

# INVISIBLE GIRLS

## Myanmar Child Domestic Worker Intervention-Service Mapping

The *Invisible Girls* program is a three-year project funded by the Milby Foundation, that aims to contribute to the evidence base on child domestic workers (CDW) in South East Asia. The program aims to generate replicable interventions with CDWs and employers that are protective and beneficial for young girls. The *Invisible Girls* program focuses on these 'destination' factors where CDWs work and live. Our *Invisible Girls* intervention research framework (see figure 1) depicts several study components, which examine:

1. **Intervention options:** Current services and potential intervention opportunities to meet the needs of CDWs;
2. **Child domestic workers:** CDW needs and preference related to education, training and future hopes;
3. **CDW brokers:** The practices, experiences and perceptions of labour intermediaries;
4. **Employing households:** CDW employers' household needs, CDW attitudes and treatment;
5. **Local employer attitudes and norms:** Public perceptions of CDW;
6. **Job market:** Opportunities for decent and sustainable paid work for CDWs.

The aim of this study was to identify potential intervention options, particularly for future education and training programs that could serve the needs of child domestic workers and identify potential coalition partners for future interventions and advocacy for CDWs.

**NOTE:** Importantly, this study was conducted prior to the military coup, therefore we are unclear how these findings compare with services under the current circumstances.

### Summary of the *Invisible Girls* Research Programme

The *Invisible Girls* research programme aims to raise the visibility and voices of child domestic workers—who are primarily girls and young women. This programme of research is specifically designed to generate intervention-focused, gender-informed evidence to guide programming and policies that reduce the exclusion of these young workers. To date, child domestic workers have been shamefully neglected in public dialogue, development programmes and most importantly, targeted action. Effective action, however, depends on well-informed interventions. We are cognizant that ill-informed investments to help children in difficult circumstances can sometimes make their situations even harder, such as causing them to lose their current income or housing or force them to move to more dangerous work. Well-informed programming can prevent wasting precious development funding. To ensure we provide well-founded evidence that takes account of the complexity of child domestic work, we have designed our research to examine the structures, individuals and interactions that create these harmful versus beneficial circumstances. Ultimately, the *Invisible Girls* programme is in search of interventions that can brighten the futures of child domestic workers.

