



Green Lotus/ActionAid distributing food in Ward 67, Yangon.

ActionAid Myanmar Newsletter

JUN - AUG 2020

Since Covid-19 was classified as a pandemic by the World Health Organization, Myanmar government has put in place several measures to prevent, contain and respond to it. While the health emergency was averted, people in Myanmar have felt the economic impact of the pandemic. This is especially the case when Covid-19 impact conflate with other vulnerabilities, especially in conflict affected areas where they reinforce issues of poor access to basic services, livelihoods, and food security. This is currently the case in Rakhine and Paletwa and in Myanmar’s Southeast, where an upsurge in armed clashes has made it difficult to provide support to conflict-affected populations.

Up to August 2020, ActionAid Myanmar (AAM) and partners have reached 315,018 rights holders through 10 different projects operating across Kayin, Kayah, Kachin, Chin and Shan States and Mandalay, Magway, Sagaing, Ayeerwady and Yangon Regions. More than half of these beneficiaries (55%) are women. This is because ActionAid Myanmar (AAM) understands that the impact of Covid-19 is deeply gendered. In response, we have focused on advancing women’s rights throughout our response, and specifically promoting women’s leadership in disaster preparedness, response and recovery as part of our strategy for shifting power to women.

This newsletter provides information on the first phase of AAM’s Covid-19 response, as well as its other activities. With the surge of cases in Rakhine state, as well as in other parts of the country, ActionAid will continue to advocate for the rights of vulnerable populations – such as IDPs, returnees and conflict-affected people – to receive Covid-19 prevention information as well as basic services and resources, such as WASH and health services, internet connectivity and dignified housing that enables them to stay healthy.

ActionAid Myanmar Covid-19 responses



Contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and decrease morbidity and mortality.



Minimize the deterioration of human assets and rights, social cohesion and livelihoods



Protect, assist and advocate for refugees, internally displaced people, migrants and host communities particularly vulnerable to the pandemic.

As part of our Covid response, we have reached more than **315,000 beneficiaries**, of which **55% are women**, across 5 States and 5 Regions.



Lessons from implementing Phase 1 of AAM's Covid-19 response

- **Importance of a localised emergency response:** All Covid-response was led by our partner CSOs. This made it possible for a timely response to prevent the spread of Covid at the community level, including support in establishing quarantine centres and hospitals, cash and food support and the promotion of gender-based violence (GBV) awareness across the townships covered by AAM emergency response.
- **Engaging through technology:** Our Covid-19 response has put on hold most of our work across projects. However, CSO partners and AAM have adapted by using technology to continue our work, wherever possible, while ensuring that we prioritise the safety of the communities we work with.
- **Youth engagement is key:** AAM worked closely with youth-led CSOs and Youth Affairs Committees from Mandalay, Ayeyarwady, Bago, Kachin and Sagaing. These youth networks made it possible to distribute protective equipment to villages, Rural Health Care Centres, DSW departments across the country.
- **Quick response is necessary:** In most instances, the timing of the response was within one week, allowing our partners and the communities we work with to support the timely establishment of quarantine centres for hosting migrant returnees.
- **Women groups are at the center of the emergency response:** Women groups have been at the forefront of the emergency response. These women groups learned how to tailor masks and to make liquid soap and hand-gel.
- **Emergency response was possible thanks to existing networks:** Effectiveness of response was possible due to the relationships between our partners and the local authorities. Trust was the ingredient that allowed for a quick response at village level and within village tracts.

ActionAid Myanmar (AAM) continues to work with CSO and youth networks to protect, assist and advocate for refugees, internally displaced people, migrants and host communities particularly vulnerable to the pandemic.



Protective equipment distribution to community quarantine center in Pakokku



Myaing township food distribution for households with children under 16 at Kha Yu Chaung village, Pyapon Township



Youth volunteer delivering food to the community in Meikhtila

Safe migration for Decent Work (SECURE)

Thanks to LIFT, the Safe Migration for Decent Work project aims to strengthen the resilience and sustainable livelihoods of poor and vulnerable groups in Myanmar.

This project is implemented by a consortium of 6 organisations led by AAM. Up to now, the consortium provided 1,458 cash transfers and food assistance to 1,000 vulnerable workers. The Cooperative Committee of Trade Unions (CCTU), with support from other consortium partners and local CSOs, successfully campaigned for, and contributed towards, a workplace dispute settlement at GEC factory benefiting 2,000 workers of which 70% are women workers.

