35 y) is estimated by KII partners something between 5-20%. This largely depends on the extent of remoteness of the villages: "The more remote, the higher the level of illiteracy, so to speak." Illiteracy among girls is higher than among boys because they are more occupied with caretaking responsibilities in the family (i.e. looking after siblings) and other household duties. However, also boys are hindered from attending proper schooling because they are often required to care for house- and farm animals. The research data revealed a relatively high number of people who never attended school. Among female household members it is 27%, and among male household members it is 18% who never attended school. It can be assumed that their Burmese language skill level is relatively low. These figures, however, include all household members. With an exclusive focus on youth alone, these numbers are likely to change as 97% of the youth are exposed to Burmese language as the main language of instruction in schools.

According to the 2014 government census among ethnic people, the average literacy level (reading and writing skills in Burmese) in Kayah State was 82%. Generally speaking it can

**"The more remote, the higher the level of illiteracy, so to speak."**

be said that the literacy rate in Myanmar is relatively high due to traditional monastic education which is strongly embedded in culture and society. However, KII partners acknowledged that the census did not capture data from all rural populations. KII partners communicated their impression of the literacy level in rural communities. They perceive it to be lower than the census and estimations that have been released by the government. In a nutshell, it can be summarized that there is no doubt about the probability that more or less illiterate ethnic youth may face even more difficulties in finding jobs and occupations outside of their ethnic communities. KII partners agree upon the observed reality that "those youth who cannot properly read and write Burmese language face even less job opportunities outside of their community, family, and/or farming settings." KII partners also said that *"some youth have tried to find jobs elsewhere but often did not succeed."* One possible reason could be that current education offers did not sufficiently prepare youth for conducting a job. Therefore, youth who seek a job can only work in the category of unskilled labor with low salaries. Youth see their future perspectives on a given scale of 1-10 between the numbers 4-7. While the overall quality of education has been declining due to a lack of motivation and training in teachers, a lack of interest in schooling and a vision for formal education's purpose and value has been observed. This is directly linked to the current lack of interest in working in remote areas.

This situation needs to be seen in the context of "youth from remote areas that have a hard time to cope with challenges in urban areas (JRS)" and the fact that "basic education does not provide critical thinking or life skills (KSYN)." On one hand, there is the optimistic view of DoL, considering illiteracy not as a big problem because those people who have difficulties to speak Burmese will be "able to catch up." However, this view is opposed by representatives from the Loikaw University. KII

14 **Gross Domestic Product** – is the measure of a country's total economic activity. It represents the monetary value of all goods and services produced over a period of time, i.e. annually.

“Those youth who cannot properly read and write Burmese language face even less job opportunities outside of their community, family, and/or farming settings.”

partners from that institution have the impression that “the illiteracy rate in remote areas increases as the level of education declines.” This has been observed by young teachers who were assigned to teach in remote areas. This means, “once language is not practiced, as it frequently happens in remote areas, language skills are fading.” With regard to ethnic languages, KNPP expresses the concern that “ethnic languages vanish since they are not further developed and less and less practiced.” KLCC suggests to share VA results with the state government and to promote mother tongue language skills parallel to vocational training. Although Burmese language is

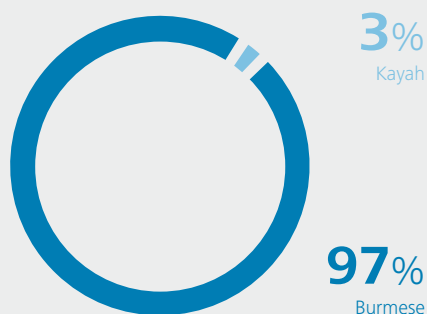
generally perceived as the unifying language between ethnic groups, there are still many challenges to be overcome when it comes to the translation of existing training manuals into Burmese language.

KII partners also mentioned that ethnic languages are mostly learned in church settings. There is religious literature available in people’s mother language. However, there are only few or often no teachers at disposal to further develop students’ skills in ethnic languages. In some schools, there is only 1 teacher who is literate in the ethnic language. This teacher has been placed there by the Kayah Literature and Culture Committee (KLCC).

The more remote communities are, the higher the level of illiteracy seems to be. Illiteracy among youth (16-35 years of age) is between 5-20 % while illiteracy seems to increase because rural populations use ethnic languages instead of Burmese. This also means that the illiteracy rate in remote areas increases as the level of education declines. This reaches severe levels in non-accessible remote areas and areas that were left behind due to conflict situations.

The study revealed that a high percentage of people did not attend school: 27 % of female household members and 18 % of male household members never attended school. A low level of command over Burmese language, limited access to communication with others outside one’s local community, and participation in skill building and training as well as access to jobs comes along with it. Furthermore, most war-affected townships in officially restricted areas could not be included in this study. It is assumed that levels of illiteracy in such regions are even higher since people have been disrupted from access to educational opportunities. In remote areas, it is critical that especially women, youth, and middle-aged people find ac-

**FIGURE 10: LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION AT SCHOOL**



“The illiteracy rate in remote areas increases as the level of education declines.”



cess to literacy trainings because language barriers limit their means for building relationships and finding job opportunities beyond their immediate family- and community circles.

## 2.6 HEALTH

Chronic illness and other health issues of primary breadwinners or other family members threaten livelihood security and reinforce vulnerabilities. There is a strong correlation between health, food security, and lifestyle. Although poor households do not necessarily suffer more from illness and disease than affluent households, lifestyle habits and consumer choices have an impact on people's health status. However, education also plays a significant role which explains why educated people often make better choices in terms of nutrition and lifestyle. With a weak health status of the poor, health expenditure increases, together with the risk that the conversion of livelihood assets into cash becomes a necessity. This vicious cycle functions like a negative boost for increased levels of vulnerability. In this context, primary and preventive health care becomes an important issue and has a significant impact on the level of vulnerability. A poor health status of the youth surely does have negative consequences for their educational performance. Young women who suffer from poor health conditions might additionally become burdened by female-related diseases.

