Mote Oo Curriculum Needs Assessment – SUMMARY REPORT

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This document describes an assessment of curriculum needs among education organisations in Myanmar’s adult non formal education sector. Commissioned by Mote Oo Education (Mote Oo), this curriculum needs assessment was conducted by a team of staff at Mote Oo and led by external researcher consultant Sarah Mason.

Mote Oo is a community-focused organisation that specialises in teacher training and adult education materials development. Operating inside Myanmar and on the Thai-Myanmar border, Mote Oo seeks to promote social change through teacher training and curriculum development for the non formal education sector. This needs assessment is intended to inform Mote Oo’s decision making on the direction and focus of future curriculum development.

Research Questions

To this end, the needs assessment addressed eight key research questions.

1. What subject areas do Mote Oo partners prioritise?
   a. What curriculum materials currently exist in these areas?
2. What topic areas do Mote Oo partners prioritise?
3. What language/s should Mote Oo develop materials in?
4. What format/s do Mote Oo partners prefer?
5. What resources are available for teaching and planning at Mote Oo partner organisations?
6. To what extent is accreditation important to Mote Oo partners and their students?
7. How are curriculum materials selected and used at Mote Oo partner organisations?
8. Among those who have used Mote Oo materials, how are they perceived?

In answering these questions, the research team adopted a mixed methods approach, collecting quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously, then comparing and contrasting their results.

This included:
1. 522 surveys, completed by students, teachers and managers at Mote Oo’s partner organisations
2. 77 interviews with teachers and managers at partner organisations
3. 23 key informant interviews with social change and education experts from Myanmar and on the Thai-Myanmar border.

Data collection was primarily conducted by Mote Oo staff. Participating organisations represent seven regions in Myanmar (Yangon, Mandalay, Chin State, Shan State, Kachin State, Mon State, Kayin State, Kayah State and Bago), four areas on the Thai-
Myanmar border (Mae Sot, Chiang Mai, Mae Hong Son and Sangkhlaburi) and six camps (Ban Do Yang, Mae La, Mae La Oon, Nu Po, Mae Ra Ma Luang and Noi Soi).

Findings

**Question 1: What subject areas do Mote Oo partners prioritise?**

- All proposed subject areas (Social Science, Civic Education, Life Skills, Study Skills, Community Development, English and Teaching Skills) were rated highly on both importance and interest. Mean scores for each subject sat above 4 (interesting, important) on a 5-point scale, indicating participants were eager to—and believed they would benefit from—receiving curriculum materials on any of the proposed topics.
- However, across the board, two subjects—English and Community Development—were consistently prioritised above other proposed subjects (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Proposed subjects rated on importance and interest (overall Go Map)**

- These preferences were consistent across all sub-groups (Teachers, Students, Child’s Dream fundees, Camp-based organisations, Priority 1 partners, Regular Mote Oo users) except one (Foreigners), who prioritised community development over all other subject areas.
- Two additional subject areas—Study Skills and Teaching Skills—were identified as general priorities, but were not consistently emphasized across sub-groups. Students, Priority 1 partners and Myanmar nationals highlighted Study Skills but not Teaching Skills, whereas Teachers tended to prioritise Teaching Skills but not Study Skills.
- Although rated highly, Civic Education, Life Skills and Social Science were generally ranked below average on both interest and importance.
• In contrast to survey findings, key informants consistently identified two areas—Study Skills and Work Skills—as areas of weakness among students from non formal education programs. Many felt students lacked core learning capabilities such as questioning, critical thinking, discussion and self study, which limited their ability to benefit from educational opportunities.

• In this way, study skills were often described as the foundation on which all other subject areas were based. That is, to benefit from MO’s other materials, students first need to be able to participate, study and learn effectively (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Participant comments on the importance of Study Skills

• Similarly, many also viewed gaining employment as a pressing challenge for Myanmar youth, both along the border and inside Myanmar. Interviewees felt students needed greater knowledge of how to choose a career, where and how to search for work, applying for jobs, writing CVs, and interview skills.

• Related to this was the perception that students graduating from non formal education programs were inadequately prepared for work life, both in terms of the types of work they were (or weren’t) being prepared for, and their understanding of practical work skills.

“People are never going to be able to make their own way if they can’t earn money. And to get a job people need three things:
• They need to be able to think and solve problems (critical thinking)
• They need practical skill sets (numeracy, literacy, the right language)
• And they need specialist skills (something that will get them employed)
These are all essential but people will pay you for your specialist skill.”

• Within the social change domain, interviewees highlighted advocacy, communication and relationship building skills as areas in need of development among social change actors in Myanmar.

Question 1(a): What curriculum materials currently exist in these areas?

• Respondents identified Life Skills, Maths, Science and Study Skills as areas with the lowest availability of relevant curriculum materials.
• Across all subjects Burmese language materials were seen as less accessible than English language materials.

• Many felt that some level of curriculum support already existed for both English and Community Development. Thus, if Mote Oo were to pursue these areas it would be important to complement existing materials, either by addressing topics not yet covered, or through supplementary materials.

• That said, in many cases, curriculum materials that exist are ad hoc and informal. In these cases, Mote Oo may be able to build upon existing materials, adapting them for broader public use.

• Opinions were split on the issue of whether adequate resources existed for young learners, with just over half believing their were, one quarter believing their weren't, and one quarter who did not know.

Question 2: What topic areas do Mote Oo partners prioritise?

• Among potential English Language topics, respondents prioritised English for Community Development and English for Business.

• Within the Life Skills domain, respondents prioritised Relationships & Communication Skills and Work Skills & Career Planning.

• Among possible teaching topic, Planning Lessons & Assessment and Identifying Learners Needs were viewed as the highest priorities.

