

CHAPTER III

THE TRAINING PROGRAMME, THE RESEARCH SITES AND THE FIELDWORK METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes 1) the methodology of the life skills training programme which is called SHAPE Plus for out-of-school age 10-15+ youths, 2) a comparison of the environments of the two different research sites where the children who undertook the training in order to ascertain whether they contribute to youths' vulnerability to HIV/AIDS, and 3) the methodology of my fieldwork research on those two sites.

3.1 Life Skills (SHAPE Plus) Training Programme for out-of-school youths aged 10-15+

UNICEF has signed a Project Cooperation Agreement with Pyinnyatazaung and DEPT to carry out life skills training for out-of-school youths. With the financial assistance of UNICEF, a local NGO called Pyinnyatazaung Association (see Annex C), in cooperation with Department of Educational Planning and Training (DEPT) of the Ministry of Education, runs the SHAPE Plus programme. DEPT, with their technical expertise, conducts training for community leaders, monitors, and facilitators. Pyinnyatazaung implements the programme by identifying and selecting monitors, facilitators and community leaders from their respective townships. SHAPE Plus is thus a cooperative endeavour between an international organization, a government agency and an NGO.

This programme, a community-based model (SHAPE Plus circles) has been taking place since 2003 to reach out-of-school youth aged 10-15+ in 7 townships. This project has now extended the age limit to under 18, especially in vulnerable communities. In 2003, training programmes were conducted in Ngaputaw, Kyimyindine, Saw, Myanaung and Mrauk Oo Townships and in 2004 were expanded to include Taungoo and Thaton Townships. (See Annex D).

As of July 2005, a total of 2,765 out-of-school young people have undertaken the training in 36 villages in these 7 townships. A breakdown of the trainees by township is as follows:

Township	Villages/ ward	SHAPE Plus Facilitators aged 18-25	Out of School Youth 10-15+	Girls	Boys
Kyimyindaing	6	18	532	296	236
Ngaputaw	6	18	398	256	202
Myanaung	6	18	458	303	220
Mrauk U	6	18	523	189	209
Saw	6	18	351	191	160
Taungoo	3	9	234	145	89
Thaton	3	9	269	164	105
Total	36	108	2765	1544	1221

Source: UNICEF Myanmar

The objective of this programme is: “To advocate for and contribute towards the progressive establishment of an environment where the rights to survival, development, protection and participation of children and women are realized according to the obligations and responsibilities assumed by Myanmar as a State Party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)”. (UNICEF: 2004)

Due to deteriorating social and economic conditions in Myanmar, young people at the grassroots are increasingly left untouched by the formal school system. In addition, HIV/AIDS infection has been increasing at an alarming rate. Hence, due to their changing behaviour, these young people are vulnerable and at risk to HIV/AIDS infection. Therefore, SHAPE Plus Training, a revised SHAPE curriculum which was taught in formal schools, was introduced to these out-of-school young people.

3.2 Training Methodology of SHAPE Plus Training

SHAPE Plus programme is designed to reach out-of-school young people, to become knowledgeable of life skills education and HIV/AIDS prevention practices and messages through non-formal education. The intervention attempts to prevent and reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS amongst marginalized or out-of-school youth aged 10-15 focusing on the provision of life skills concepts and practices to effect behavioural change. In this Shape Plus training programme, the participatory teaching/learning method and Child-centered Approach are used to learn about skills,

concepts, and to gain insights to help youths learn more about themselves, their relationships, their behaviours, and their feelings and empower them to become self-esteemed persons.

For the implementation mechanism, community-based SHAPE Plus circles are established to enable communities to reach out-of-school youths and empower them for informed decision-making. The multifold objective of this training programme is that youths, especially girls, become aware of and knowledgeable about protecting themselves against HIV/AIDS and develop safe behaviours; and by establishing an enabling environment, enable out-of-school youths to practise life skills acquired through SHAPE Plus and are able to cope with the risks of contracting HIV/AIDS and to develop linkages with HIV/AIDS-related services such as counseling care and support if and when available.