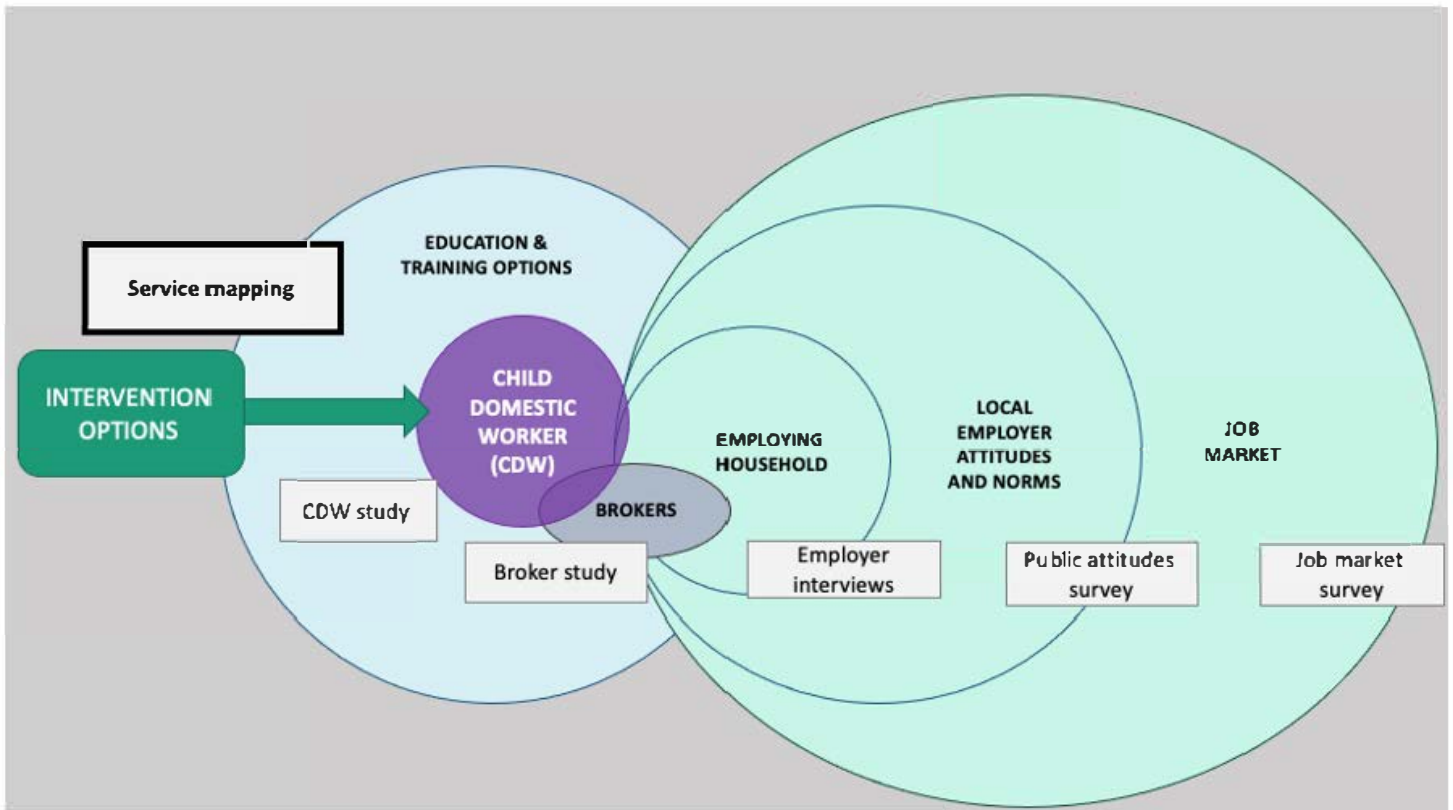


Figure 1: *Invisible Girls* intervention research framework

## Methods

This mapping drew on UNFPA's service mapping, a search of organizational webpages and snowball sampling to identify organisations working on topics related to child domestic work. Interviews were conducted between January 9-27, 2021 via phone or Skype in Burmese and translated into English. Unfortunately, data collection was suspended due to the major political disruptions of the military coup in Myanmar.

## Results

Of the 17 service organizations invited to participate, 12 were interviewed. The organizations tackled various topics including child protection, survivor case management and awareness raising for GBV and human trafficking victims, girl's empowerment, female domestic worker and migrant worker issues and free legal consultation and support. Seven organizations explicitly include services for domestic workers/ child domestic workers (see Table 1).

**Table 1: Participating organization and activities**

Organization	Main organizational activities
Action Aid (AA)	GBV and human trafficking: abuse case management, awareness raising.
World Vision (WV)	Child protection: awareness raising; community access to child protection services; strengthen referral mechanisms, educate parents about child protection; strengthen protection systems; raise children's voices and participation; outreach programs and drop-in center for street children.
Girl Determined (GD)	Extracurricular and empowerment training for adolescent girls. GBV case management of abuse cases mainly for girls within training programs.
Legal Clinic Myanmar (LCM)	Provides free legal consultation and services for women, children, disabled people and any person who face human/citizen right violation.
Terres des Hommes (Tdh-L)	Child protection; family reintegration, income generation package for family and deinstitutionalization (early stage of alternative foster care); health (e.g., vaccination, nutrition, health micro-insurance project, Hlaing Thar Yar township); participatory action research
Akhaya Women (AW)	GBV: case management of child rape and domestic violence (especially sexual abuse); women empowerment and men engagement.
Child Friendly (CF)	Child protection: child rights, governance education, social protection and security; GBV and human trafficking: case management and service coordination; pre-departure training.
White Girl (WG)	GBV and human trafficking: crisis management, temporary shelter, counseling services, connecting with justice/legal support; prevention/community mobilization, awareness raising for human rights and training.
Yangon Kayin Baptist Women's Association (YKBWA)	Survivor support for human trafficking victims, migration and domestic workers
Save the Children (SC)	Child protection (CP): Support vulnerable children to access mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), financial support for health care, case management; positive parenting; case assessment and management.
Child Focus Net (CFN)	Child protection, child rights and child right governance.
White Marker (WM)	Gender issues, politics and peace process, community development, youth empowerment