Throughout the research and personal interviews with KII partners, it was revealed that communities and households have great issues with alcoholism. In total, 86% of HH interview partners and all CSOs mentioned that alcoholism is an issue for many. Surveyed HH members reported that home-made liquor generates only a small percentage of income (1%) and that such alcoholic produces are largely meant for personal

consumption or sharing with friends and relatives. FGDs with KII further revealed that "drug addicts have a high and early dropout rate from school (by Grade 6 in average). KNWO have one Safe House in existence. They consider the existence of a Safe House as crucial because "the reality that GBV/ domestic violence as an ongoing or even increasing issue" stands in direct relation with unemployment of men who are currently ex-army members and alcohol/drug addicts. Village leaders (exclusively male leaders) often do not take people's issues with addiction very serious. KLCC identifies unemployment to be associated with drug addiction or alcoholism as the "key community problem." Thus, the consultant suggests addressing the issue through capacity building for CSOs and through vocational training courses. Ideally, youth clubs and life skill training units will address the issue in more detail.

## 2.7 PRODUCTIVE INCOME & LIVELIHOOD DIVERSIFICATION

Income that derives from a single source is more vulnerable to shocks. Multiple income sources and the strategy to diversify skills may potentially intensify the level of protection against shocks and reduce the risks for dependency on a single income source. There is a strong correlation between productive skills and productive income. Income diversification is in this context an effective way to increase household wellbeing, to reduce income-related risks, and to foster the stability and provision of household members' food consumption. Increasing the sources of income, therefore, needs to become an important component in livelihood strategies among rural households. The situation in Kayah State needs to be assessed in two ways: Income diversification opportunities in lowland - and upland agriculture. While rice is staple food and the main crop, other often more labor intensive sources of income need to be considered. By investing in irrigation schemes to ensure a production diversification and all year-round production cycles, in particular in lowland agriculture areas, the government would set sufficient triggers in simultaneous ways.

This research and Vulnerability Assessment investigated on more general income sources and found that 71% of the main income in all surveyed households comes from agricul-

"Ethnic languages vanish since they are not further developed and less and less practiced."

## “Unsuccessful people who cannot send remittances back home are mostly unskilled workers.”

ture activities. A second source of income is represented by simple day-to-day labor work outside of people's homes. Only a smaller number of households (5% only) do have regularly paid jobs or generate income through selling of goods in their own shops. Problems that occurred and impacted the household's income were related to low crop yields, commodity prices, and health issues. An overview of the mentioned reasons will be illustrated in the following graph. It is interesting to note that 24% of the respondents did neither know nor seem to have analyzed the reasons for an un-anticipated income decrease in any further detail. This survey response indicates household vulnerability to a critical extent.

As migration for seeking work opportunities elsewhere is a general issue in Myanmar, it is much less prevalent in Kayah State. However, only 3% of all surveyed households indicated that they received remittances from family members who work elsewhere, either in Myanmar or abroad. Migration to Thailand is an issue because the income in Thailand is still higher than in Myanmar. Some migrating youths are successful while others return from Thailand, without having had great success. KSYN mentioned that “only a few migration success stories do exist. Unsuccessful people at least get a lesson for life.” They also claim that “unsuccessful people who cannot send remittances back home are mostly unskilled workers.” It is estimated that only 3/10 became successful in cross-border labor (Thailand) in order to send remittances to family members left behind.<sup>15</sup>

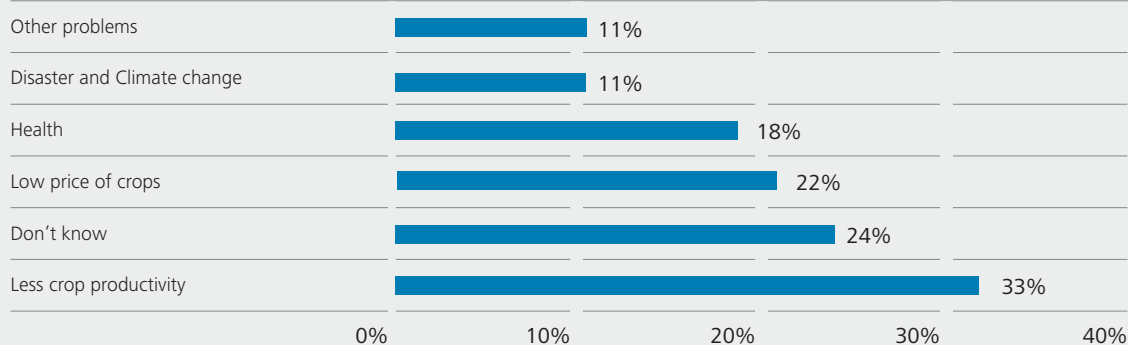
In regard to plans or ideas on how to increase the levels of household income, 36% of HH respondents indicated ‘not having the plan to do so’. And while 39% of respondents said that they will try to extend their agriculture production by either renting more land or other means, only 14% indicated to consider taking up daily labor or work elsewhere and outside their own community. Overall it can be analyzed that strategic income diversification is not a well-known concept as it carries certain limitations that are mostly related to available skill sets. There is a huge potential to increase various kinds of livelihood skills and promote income diversification strategies. However, this issue also refers back to the discussion of people's low self-esteem and awareness for naturally given talents and skills. KNPP recommends that “training should be built on existing talents to be identified beforehand. All stakeholders should work together to create job opportunities for young people. Training in life skills would be valuable, including critical thinking and mental development of young people.” The latter part of this recommendation may hold an important key for the first part, to build training on existing talents. The consultant suggests that creating the space for mental and moral development may substantially contribute to students' opportunities for identifying natural skills and talents.