As restrictions eased in June 2020, the consortium started implementing project activities linked to protection of migrant workers. The work included an assessment of migration practices was conducted with 100 migrant workers in Hlaing Thar Yar and South Dagon to understand job finding and recruitment practices. In addition, the project conducted eight introduction workshops on safe migration with migrant workers and communities in Patheingyi, Pyaw Bye, Laputta and Tharbaung Townships across the Ayeyarwaddy Region and Meiktila, Myaing, Myingyan and Kyaukse Townships in the Dry Zone.



Taxes can address the impact of Covid-19

Covid-19 is testing the boundaries in the management of public resources as governments respond to the pandemic and manage its social and economic impact. This context has brought into focus the importance of taxation and accountability in the management of public resources. On the 14th of August 2020, OXFAM in Myanmar and AAM organised a round-table discussion to talk about 'Fair Finances: How tax and social spending can support the reduction of poverty and inequality in Myanmar'.

This discussion was attended by over 160 participants from diverse backgrounds including Ministry of Finance, Internal Revenue Department, NGOs, CSOs and others. Based on a joint policy brief, the round-table

discussion reflected on how Myanmar tax policy can support more sustainable development. The event provided an overview of the current tax system, key obstacles to effective tax policy and administration, and recommendations by OXFAM and AAM for a fairer tax system that helps reduce inequality and drive towards shared prosperity. The discussion explained how the Covid-19 pandemic has shown the importance of strengthening access to essential social services and the presence of a robust safety net, which has sharpened as households deal with the immediate shocks and long-term economic consequences associated with the virus. Now more than ever, there is an opportunity to look towards public financial management policy tools, such as taxation and budgeting, as core to

supporting more equitable Covid-19 recovery efforts, also through the government's Covid-19 Economic Relief Plan, working towards a fairer, more resilient economy.

Read more: <https://www.facebook.com/events/300689017872680/>



MCCR supporting Covid-19 response

ActionAid Myanmar, together with Myanmar Consortium for Community Resilience (MCCR), continues to build resilience through strengthened institutions and communities thanks to the funding provided by European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO). This project has put in place a community reporting mechanism to reduce disaster risk that focuses on youth-led programming, cascading approach and localisation of activities.

For the last quarter, the MCCR has been able to adapt its operations to respond to the Covid-19 crisis. Together with the Department of Social Welfare, the project provided training to first-line responders, particularly urban volunteers and Township Disaster Management Committee members, on protection and safety guidelines during the Covid-19 emergency in order to conduct awareness-raising activities at community level, as well as referrals to GBV survivors. In addition, the project distributed 10,000 face masks, 50 non-contact thermo scanners, 250 buckets of disinfectants, 205 PPE sets, 106 boxes of gloves, 500 bottles of hand-gel and 20

buckets of spray disinfectant. Cash was paid to the first responders (30 urban volunteers) for their work conducting the awareness sessions at community level in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.



Funded by European Union Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid



AAM Social Enterprise: Expanding Community-Based Tourism to Climate Change Resource Centre

The project 'Economic Empowerment of Rural Communities through Community-Based Tourism' was designed to diversify sustainable alternative incomes for rural communities in Myanmar's Dry Zone through community-based tourism (CBT) and the establishment of village-run social enterprises using a participatory bottom-up approach. The project was created to provide on-the-job skills development and foster an exchange learning concept through the creation of the community training centres focusing on agriculture and climate change.

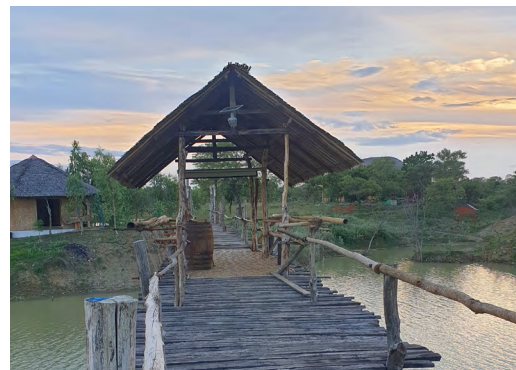
Since its inception, the CBT has helped expand job opportunities for women in the region. The initial successes of the project as an eco-friendly international tourist destination are being expanded to tap local visitors, and diversify its income stream beyond tourism, to include training/workshops and other activities which the CBT can host. As part of this effort, two new training centres are being constructed at the CBT site to expand its offering of courses including climate change adaptation.