As part of the delivery mechanism, 10 community-based SHAPE Plus circles, 3 facilitators, in each village, and 1 monitor for each township are employed to foster community support to the project and to reach out- of-school youth so as to empower them for informed decision-making. The criterion for selection is: 1) for facilitators they must pass at least 8th standard; and 2) monitors are to be graduate Bachelor's degrees or at least 10th standard pass. The Circle Committee members are selected and formed by Pyinnyatazaung Association with the assistance of Township Education Officer. Through the SHAPE Plus Committee circles:

- Appropriate safe venues for meetings and sessions (e.g. schools off working hours) are identified;
- A flexible timetable for the lessons and messages is fixed;
- Information is shared to/from trainers/facilitators and monitors and among themselves;
- Monthly meetings to discuss progress and take corrective action are convened;
- Monitoring of the progress of the training programme is carried out and reports to the township monitor are issued; and
- Networking with local social services is developed.

This training takes place in 3 phases, and is implemented through non-formal training. A total of 90 young people are selected for training each year in every township. They are divided into 3 groups consisting 30 in each group A, B and C. During the training circle, each group is subdivided consisting of 10 each depending on their age, vicinity to each other, available time, age, common interests, etc. One trainer/facilitator accompanies each group throughout the training programme. In each circle, one of the 3 facilitators takes the lead role in the circle. The time of the training is flexible and depends on the youth's availability: evenings, weekends, in the schools, Dhamar-yone (one of the buildings in a Buddhist temple), homes, etc.

Each sub-group of 30 has to undergo 3 phases and in each phase Part I A of the training is conducted for 2 hours per day, three days per week, totaling 12 hours over a period of two weeks (schedule is flexible depending on the availability of the young people's free time hence it is sometimes held 3 days continuously or 6 days continuously within a two week period). Then they had to undergo Part I B of the first phase of the training through the same cycle. After completion of the first phase, children will have been exposed to over 24 hours to HIV/AIDS prevention and life skills training. (See Annex V). The trainers/facilitators, selected from respective townships, carry out the lessons and conduct life skills activities. In every village, a group of community members known as SHAPE Plus circles supervise the training sessions. One monitor is also selected in each township to coordinate and to ensure the smooth running of the training. During the training session, the HIV/AIDS lessons are discussed and life skills activities are practiced in the villages.

During the Phase I training session, young people are taught to know about themselves, to know what is essential in life, physical and emotional changes as they enter puberty and its associated risks in the community, drug abuse and its consequences, to beware of strangers, to have empathy and to respect others, to have self-esteem, to be assertive, to think critically, to be hygienic, to have effective interpersonal communication skills, and HIV/AIDS transmission and prevention.

During Phase II, young people are taught self-awareness, in order to know how to differentiate needs and wants; personal safety and coping with emotion; reproductive health and counseling; drugs and alcohol, and counseling; care and support and use of condom for HIV/AIDS; and health and nutrition.

During Phase III, they are taught good communication skills to be clear, conscious, and good listeners; interpersonal skills, to have personal value and to be able to control their tongue; mental health, to be mindful in that they should think before they decide to do something; communicable diseases such as malaria and pulmonary TB; decision-making and problem solving in a questionable world; how HIV/AIDS patients should live positively; and compassion and care for HIV/AIDS patients.

Reference materials used for the curriculum are the traditional games, stories, health education video shows, case studies and practical demonstrations which are part of the lessons as well as activity-based participatory methodologies.

Hence the aim of these trainings is to give young people the empowerment in that they will have the ability to think critically for decision-making and problem solving in order that they can cope with any situation should they encounter. This empowerment in turn will have a positive impact as they possess the knowledge and coping skills for the prevention of HIV/AIDS as they settle in an environment where they are vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.

3.3 The Research Sites

The research sites selected are in Kyimyindine Township of Yangon Division and Thaton Township of Mon State. I had selected Kyimyindine Township of Yangon Division and Thaton Township of Mon State in order that I can compare the vulnerability of the young people living these two townships with regard to HIV/AIDS, and the degree of empowerment gained by the trainees who undertook these training programmes using rights-based approach to youth development in the prevention of HIV/AIDS, and to find out about their knowledge of and access to services for HIV/AIDS prevention, as their right.