### 2.8 ASSETS

The ownership over convertible livelihood assets/capitals (land, livestock, rights, production factors, etc.) can provide short-term protection against shocks. When a crisis hits a family, these assets are often converted into cash. However, on the long run, this conversion of assets does rather increase people's level of vulnerability. Most of the households in the survey area own the land on which their houses are built. Furthermore, 78% of the households have own farmland that has been mostly (52%) registered by the government. In contrast, 27% indicated that the farmland is un-registered; neither registered by the government nor by ethnic authorities.

Over the years, people in communities have managed to own several other important items such as a motorbike (83%), a mobile phone (80%), small livestock/poultry (76%), and pigs by 72%, just to list the four highest categories of indicat-

<sup>15</sup> Focus Group Discussion with Village Leaders and Catholic Priest from Kone Thar, Jan 22, 2018.

**FIGURE 11: PROBLEMS THAT AFFECTED HH INCOME IN 2017**

ed assets. In addition, one third of the HHs own craftsman tools or cows. Meanwhile, the remarkable number of 23% of all households own a portable small engine that can be used for multiple purposes (hand tractor, generator, transport medium, etc.). Interestingly, only 1% indicated to own a TV because received signals in many rural areas are poor.

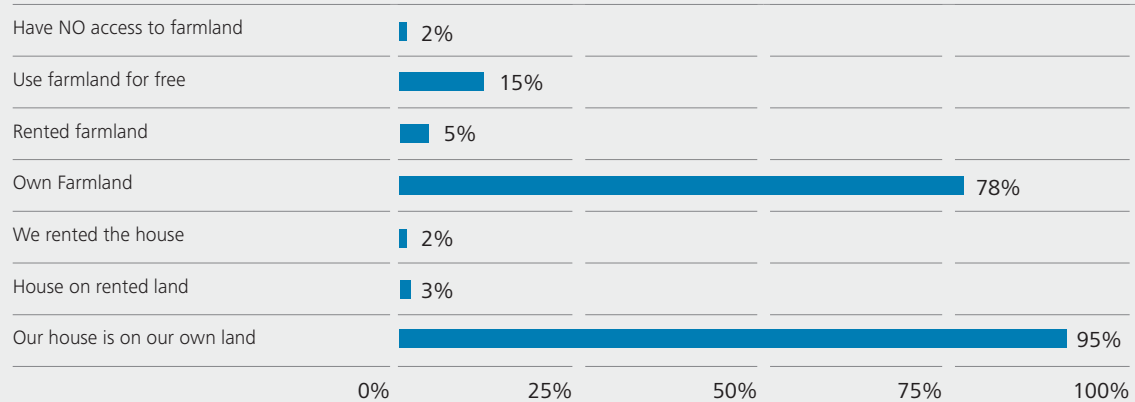
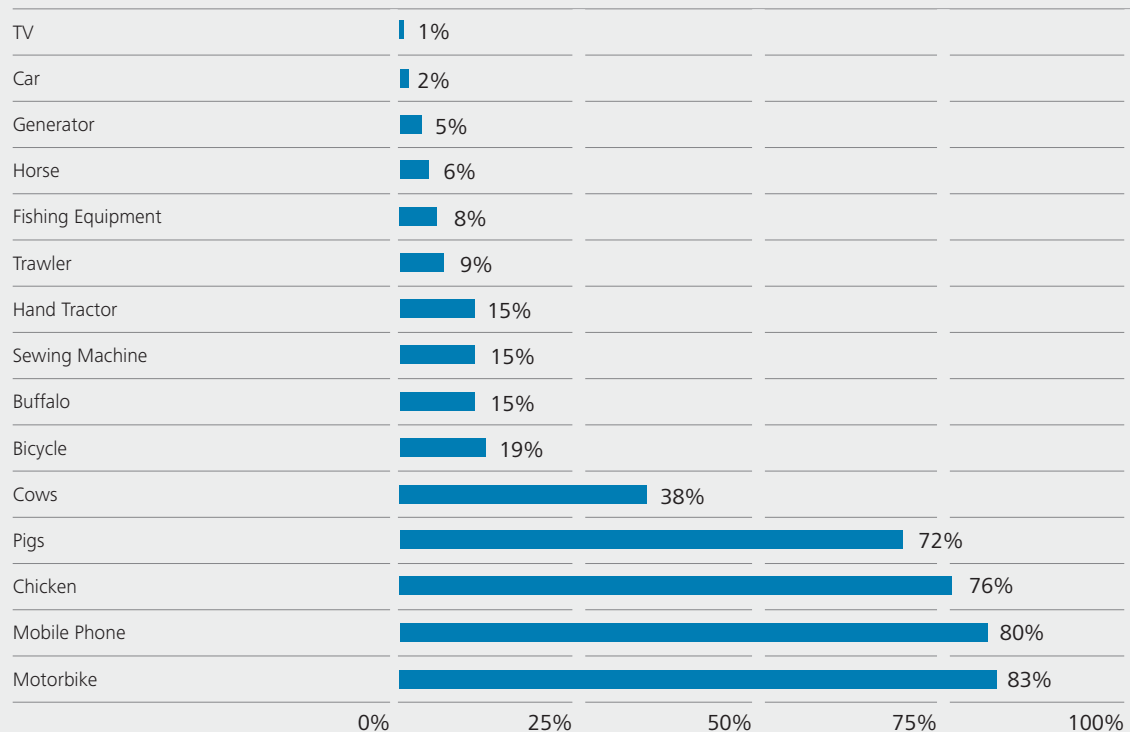
**“Training should be built on existing talents to be identified beforehand. All stakeholders should work together to create job opportunities for young people. Training in life skills would be valuable, including critical thinking and mental development of young people.”**

As already alluded to earlier, many survey respondents do have low levels of awareness for their given skill sets. While 46% indicated agriculture skills, 22% of the respondents answered that they ‘Don’t Know’ which skills they may have. This result reconfirms that poor people often have a low self-esteem and consider themselves as uneducated. Throughout the process of doing development and trainings with people, this aspect needs to be addressed in an adequate manner (see recommendation 20).