AAM Community Based Tourism (CBT) Bridge Completed



Waste segregation at CBT



AAM and EMREF selected to participate in prestigious Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS) Research

AAM, Enlightened Myanmar Research Foundation and ActionAid UK have been selected to participate in a prestigious GAPS research project that brings 10

countries around the world to explore the gendered impact of Covid-19. This research follows a rights-based approach and gender-conflict analysis. Findings from this research will be used by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) to design its response to Covid-19 on the global level. The research will explore the virus's impact on people, communities and countries based on their intersecting identities, including gender, race, ethnicity, disability, class, age and social-economic status. It will also take into account how this pandemic is impacting conflict

dynamics which are also gendered in themselves. The Women, Peace and Security agenda expects to make a significant contribution to the framework for analysing and responding to Covid-19.

Read more: <https://gaps-uk.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Call-to-Action-Now-and-the-Future-COVID-19-and-WPS-2.pdf>



EMREF
Enlightened Myanmar
Research Foundation



gaps []
gender action for peace and security



2020 Myanmar Elections

On November 2020, Myanmar will hold its national elections. It is anticipated that 5 million first time voters (youths) are expected to participate in 2020 election (Callahan & Oo, 2019). Since the 2020 Myanmar election will be the first time they will be voting, it becomes imperative to ensure that youths have access to election information and voter education.

In August, AAM and the Myanmar Network of Organisation for Free and Fair Elections (MYNFREL) conducted a training of trainers to build the awareness on electoral education for women and youth. The training focused on building awareness on election and electoral processes.

The Cultural Bridges project, funded by the EU, is preparing to conduct activities on inclusion among different groups during this election period.

Global Platform Myanmar and Arloo Phote Kya Mae digital talk show have put together videos to raise awareness among youth that are first-time voters of why it is important to vote.



GLOBAL PLATFORMS
NETWORK FOR YOUTH-LED ACTIVISM actionaid



Watch Video: <https://www.facebook.com/ArlooPhoteKyaMae/videos/2984980481550463/>



Watch Video: <https://www.facebook.com/ArlooPhoteKyaMae/videos/278652016808565>

Rooting our feminist principles in a community of practice

Thanks to support from ActionAid International, AAM is the first country programme in the federation to pilot the Feminist Research Guidelines. By establishing a community of practices within AAM, we are discussing ActionAid work, how do we understand it, and what makes it feminist? What value does it bring? Throughout this process, we are looking into methodologies and methods: How we practice it and link

the practice to theory and vice versa (action-reflection-action) also linking to non-conventional approaches like storytelling.

Read more: <https://actionaid.org/sites/default/files/publications/feminist%20research%20guidelines%20online.pdf>



AAM organisation highlights

- AAM Human Resources has rolled-out training across the organisation on all updated HR policies and procedures.
- AAM has a Covid-19 contingency plan and measure in place. This plan is constantly updated. administration team continues to monitor and update Covid-19 safety at work guidelines to ensure all staff are safe and able to continue their work following Myanmar government procedures. On the 10th of June, AAM office was re-opened on a rotational basis. However, on 1 September, with recent increase in local transmissions, AAM will go back to working from home.
- In 2020, AAM has signed 13 new project contracts and raised GBP 4.6 million for the country programme. These projects vary from 45 days to 42 months.

AAM has secured funding from HARP for Covid-19 response in Kachin State, together with three local partners that AAM has been working with since 2017.

- > One of our long-standing donors has approved a funding for addressing the increased gender-based violence concerns in Yangon and Mandalay; as well as food insecurity for vulnerable populations in Chin state.
- > AAM has secured funding for Covid-19 response in Kachin State, together with three local partners that AAM has been working with since 2017.

AAM Trainings

In July, AAM and AA International held a workshop on Institutional Resilience. This workshop focused on putting in place a risk assessment and strategy to better predict and counter threats towards civic space.

In August, the Women's Rights team provided SHEA and Safeguarding training to AAM staff. The training focused on the importance of incorporating SHEA and Safeguarding into our COVID 19 response. This training is critical to ensuring that our response work is safe, that we protect the rights of children and communities we work with, and that we reduce the risk of sexual exploitation and abuse taking place.



Watch Video: <https://www.facebook.com/ActionAidMyanmar/videos/682179642508760/>

On 19 August, AAM celebrated the World Humanitarian Day

Find out more: <https://www.facebook.com/ActionAidMyanmar/photos/a.573133349366188/3590008327678660/?type=3&theater>



Towards a tipping point? Climate change, disaster risk reduction and resilience in Southeast Myanmar

This report, briefing paper and presentation are focused on the impacts and understandings of climate change, and local responses and adaptations, based primarily on the experiences of nine villages in southern Kayin.

Read more: <https://myanmar.actionaid.org/publications/2020/towards-tipping-point>

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