While Kyimyindine Township is situated in the capital city Yangon, Thaton Township is situated in Mon State which is closer to Thai border and I had felt that young people who live closer to Thai border were more vulnerable as they could be trafficked more easily to a neighbouring country. As the following section will show, the opposite is the case.

Myanmar consists of 7 states and 7 divisions which are broken down into 322 townships. The 7 Divisions are Yangon Division where the capital city Yangon is situated, Bago, Magway, Sagaing, Ayeyarwaddy, Mandalay, and Tanintharyi Divisions. The 7 States are Mon, Kachin, Kayin, Shan, Chin, Rakhine and Kayah. Mon State is situated towards the South and is close to Thai border. Nevertheless, Mon State and Yangon Division though separated by Bago Division, is only 120 miles and 4 hours ride from the capital Yangon to Thaton Township of Mon State.

3.3.1 Kyimyindine Township, Yangon Division

Yangon Division borders Ayeyarwaddy Division to the west and Bago Division to the north. Its population in 1999 was 5,420,000 (Modins.net: 2005). It comprises four districts, Yangon East, Yangon West, Yangon North and Yangon South and 45 townships. There are 1,305 wards and village-tracts. Yangon City is the capital of the division as well as of Myanmar and is a port city. Kyimyindine Township of Yangon Division is on the west side of Yangon and has two parts, one on either side of the Hlaing River. It has an area of 5.10 sq. km. Located to the west of Kyimyindine Township is Seikkan Township, Sanchaung on the east, Ahlone on the west and Kamaryut on the east. As of 2000 it had a total population of 76,300 with 45,049 in the urban part and 31,281 in the rural part.(Myanmar: 2003) This rural part is accessible from Yangon City only by 10-15 minutes of canoe ride across the river. The people there are among the poorest of the poor. (See Appendix A).

In Kyimyindine Township there is a vegetable wholesale market called Thirimingalar and the new Asia World jetty situated on the mainland side of the river. Fishing boats, commercial boats and ships pass by and also dock. On a canoe ride from the jetty across the river, one sees squatters densely built along the other bank. Beyond lies some paddy fields where some of the inhabitants do seasonal plantation. Due to cheap rent, squatters of Kyinmyindine Township are found on this side. This means that it also breeds a mobile population in addition to those who have settled down there for over 50 years.

This mobile population includes pimps, drunkards, rapists, prostitutes, and gays. Prostitutes, as young as 12 to 14, who reside there across the river at night can be found in the market in the day-time. They nowadays wander about in the market

because the police raided their brothels a year ago. Most of them originally came from other parts of Yangon and have become prostitutes for various reasons.

Therefore, some of the young people in Kyimyindine Township living across Hlaing River grew up in an environment where they often witnessed girls being raped by a fellow tenant in exchange for food or observed a drug seller arrested on a police raid. Most of the young people there have caught sight of child prostitutes as young as their age and young boys in their area frequenting brothels. They have also witnessed some of prostitutes dying of AIDS.

There are many parents who continue to give birth but cannot afford to send their children to school. Most fathers are jobless due to health or economic reasons and have become drunkards dependent on their wives' and children's incomes. Other children have to take care of their siblings when their parents work. They sometimes help their mothers in selling vegetables, though some are breadwinners for the whole family. Some often see their parents quarrel. Others have observed many girls of their age separating after marriage or elopement. They have also seen some of their friends becoming prostitutes after being married three times in a year.

Nevertheless, all this occurs mostly in Seikkyi Village of Kyimyindine Township across Hlaing River which is closer to the jetty, and to a lesser degree in other villages of this same Township. Most of the young children in Kyimyindine Township are working children, either generating income for the family or helping mothers at home while their mother goes to search for household income. Some of these children have never attended school. Most had little opportunity to complete their primary education or to continue their education up to the secondary level due to economic constraints. Even though some state they wish to continue their education, some feel ashamed to go back for fear of being stigmatized by their younger classmates after having been away from school for several years.

Therefore, it seems that some of these young girls have no aspirations or hope for their future. Frustrated by the vicious cycle of their lives, they resort to eloping or getting married, not thinking seriously about what the future holds. As for the boys, some routinely witness their fathers being drunk. In addition, some of them are beaten up by their fathers if they cannot earn enough money for them.