Question 3: What language/s should Mote Oo develop materials in?

• Findings indicate support for continued production of materials in both English and Myanmar languages. Despite minor differences across subject areas and sub-groupings, respondents’ language preferences were evenly split between English and Myanmar, with another, smaller proportion opting for both English and Myanmar, or English and a local ethnic language.

Question 4: What format/s do Mote Oo partners prefer?

• Textbooks continue to be viewed as an important resource for Myanmar teachers. There was a general consensus that textbooks are necessary, and that clearly articulated, step-by-step instructions were valuable for teachers with less training or experience.

• Alternate resource options, including Activity Guides and Lesson Plans, were generally viewed as helpful and as having a moderately high likelihood of use.

• Curriculum Frameworks were viewed as less helpful as they do not contain enough detail to support everyday use.

• By and large, Mote Oo partners support continued development of interleaved textbooks that combine teacher materials with student pages in one book.

Question 5: What resources are available for teaching and planning at Mote Oo partner organisations?

• Resource availability differed substantially across partner organisations, with more than two-fifths reporting access to computers, two-thirds reporting access to Internet, CD/DVD players and Projectors, and one third reporting access to cassette players.
• Even among those with access to Internet, however, speed and connectivity issues often meant it could be unusable for sustained periods of time.
• Findings suggest any reliance on activities requiring these resources would likely exclude a significant proportion of partner schools.

**Question 6: To what extent is accreditation important to Mote Oo partners and their students?**

• Overall, accreditation is viewed as moderately important, however opinions differ based on sub-group.
• Respondents from Child’s Dream funded organisations tended to view accreditation as more important than those from non-Child’s Dream funded program.
• Similarly, respondents in camp communities also viewed accreditation as more important than those in non-camp communities.
• Some key informants raised questions around the practicalities of Mote Oo accreditation, viewing the most likely scenario as one where Mote Oo partnered with a registered learning institution that would recognize completion of specific course materials.

**Question 7: How are curriculum materials selected and used at Mote Oo partner organisations?**

• Practices relating to curriculum selection and use varied quite considerably across schools.
• One consistent finding across groups was that Mote Oo materials, where used, were rarely taught cover to cover. Instead, sections from each booklet were adapted to fit within existing course structures or shorted to fit workshop timeframes. In this way, many requested that Mote Oo include a set of instructions on how to adapt their materials to suit different timeframes.

**Question 8: Among those who have used Mote Oo materials, how are they perceived?**

• Only a moderate proportion (35%) of responding teachers had ever used Mote Oo materials.
• Among this group teachers expressed relatively high satisfaction with the materials, with the average teacher describing their usability and level appropriateness as somewhere between ‘just right’ and ‘easy.’

**Other Findings**

• Although not a focus for the needs assessment, many interviewees raised the issue of teacher training. Consistent across groups was view that partners required training in how to deliver Mote Oo materials. More specifically, key informants and teachers both felt that any training Mote Oo provided must be ongoing rather than one-off.
• Another common view across key informants was that migrant groups in Thailand remain an under-served group with respect to curriculum and training. Many participants felt migrant workers required more practical training (language, literacy, numeracy, work skills) than were currently provided by Mote Oo partner organisations.
Recommendations

General

- As part of their upcoming strategic planning session, Mote Oo should more clearly define what they mean by social change and the pathways through which Mote Oo training is expected to contribute to that change. Mote Oo’s incoming M&E volunteer could be utilized to develop a program logic model or theory of change as part of this process.

Subject and topic focuses

- Regardless of how social change is defined, Mote Oo should consider two subject areas when prioritizing upcoming material development: Foundational Learning Skills (Study Skills) and Work Skills/Career Planning, as these needs are consistent across target groups.

- Given their broad and consistent popularity, Mote Oo should also consider prioritizing English Language and Community Development materials for future development. However, recognising the existing availability of materials in these areas, Mote Oo should focus on mechanisms to complement existing resources, either by addressing topics not yet covered (e.g. English for Community Development, English pronunciation) or through supplementary resources (e.g. sets of authentic English language materials)

Language

- Mote Oo should continue producing materials in both English and Myanmar languages, seeking out partner organisations to translate materials into local languages where sufficient interest is apparent.

Format

- Mote Oo should continue producing materials in an interleaved format.

- Mote Oo might also consider trialing alternate formats, such as lesson plan sets, when developing future materials.

- Given the wide range of contexts in which Mote Oo materials are used, Mote Oo should provide more specific instructions on how to adapt materials for different time frames and contexts.

- Mote Oo should also include general time frames for each topic to assist in classroom planning and offer guidance on how long each activity is likely to take.

- Mote Oo should also incorporate a list of core competencies for each topic to assist teachers in assessing students’ learning. This might also include proposed strategies for assessing student learning on these competency areas.

Resource Considerations

- Mote Oo should consider incorporating more multimedia activities into their materials. However, where this occurs they should also provide alternate, low-resource options for teaching the same content.
Accreditation

- Mote Oo should research and initiate contact with registered learning institutions who might be interested in partnering with Mote Oo.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- Beyond the development of a program theory or logic model, Mote Oo’s first priority should be to gain a better understanding of how Mote Oo materials are used in practice. This can be achieved through more frequent classroom observations at partner organisations.

- A second priority is to establish processes for collecting baseline data on key student outcomes, and mechanisms for following up on students after they have been trained with Mote Oo materials.

Other

- Mote Oo should continue to provide training in how to deliver their curriculum materials, but ensure this training is ongoing and includes opportunities for classroom observation and continuous feedback.

- It would be beneficial if the training could also emphasise (1) building content knowledge, and (2) strategies for practice in facilitating discussion on controversial topics.