## 2.9 DISPLACEMENT

The experience of forced displacement contributes to the perception of powerlessness and diminished levels of self-esteem that affects people’s capacity to restructure healthy lives. Results from another regional Vulnerability Assessment<sup>16</sup> show that displacement had a ‘multiplier effect’<sup>17</sup> upon the vulnerability in these communities. The study indicates that the experience of forced displacement has produced noticeable and negative outcomes within these communities and has exacerbated the effects of already-prevalent causes of vulnerability (a ‘multiplier effect’).

The experience of displacement in Kayah State has been on a smaller scale than it had occurred in other states throughout

**FIGURE 12: WHAT TYPE OF LAND DO YOU HAVE?****FIGURE 13: HOUSEHOLD ASSETS**

the SE of Myanmar. Ethnic groups are relatively small. People are among themselves. These diverse ethnic groups have found ways to cope with the experience of displacement and integrated the Burmese language into their education systems. In total, 36% of surveyed households mentioned that forced displacement (once or multiple times) has been part of their experience. About the same number percentage has suffered from violence due to ethnic conflict while the majority number percentage does not share this experience and lived in relatively stable communities. Despite the fact that most people did not experience forced displacement directly, there is little doubt that most others are indirectly affected. The threat of civil war against one's ethnic group has led to deep mistrust.

Household survey results reveal that a number of people indicated experiences with migration. However, these experiences were often negative in nature and related to inner-communal and inner-family social problems such as divorce and/or destruction of family units.<sup>18</sup>

In the context of experiencing (domestic) violence and abuse, it is interesting to note that 90 % of all HH respondents indicated 'No' and 10 % indicated "Don't Know" when they were asked if there happened domestic violence in their home environment. In contrast to previous discussions of high GBV incidences in people's homes, this data must be treated with caution.

There is the chance that the younger generation who has learned Burmese in school from early years on will soon begin to evaluate the ethnic and conflict situation quite differently. There is a good chance now for NGOs and CSOs to work with youth and draw their attention to skill-building and personal formation (incorporate valuable life skills) to become competitive on the emerging job market.

16 Mellor, Dr. Robert, *Vulnerability, Poverty and Displacement in the Tanintharyi Region of Myanmar*, Covenant Consult, 2017.

17 Multiplier effect: this is the process whereby a given change on people's vulnerability causes a larger change i.e. livelihood prospects. This can be either negative or positive. At best, reduced vulnerability indirectly strengthens livelihood opportunities and communal life.

18 Focus Group Discussion with Village Leaders and Catholic Priest, Jan 22, 2018.

## 2.10 PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

It has been found that about 24 % of disabled people are illiterate and 29 % of people with disabilities are without any activity. Within the study area, 8% of the households indicated to have one person in the household who needs special assistance due to physical or intellectual disabilities. The level of disability also determines whether a child can attend school or not. Teachers and school settings are not prepared to receive children with physical disabilities, not to mention mental limitations or retardations.

However, the study reveals that one third of disabled persons have completed primary school education while 19% of them graduated from middle school. The study also reveals that youth and adult people with disabilities are largely involved in some meaningful activity (71%) as shown in the below graph. It is most likely that the level of disability finally determines also the extent of involvement in some sort of activity that either contributes to housework or allows the person to be a student.

The survey also revealed that mostly mothers and older sisters (62%) are the primary caretakers for persons with disabilities. This is an additional burden for women as they already carry the greatest workload in the household. Vocational training on Child - and Elderly care or courses on Service for people with disabilities could be of great support for these families. CSOs who identify the service gap might develop this expertise and could become trusted partners of burdened families. In this context, INGOs may consider offering a training module that would enhance the skill level of caretakers (further see Rec. 17).

## 4.11 CULTURAL PRACTICES

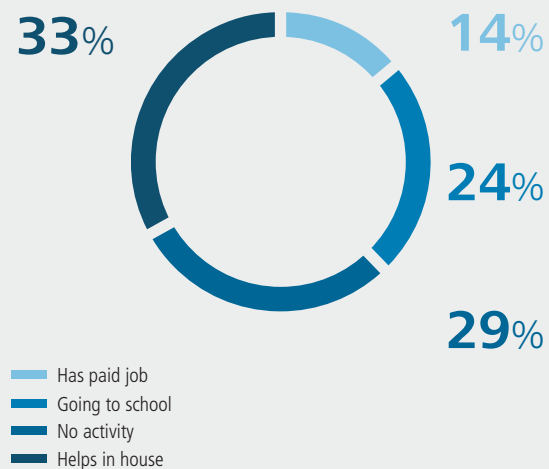
Culture is often defined as customary beliefs and values that ethnic, religious, and social groups pass on from one generation to the next. Anthropologists argue that a culture consists of habits that are shared by members of a society. Cultural practices in general have two powerful dimensions. The first category of practices can be life-enhancing and unleash forces

and empower families and groups. Practices (i.e. collaborative work) that share values in common can be powerful and provide the energy to cope with adversity, especially in times of crisis. Cultural practices also give meaning and identity to a community or family in a life-enhancing way. Powerful examples can be identified where people have practices and rituals that ensure mutual support in physical and/or emotional aspects. The other category of practices is life-diminishing and bears the potential of ‘sucking’ on individuals or community’s energy levels. Such can be cultural practices, rituals, and views that have more negative or even destructive aspects. Despite the fact that there might be a common agreement among villagers to value such practices as part of community life, they ultimately diminish peoples’ capacity to cope with stress and crisis and thus reinforce vulnerability and poverty.<sup>19</sup>