3.3.2 Thaton Township, Mon State

Mon State borders Bago Division to the south of Sittaung River Mouth, Kayin State to the east, Thailand and Taninthayi Division to the south and the Andaman Sea and the Gulf of Mottama to the West. Mon state is situated between latitudes 14°52' north and 17°32' north and east longitudes 96° 51' east and 98° 13' east. Its area is 4,747.8 sq.miles.

Mon State has a cultivated area of nearly three million acres. Most are paddy fields. Over 600,000 acres are put under monsoon paddy yearly. Annual yield of monsoon paddy is 35.4 million baskets. Summer paddy is cultivated on over 700,000 acres yearly. Annual production is 4.8 million baskets. There are few silted-land cultivation and garden farms. Nearly 150,000 acres are put under rubber in the state. Corn, groundnut, sunflower, beans and pulses, tapioca, sugarcane, coconut, oil palm, cocoa, condiments, cashew, nipa palm and fruits are other farm products of Mon State. Mon State is renowned for its famous farm products such as durian, mangosteen, rumbutan, pineapple, citrus fruits, avocado and djenkol bean. All in all, the people in Mon State can clearly be said to be more self-sufficient than those in Kyimyindine Township of Yangon Division.

Out of the ten townships and 450 wards and villages tracts in Mawlamyine and Thaton District of Mon State, the population of Thaton Township as of 2000 is 293,124 while 61,143 live in urban and 231,981 in rural. There are 5 wards and 197 villages and 188 village tracts in Thaton Townships (Dept. of Health Planning: 2000). Because of its fertile soil, most of the inhabitants live on land and farm products. In addition, it is located en route from Yangon capital city to Myawaddy Township, which is a check point on the Thai border (See Appendix D). Since it is situated en route to Thai border, those living in Thaton Township could have benefited economically from businesses where border trade thrives.

Nevertheless, due to trade liberalization in the agricultural sector of the country in recent years, those living along the Myanmar border are faced with scarce job opportunities. Some of these people enter Thailand for greener pastures. While most of those who have good connections end up having decent enough jobs in Thailand, some are being trafficked as prostitutes. Most of the migrants from Mon State to

Thailand are from Thanphyuzayat, Mudon and Mawlamyaing Townships and from other parts of the country. Even though there are no children from Thayetaw and Kyone Par Villages, where the Shape Plus training for 2004 took place, who have been trafficked, Naung Kalar Village Tract of Thaton Township has just recently received back one trafficked young girl who went to work in Thailand. This village is 6 miles away from Thayetaw Village Tract. Naung Kalar Village is selected for Shape Plus training for 2005-2006.

Children living in Thaton Township which is situated along Yangon - Myawaddy route can survive probably due to the fertile soil even though they do not have enough money to send their children to school. Since it is situated en route to Yangon capital city to Thai border, hence those living in Thaton Township could have benefited economically from border trade. Hence, some families from other parts of the country would come to this little village to work. Most of the fathers there are the breadwinners of the family. Even if some of the mothers are separated from their husbands or are widowed, they still can survive. On the whole, their families live in harmony. Some children whose parents could afford to send them back to school after 1 or 2 years' absence refused to return to school as they were afraid of being stigmatized by younger siblings who would be in the same class.

Hence, even though young people in Thaton Township dropped out of school due to poverty and economic reasons, they all live in a secure environment. Mutual help is the norm in the communities and children are protected. They have not seen violence in the family, and fathers are not dependent on their children's income. They have not heard of any rape cases, nor have they seen prostitutes or drug cases.

In the light of above observations and through discussions with community elders of Shape Plus circle, it can be said that children, especially girls in Kyimyindine Township are more vulnerable than those in Thaton Township as they are living in an environment where HIV/AIDS can spread much more easily. Because of the training project some of the elders in the community have become aware of the necessity to acquire knowledge of and coping skills on HIV/AIDS prevention for the young people. They tried to do their best in protecting the children, but due to the bad surroundings it is apparent that some of these young people are still vulnerable.