## Available services

Findings indicate that there are various organizations that offer various forms of relevant assistance. Specifically, Action Aid (AA) and Akhaya Women (AW) can offer crisis management for girls experiencing abuse, including counselling, healthcare, shelter and economic support. Yangon Kayin Baptist Women's Association (YKBWA) can assist with domestic workers' complaints and Legal Clinic

Myanmar (LCM) provides free legal aid services for rights violations. Girl Determined (GD), Child Friendly (CF), World Vision (WV) and Terre des Hommes (Tdh-L) (only Hlaing Thar Yar township) can connect girls to services in cases of gender-based violence (GBV). WV can assist with basic food needs, medical costs (e.g., pregnancy test and health problems) and shelter referrals for children who have experienced abuse or rape.

## Intervention services by international and non-governmental organisations

Each organisation expressed an interest in working on child domestic workers, including partnerships for intervention implementation, advocacy and assistance with research. Several NGOs suggested their interest in providing training for CDWs on reproductive health and violence prevention and assistance with livelihood support for CDWs who are abuse survivors. Importantly, at the time of this research, Myanmar's Department of Social Welfare (DSW) ran vocational training programs (e.g., hair styling, sewing, motorcycle repairing, early childcare) for vulnerable youth, which would make them well-placed to coordinate on educational support.

Multiple organisations are willing to participate in a coalition to advocate and build services for CDWs particularly those with project

plans related to (child) domestic workers. Girl Determind currently conducts activities specifically designed for child domestic workers, which include knowledge-building about domestic violence and menstruation. Terres des Hommes specified they had encountered child domestic workers in their current activities. Yangon Kayin Baptist Women's Association (YKBWA) serves a network of adult domestic workers (i.e., Ayeyarwaddy region), offering training, shelter and job placement opportunities. Child Friendly (CF) has a current project with the International Labour Organization (ILO), which will be implemented once Myanmar approves UN Convention 189. Action Aid's work currently targets factory workers but they had plans to expand to assist other workers.

## Myanmar's Department of Social Welfare and International Organisations

Myanmar's Department of Social Welfare (DSW) leads on child protection and gender-based violence cases and coordinate with UN agencies, INGOs and NGOs. There is a Child Rights Committee (child protection action group) comprised of focal persons from the General Administration department, Education, Labour, and departments in townships have responsibility to address all child-related issues. There are two technical working groups – Child Technical Working Group led by UNICEF and Child

Technical Working Group by ILO bring partners together to provide coordinated responses for child protection. Reports also suggest that police units responsible for child protection and human trafficking are efficient. Organizations that provide case management differ by region, for example, World Vision in East Dagon, Yadana Myittar in Dala. There appears to be a referral network, but the manual is kept within their network for confidentiality reasons.

## Summary of gaps and opportunities

To date, targeted work to address CDW appears to be relatively under-developed in Myanmar, as organizations recognize that this population is difficult to access and interventions require the cooperation of employers. CDWs appear to constitute a small fraction of total beneficiaries in Myanmar. Yet, there seems to be a growing interest in domestic worker projects. Certain activities for vulnerable children, such as mobile education for working children ([MyME](#)), extra-curriculum activity for adolescents (GD), vocational and livelihood training (DSW, Tdh-L), drop-in center for street children (WV), domestic

worker training (YKBWA, TGS) may offer opportunities for adaptation to meet the needs of CDWs. Findings suggest that the emerging focus on child domestic work will benefit from greater coordination to identify the needs of CDWs from children's perspectives, develop feasible intervention ideas, particularly those that will be acceptable to employers, link potential partnerships to form safe referral networks and foster advocacy to create better future options for CDWs and address the social stigma of domestic work.

## Conclusion

This report aimed to identify the activities in Myanmar that address child domestic work or that may have the potential to participate in future strategies. If united as a coalition, the organisations identified in this report appear to have a lively interest in child domestic workers and bring a variety of services that could be adapted to meet the needs of child domestic workers. Given the current political climate in Myanmar, we are cognisant that child domestic workers are likely to be in greater need than ever of assistance. We hope to use these findings to work collaboratively to identify these girls and their needs, as soon as it is safe for our team and our partners to engage in this work.