The research in Kayah State did not provide sufficient space for exploring cultural aspects on deeper levels, which means to determine whether existing practices fall into the category

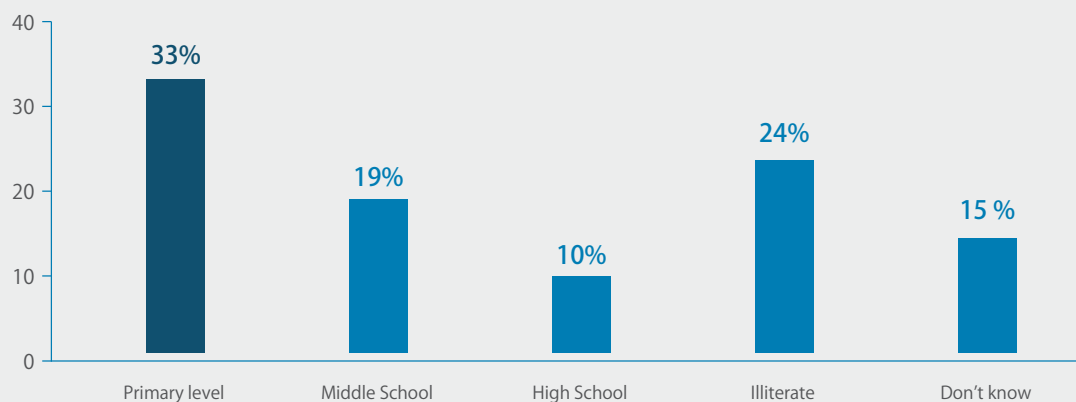
of life-enhancing or life-diminishing. However, there are some hints to practices that are likely to be contributive to vulnerability and poverty. As indicated by most KII partners, alcohol consumption is a widely accepted practice among all

**FIGURE 15: ACTIVITIES OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**



19 Lopez-Claros, Augusto, 2014, *Does Culture Matter for Development?* The World Bank, Blog, <http://blogs.worldbank.org/developmenttalk/does-culture-matter-development>

**FIGURE 14: EDUCATION BACKGROUND OF PwDs**



groups and men, women, and youth alike. Early or immature marriage is also often a practice (>9%) in many communities that jeopardizes young women's life perspectives and violates other human rights. The list of life-enhancing as well as life-diminishing practices can be long and it is not difficult to comprehend that cultural practices at the HH level do potentially influence the families' capacity to sustain their livelihoods. Cultural practices also determine to what extent participation in education can happen or the pursuit of HH members' livelihood activities is prevented or enabled. It is suggested to look at cultural practices and assess to what extent these practices may contribute to life-enhancement as well as developing the courage to address destructive patterns that exercise reinforcement on vulnerabilities of people already over generations.

### 3 Conclusion and Recommendations

The following conclusions and recommendations are made on the understanding that FRC aims to enhance the partnership with locally operating CSOs. According to the Charter of Change principles, the partnership shall be built on equality, transparency, result-oriented approach, responsibility, and complementarity.<sup>20</sup> The development approach to work with local organizations should be built on strategic empowerment of CSOs and their engagement in direct implementation to gain confidence and experience. Such view is built on the bottom-up approach, supporting CSOs in identifying community needs, their own strengths, and capacity needs.

Following conclusions are drawn from the field work as well as gathered and interpreted data through the structured questionnaire. These conclusions directly flow from the research data analysis, as described in detail above. Therefore, they deem to be worthwhile to be taken into consideration.

- › Youth in rural areas have insufficient access to skill building training and job opportunities.
- › The inclusion of the Youth in community decisions is not common practice in many communities. CSOs can play a crucial role through training and enabling the youth to increase their meaningful contributions.
- › There is strong evidence that alcoholism and addictions are a significant issue in communities. Homemade liquor is quite common and KII partners confirmed that alcoholism is a huge problem and often leads to GBV, abuse, or neglect.
- › Local CSOs are keen to learn and work in partnership with INGOs in various ways. The potential partly exists but needs to be further developed and nurtured.
- › Illiteracy is a significant issue in rural areas and among the older generations. Women are less literate than men because access to education is unequal.
- › Authorities (Government and Ethnic authorities) are largely open-minded and welcome NGO engagement. In particular, the GTHS is suggested to be a future partner.
- › Rural households need to become better adaptable to changing economic and social changes. Tailored training

for farm businesses and cooperatives is essential, so that farmers can learn to make better market-oriented decisions.

The research data sets from 254 HH interviews and conducted 14 FGDs with 167 youth participants and nine KIIs enable the consultant to give following recommendations:

1. **Vocational Training Methodology:** Short training courses gain increasing relevance and popularity among all age groups. New VT courses need to be added to training portfolios with a strong emphasis on appropriate training methodologies. The integration of adult-learning principles<sup>21</sup> is essential. It enables and promotes dialogue (experience exchange) within the training setting. Addressing the needs of young people (youth), similar principles are valid including a strong focus on life skill training: communication, decision-making, time- and self-management, problem-solving strategies, financial resources management, gender relations, health choices, job hunting strategies, etc. Within this context, FRC is advised to consider to extend the cooperation with the GTHS as well as to establish cooperation with women CSOs for reaching out to rural communities in effective manners. Mobile training units are good instruments and were requested multiple times by KII partners and would increase accessibility to training opportunities, in particular for women.