Hence, by comparing these two sites in terms of environment, social norms such as family disintegration or community disunity, violence, lack of parenting skills, deterioration of culture; and economic disparity as Thaton is situated en route Thai-Myanmar border trade thrives. Hence, it is better off economically while cost of living in Kyimyindine Township of Yangon proper is higher than Thaton with scarce job opportunities. Hence, the main causes of vulnerability to HIV/AIDS such as social norms and economic disparity in addition to extreme poverty, lack of employment in the face of unfavorable social and economic conditions are revealed.

3.4 Fieldwork Methodology

Field research was undertaken between 9-22 June and 11-16 August 2005. I initially focused my research on right to knowledge and prevention of HIV/AIDS but after I presented my draft research findings to my thesis adviser, I realized that I did not get enough information on the empowerment aspect from the trainees. Therefore, a second trip was made in August. Since I am a Myanmar national, I had no problem with regard to communication as I could talk to the respondents directly in Myanmar language.

In-depth interviews on young people who had been through life skills training for HIV/AIDS prevention were personally conducted by the researcher at their respective villages (see References for brief profiles of those interviewed). I prepared a list of open-ended questions. At the end of the interviews in each village, focus group discussions were held with the four trained groups. All the interviews were recorded on tape.

Altogether 47 out-of-school young people, aged between 10-18 years old who had undergone training, of which 10 from Thaton Township and 37 from Kyimyindine Township were interviewed. I was able to interview more girls than boys (4:3). Of the 37 from Kyimyindine Township, 12 young people were from Seikkyi Village and underwent training last year (2003-2004), 11 were from Ngazin Village and 14 were from Alettchaung Village of Kyimyindine Township and underwent it this year (2004-2005). In Kyimyindine Township, boys who underwent training last year already had jobs at teashops, fishing boats and elsewhere where they had to work the

whole day and to sleep at their workplace and hence were not available for the interviews.

Only 10 young people in Thaton Township who underwent training this year (2004-2005) were interviewed as the training started only this year and most of the young people had already accompanied their parents for seasonal paddy plantation because of the start of rainy season. They built temporary huts near the paddy fields and the whole family sleeps there and so it was not feasible for me to walk around from one place to another in order to interview each individual young people at the time they were free which is about 7 p.m., due to difficulty in accessing to these places in the heavy rainfalls and the time constraint. Nevertheless, the young people I interviewed had a similar background. All were putting in their labour to help their parents earn an income, and due to their family difficulties they are unable to attend school.

In Kyimyindine Township I compensated all the interviewees an amount equivalent to that which they would receive from wage earning work for the time they spent being interviewed. The young people in Thaton Township were interviewed only after work. I provided food to them and some pocket money.

By interviewing young people I could get the necessary information from them as to their awareness of their right to knowledge the amount of knowledge, gained from the training and the resultant awareness of HIV/AIDS and its prevention and of their right to protection. I could also gauge their awareness of the availability of the services mentioned in the training session. Interviews with the facilitators allowed me to find out the difficulties and problems they face in bringing young people together for training and what problems the young people faced in order to realize their rights to HIV prevention as it affects their lives.

However, I was unable to observe training sessions due to time constraint as the training programme was held in the evening when the youths were free. By the time the training session was over, it was night. I was discouraged from observing it as I had to return alone by canoe from Kyimyindine Township. The same applied to Thaton Township. This being so, my assessment of the Problems in implementing rights-based approach to youth development in Myanmar in respect of HIV/AIDS prevention is based on the interviews and focus group discussions alone, whether

there is a change in trainees' attitudes and behaviour due to the acquisition of knowledge.

I also conducted focus group discussions with 30 out-of-school young people who had not undertaken life-skills training but are listed to be trained in the near future. Of these, 10 are in Thaton Township and 20 are in Kyimyindine Township. This was done so as to compare their vulnerability with those who have attended the training. I also interviewed the staff of Pyinna Tazaung, a local NGO that implements this SHAPE Plus programme to find out how they run this programme, and facilitators and community members from Kyimyindine and Thaton Township on the advantages and constraints they had in conducting the training programme.

After conducting interviews with the young people from Kyimyindine Township of Yangon Division and Thaton Township of Mon State, I found out that out-of-school young people in Kyimyindine Township were more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS infection than their counterparts in Thaton Township even though they are situated in the capital city. This was due to their economic and social environment and not because of the location.