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21 Adult learning principles simply refer to the fact that training participants are often adults who bring a certain set of work and life experience to the classroom. These work experiences need to be taken into account and, if possible, integrated into the training setting. Certain aspects are key and should be nurtured within a VT setting: a) Participant **experiences** need to be included, b) the connection between learning and life must be very clear; c) Participants sign up for an area of interest and therewith come with certain **expectations**, d) The trainer must help them to achieve their learning goal; e) The training setting must be as much **practical** as possible (less than 50% theory) while it will be valuable to identify learning goals mutually agreed upon or individually determined; f) Trainers must show **respect** at all times. Linguistic diversity and backgrounds should be embraced as valuable training components that bear the potential to enrich the learning experience of all training participants.

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20 Charter for Change, <https://charter4change.org/2015/07/31/thecharter/>



2. **Cooperation with GTHS:** The vocational education schools in Myanmar are facing enormous challenges and are the backbone of the country's economic development. Since a number of years, FRC has maintained the cooperation with the GTHS in Loikaw. Through this partnership, trust was built and the receptiveness of teachers and the leadership for further inputs seems to be stable and at a high level. It seems that the time is ripe to suggest the development of higher skill level short courses as well as a few new VT short courses. Teachers and the management expressed their interest to move forward, realizing the demand for learning among young people and their current capacity limitations. In order to boost teachers' technical and methodological capacity, it is suggested to consider sending GTHS teachers to training sessions to Thailand. As the partnership between the Loikaw GTHS with the Technical College in Mae Hongson province is already in place, it is relatively easy to enhance teachers' technical knowledge and teaching/training skills. Meaningful teacher training is likely to benefit both, the short course program and the regular program at the GTHS. A noteworthy cooperation with a GTHS was developed by ADRA Myanmar and an information session can reveal more details about such endeavor. The short technical course trainings should be made accessible for people with disabilities (*depending on the disability level*) who also might be considered for scholarships.
3. **Development of new VT courses:** The huge number of young people with little or no skills currently relevant at the job market requires a greater engagement in skill-building. New short training courses are necessary to meet the demand and also better utilize the potential (classroom space) at the Loikaw GTHS. Following courses should be considered as relevant new VT courses: Agriculture Mechanic, Hotel Service and Catering, Computer (i.e. AutoCAD, PhotoShop), Entrepreneurship, and last but not least Agric. Business Management (ABM). It is suggested to also focus on the provision of suitable equipment and materials for the currently offered short courses at GTHS. A funding collaboration with the private sector with the private sector can for instance be accessed through the Embassy of Japan. The Embassy of Japan strongly emphasizes technical cooperation and linkages to the private sector.
4. **Translation of vocational training manuals:** There is the vast amount of training material and manuals available in English language. Technical manuals are already available at the GTHS but cannot be utilized as they should because these materials are in English. It is therefore suggested to invest in translation or to consider already translated materials in order to ensure that students and teachers alike do find access to training manuals in Burmese language.
5. **Vocational Education at High School level:** it has been repeatedly identified that the basic education system and the 12 school years do not prepare graduates for any job or livelihood activity. Therefore, it is suggested to pilot a VT program in a High School in order to offer technical skill building and life skill training to at least students from Grade 9 onwards. This most likely will help reducing the school drop-out rate of students, especially after primary education. Experiences elsewhere show that an integration of VT in the weekly curriculum is a valuable strategy to shift basic education towards higher relevance and acceptance. Within an education framework that serves as a platform for change it is possible to engage students in dialogue and behavior reflection over significant topics. These topics are relevant to the youths' daily life i.e. drug abuse, crime, gender relationships and family, to name just a few. Last but not least, it gives youths the opportunity to explore different skills prior to entering the labor market. Following subjects are valuable to be considered for the High School VT program: Motorcycle Repair/Mechanics, Healthy Cooking, Child Care, Sewing, Hair Dressing, Basic Computer Applications, Art & Design (with wood, steel, paper, etc.).
6. **Promoting a 'permeable' TVET system:** The discussions with representatives of the GTHS in Loikaw revealed the limitations for short course graduates to participate and move to the regular program. The existing barrier is the grade level that students need to complete, at least Grade 9. The current system does not provide the option for short-course graduates with lower basic education achievements to pursue in the long-term Diploma program. Those who did not complete Grade 9 have no

chance to access the Diploma program later on. Advocacy is needed to work on a fairer TVET system that would open a way for short course graduates, to those who are fully literate and are able to master the needed numeracy requirements to access the Diploma level study program. More research is necessary to further assess the situation but it can be assumed that thousands of young people who were challenged with difficulties during their youth formation have acquired necessary language skills and are ready for higher-level education at a later point.

7. **Literacy and Numeracy Training:** The level of literacy determines people's ability to participate in education and also access the job market. Therefore, it is recommended that ethnic youth (16-35 years) and ethnic middle-aged people (above 35 years) become involved in literacy and numeracy training programs. All such activities should lead towards *functional literacy*<sup>22</sup> as overall objective of interventions. Functional literacy/numeracy training is recommended to be conceptualized as preparatory training and purposeful learning that smoothes the path towards meaningful and relevant education, as an entry point for meaningful skill building, and people's participation in the job market, and youth's involvement in bi-lingual friendships. In short, Burmese language training (speaking, reading, and writing) for ethnic youth has been identified as a critical component of youths' successful performance in income generating activities. In addition, it is recommended to widen the scope of the previously formulated target area of this project and to include those communities which were formerly excluded from the vulnerability assessment into literacy and numeracy trainings. It should also be considered that the access to written materials (books) is limited. It has been estimated that 75 % of people in Kayah State don't have access to books or find

reading appealing. The interest in reading is limited since access to literature is limited. It is recommended to open up new opportunities for finding access to appropriate literature for people in Kayah State. A program component that includes the set-up of libraries in remote High Schools or youth clubs (see recommendations below) could be a means to address the issue. A cooperation with the state education department and KnED would be valuable and enhance the dialogue between these stakeholders on a project activity level rather than politicized level.

8. **Cooperation with CSOs:** In order to further and enhance their work, the organizations visited are keen to cooperate with INGOs in various ways. It is suggested to support women and youth organizations in terms of capacity development, i.e. political knowledge and other technical support (training methodology, community development principles, knowledge about human development theory, etc.). In order to clearly specify this prior to a larger involvement in capacity development, a CSO *capacity assessment* seems to be valuable. Overall however, it should be noted that women from various backgrounds and roles expressed the desire to grow in confidence. This seems to be achievable through regular coaching sessions and tailored knowledge transfer.
9. **Support existing Women safe house:** The increasing insecurity in remote areas is an issue. The rule of law is still underdeveloped and the government is unable to meet the needs. Due to drug addiction also among youth, women and girls perceive their level of security increasingly at risk, including ways to and from school. One CSO maintains a shelter for those women who have been victims of GBV. FRC may consider its engagement and support through training as well as financial inputs. Simultaneously, the root causes of GBV in communities need to be addressed and village groups (elders) need to get engaged to work out community-accepted protection measures.
10. **Promoting women cooperatives:** Appropriate responses to rapid market changes and the profits taken away by 'middle-man' business people need to be assessed in more sophisticated ways. The cooperative idea needs to

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22 The UNESCO's definition of literacy looks beyond the ability to read or write a simple sentence. Functional literacy is defined as the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, and compute. Functional literacy means to understand written information and to use that information for communication purposes. Functional literacy involves a continuum of skill development that builds over time. It empowers people to achieve goals and participate in communities (uis.unesco.org).

be revived to address market demands and increase profits for the group of producers. FRC might see the chance to facilitate a CSO-led initiative, ideally starting with a group of women producing a marketable product such as sewing of school uniforms, weaving products, or processed foods (snacks). Some market research is necessary to better analyze market demands, producer capacity, and skill gaps.

11. **Scholarship program for young women:** Financial issues are one of the greatest barriers that hinder young women to continue with education. Due to cultural understandings, parents give regular preference to boys to continue with education rather than to girls. In order to address this issue and provide a significant incentive, a scholarship program focusing on young women might be useful to consider. Teachers and the administrator from the Loikaw GTHS have indicated their willingness to better integrate and assist students from remote areas which however does not include the reduction of the school fees at this point. The provision of food stipends, shelter, and transportation should be part of the consideration, including clearly identified protection measures.
12. **Bilingual and inclusive training settings:** The conduction of training sessions in rural areas (Township or Village Cluster level) should be offered bi-lingually. It is important to ensure inclusiveness and to reach out to the least fortunate who may have little or no Burmese language skills. Trainers need to be well inducted to apply inclusive measures<sup>23</sup> as well as adult learning principles to ensure a high learning outcome. It is suggested to also reach out to the middle-aged people group (35-45) as these are the ones often overlooked as most attention is given to youth.
13. **Supporting economic opportunities:** The tourism sector is identified by the government as a significant con-

tributing sector to economic development and sustainability. This huge potential is suggested to be strategically facilitated by some community-oriented actors, ideally by CSOs or locally acknowledged NGOs who have earned trust among rural communities. As this new sector naturally carries new conflict potential at several levels, FRC may consider its engagement through partnerships with women CSOs. The goal might be to train CSOs who aim to work directly with villages that receive tourists on a regular basis. It seems to be appropriate to lay a focus on themes such as cultural-sensitivity and inclusive tourism, tourist expectations, and learning about foreign cultures, food security, and pricing. The development of IEC materials or other introductory media is also important in order to increase knowledge and understanding among tourists. A cooperatively managed visitor center with a dining area can be monitored externally. This not only ensures fair business opportunities among villagers but also secures shopping and dining experiences.

14. **Partnership with other livelihood INGOs:** Strengthening livelihood opportunities through skill building is an endeavor that should be tackled in close cooperation with other INGOs operating in the livelihood sector. It is suggested to seek means for building a larger program (consortium), covering a wider range of livelihood activities that lead people from illiteracy to a sufficient literacy level, higher self-esteem, and later to successful job hunts or self-employment.
15. **Community Saving Groups:** So far, Women CSOs have started to promote and form women-led VSLAs in 35 communities. There is great potential for women empowerment when more VSLAs are formed and operated. These groups can also share and learn together about other relevant topics, for instance literacy, family relations, drug abuse, alcoholism, GBV, etc. This needs to be strategically monitored and nurtured with contextualized inputs. In order to move forward, it is suggested to work through CSOs and their existing capacity (decentralized structures) while they receive training from FRC and ideally resources to reach out to women groups in communities.

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23 Inclusive Measures: Inclusive measures refers to trainer behaviour that embraces diversity and handles language challenges without belittling other than Bamar ethnic groups. Within the classroom or the training setting, VT participants feel valued and respected while their linguistic background is not communicated as a challenge.

16. **Preventive health care promotion:** Experiences of armed conflict and its consequences are likely to have caused many forms of mental disorders. It is just a logical assumption that war experiences which are still present in most families have led to mental health ramifications of trauma and stress syndromes, often accompanied by anxieties. In order to encounter and engage learning program participants with traumatic backgrounds in meaningful ways, it seems to be necessary to address their needs for healing and recovery as part of the program. It seems to be feasible to sensitize CSOs towards these issues. CSOs can be trained in organizing forums that create space for people to tell their stories while other participants are invited to listen to these stories with compassion. This 'listening' tool can also become utilized in form of one-on-one settings where listeners may also function in the role of documenters of stories. As part of the health- and development sector, listening activities/projects have become significant means to engage people in learning and healing through sharing stories of lived experience. In addition, one KII partner mentioned that addictions are another threat for many families, particularly for women. The frequent life experience of gender-based violence needs to be addressed in adequate ways.
17. **Inclusion of Disabled People:** The scope of this study did only include a general assessment on persons with disabilities. Therefore, it is recommended to conduct an additional community need assessment in the project's target area in order to precisely identify the needs of people with disabilities. In cooperation with a CBO, the outcome of the assessment will build the foundation for an adequately designed response to the needs of PwDs and caretakers. The level of disability, however, determines the means for addressing the level of illiteracy. Barriers can be overcome when caretakers and PwDs themselves understand the value of literacy and inclusion in VT and learning opportunities. IEC materials and HH visitations (to be conducted by the CBO) will share information and build trust among families in order to better be able to 'imagine' and identify means for participation. In addition, it is recommended that the CBO offers a VT course on 'caretaking principles'. The input of such a course can also be offered to school teachers in order to provide practical guidelines on the inclusion of PwDs in the classroom setting.
18. **Support the formation and facilitation of youth clubs:** At the village cluster- or township level, youth clubs led by youth leaders can become ideal platforms and forums for youth to learn and become engaged in meaningful activity in a safe environment. Great potential can be seen for such youth forums to address the challenges young people face, including illiteracy, gender relations, and job market expectations. The KSYN can play a key role in establishing and nurturing such units in which youth are enabled to learn essential life skills.
19. **Libraries in High Schools:** Access to literature in schools is insufficient and most students do not have the chance to own teaching books. Meanwhile, there are an increasing number of subject books available on the market. However, school resources are scarce and purchasing adequate books becomes more unlikely. The result is that High Schools do not have or have only poorly equipped libraries. It is therefore suggested to further assess whether FRC can establish a pilot activity in one or two High Schools and equip the school's library with adequate subject books (preventive health promotion, science, life stories, world history, etc.) that enhance accessibility to literature (50% have no access) and students' literacy level. An initial discussion with UNICEF in Yangon might be helpful to assess the organizations' strategy in this aspect as well as the availability of materials. However, the state education department in Loikaw as well as KnED would be the key partner on the local level.
20. **Cooperation with Government:** The government institutions in Loikaw (DoL, DoE, and University) are largely open towards the idea for a potential cooperation that might include the following activities: annual job market fair; joint activities in High Schools that promote skill building and further training, including life skill training. The Loikaw University is open for a cooperation that addresses innovative teaching methodology and 'critical thinking' (needs to be further defined). Such cooperation can be realized with low financial inputs by FRC but can

be expected to boost the overall relationship and recognition of FRC in Myanmar. Additionally, joint campaigning for Child Rights is an opportunity to establish good relationships with the government. FRC may take a leading role because the current 'Rights of the Child' initiative in Loikaw is currently not very active. FRC can help to create the following triangle linkages: CSOs – GoUM - INGOs.

**21. Small business promotion - facilitate a linkage between training and livelihood opportunity:**

Skill building training is important and ideally leads to safe employment or entrepreneurship. While cooperating with other skill building entities, FRC may consider to establish small grant funding that could give opportunity to business-minded youth. Such funding can be granted to small groups of youth who decided to work together and have acquired the necessary skills and attitudes that promise success. FRC might also provide the necessary entrepreneurship training through a CSO that acquires the expertise in this field.

- 22. Establish psycho-social discussion forums:** The root causes of poverty often have a deeper psycho-social- or spiritual component. Contemporary approaches to poverty reduction are often based on misunderstanding and misinterpreting true reasons for poverty and social deprivation. In order to address the psycho-social realm, listening-and discussion forums should be implemented in order to create space for particularly female youth for listening to their voices. Once there are opportunities for sharing their stories, people experience new energy for working on solutions. Youth clubs and women groups are ideal instruments that can be used to talk about life experience. This may help to learn new approaches for working on problem solutions. FRC might consider conducting training for CSO staff in order to facilitate discussion forums that meaningfully address the psycho-social realm.

- 23. Livelihood sector related training:** Most people in rural communities (women and man alike) are engaged in agriculture and livelihood activities (>70%). Training seems to be necessary for improving farming systems and livestock raising. Technical training can be usefully combined with

business training where the target group learns to make economically wise investments. The increasing agricultural mechanization is an important factor and needs to be accompanied with sufficient formal and informal training.

- 24. Establishing and supporting mobile repair units:** the increasing agricultural mechanization carries potential for new business opportunities. Trained agriculture technicians with a certificate or degree from GTHS should receive start-up funding for establishing mobile repair units. These repair units on wheels can significantly support the increasing mechanization of farm businesses. In order to work towards sustainability, these mobile repair units are linked-up with and monitored by a CSO.

- 25. Supporting the Government Agriculture Extension Service:** Sustainable and advanced farming systems which are profitable agricultural activities need to be promoted and training according to pressing needs to be designed. This will help to sustain peoples' income from agricultural activities. A partnership with the government agriculture extension service which is under the ministry of agriculture should be established to channel relevant inputs and the promotion of innovative farming systems.



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