

act:onaid

MYANMAR - ANNUAL REPORT 2015



OUR VISION

... is a world without poverty and injustice in which every person enjoys their right to a life of dignity.

OUR MISSION

... is to work with poor and excluded people to eradicate poverty and injustice.

OUR VALUES:

SOLIDARITY with people living in poverty, taking sides with the powerless and the excluded.

HUMILITY in our presentation and behaviour, recognising that we are part of a wider alliance against poverty.

TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY at all levels for the effectiveness of our actions and openness in our judgements and communication with others.

INDEPENDENCE AND NEUTRALITY from any personal religious, party-political or identity affiliation in the conduct of ActionAid's work.

EQUITY AND JUSTICE in working to ensure equal opportunity for everyone, irrespective of race, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, HIV status, colour, class, ethnicity, disability, location and religion.

COURAGE OF CONVICTION requiring us to be creative and radical, bold and innovative – without fear of failure – in pursuit of making the greatest possible impact on the causes of poverty.



OUR PROGRAMME PRIORITIES 2012 – 2017

LIVELIHOODS AND DISASTER RISK REDUCTION - OBJECTIVE:

To promote sustainable income through improved access to and control over natural resource and capital, alternative livelihood practices, and build community resilience to withstand disasters.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS - OBJECTIVE: To promote women's active leadership and the policies, practices and mechanisms that enable women to live free of fear and violence and to be economically independent.

YOUTH AND EDUCATION - OBJECTIVE: To encourage and support young people to become change-makers, driving peace, democracy and development in Myanmar, and to ensure that all children in the Local Rights Programme target villages have access to quality primary education.

GOVERNANCE - OBJECTIVE: To support the reform process for just and democratic governance in Myanmar, strengthening democratic institutions and promoting active citizenship.

OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

... is based on the belief that the causes of poverty can be challenged and that change can and will happen; that a human rights based approach to sustainable, community-led development and strong youth and women leadership can be powerful drivers of change; and that all changes have to be led and facilitated by the people of Myanmar with support from the international community.

THE FELLOWS

... are at the heart of all our work. They are young, energetic people with leadership potential elected by their own community. Through the Fellowship Programme we equip them with skills, knowledge and confidence needed to stimulate participatory, community-led development. They act as change-makers in their villages, serve as direct links between ActionAid and remote communities, and engage with local authorities to facilitate sustainable development and access to rights and justice.

THE VILLAGE BOOK

... is facilitated by the Fellows in their communities by employing various participatory rural appraisal tools. Villagers collect vital demographic data, which is otherwise hard to find in Myanmar; analyse their situation using visual tools such as problem trees, seasonal calendars and dream maps; and prioritise context specific action plans. The Fellows compile this in one comprehensive Village Book, which serves as a reference document in the following implementation process. We use the village books as baseline documents and the long-term vision is for the village book to be adopted into national level planning.



ACTIONAID

... is an international organisation, working with over 15 million people in 45 countries for a world free from poverty and injustice. We have been working in Myanmar since 2006. In partnership with local and international organisations, we work with the most vulnerable people in remote rural areas. Along with our community-led, self-reliance work, we are actively involved with policy making at the national level.

COUNTRY DIRECTOR'S FOREWORD

2015 was a historic year in Myanmar, marked by a number of significant developments for the country as well as ActionAid.

Leading up to the landmark elections in November, our Governance Team supported democratic practises through media trainings and public awareness programmes in partnership with renowned media house Mizzima.

On Livelihoods we initiated an innovative Community Based Tourism programme, which is designed to both address the impact climate change has on livelihoods, and provide poor and marginalised people with the opportunity to access an industry otherwise dominated by established businesses.

On Disaster Risk Reduction we mobi-

lised a crucial response when floods devastated many parts of the country during the rainy season.

On Women's Rights we initiated the first urban program for ActionAid in Myanmar, which was supported by an innovative, interactive tool-kit called Tu Tu Thwar Zoh, or 'Let's go together'.

On Youth & Education we initiated a new programmed aimed at engaging adolescents, an age group otherwise often overlooked in development activities.

Many thanks to all Fellows, partners, donors and supporters and not least the communities we work with.

*On behalf of the team,
Shihab Uddin Ahamad
Country Director, ActionAid Myanmar*



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DISABILITY AND GENDER - POLICY BRIEF

We published a policy brief based on focus group discussions with 25 women, which highlighted the double discrimination experienced by women who are differently abled and discusses their aggravated vulnerability to sexual and gender-based violence. Read the full policy brief here by scanning this QR code:



16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM

ActionAid participated in the "16 days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence" in November. Among other activities we organised township level forums in cooperation with the General Administrative Department, Police Department and civil society organisations in Meiktila and Pakokku townships.

2015: OVERVIEW

2015 was a year of breaking new ground, innovation and forging new partnerships. We undertook initiatives towards cementing our program commitments on honing women's leadership, building economic alternatives and addressing issues of sexual and gender based violence.

We launched our first Urban Programme aimed at creating safe public spaces for women under the multi-country 'She Can' programme. Community volunteers from seven townships in Yangon undertook 'safety walk' exercises in their communities as a tool to identify safety concerns for women, and advocated for improved gender responsive public services to increase safety for women. In partnership with local group Labour Rights Defenders and Promoters, we trained 100 female factory workers on women's labour rights. In response to the ongoing proliferation of Special Economic Zones, and the increasing interest in Myanmar's low cost of production, we conducted a baseline 'safety audit exercise to document operational health and safety standards within factories, including those that exacerbate the risk of sexual violence.

In continuing our work with community paralegals, 131 community committees



My mother wants me to study and be educated like my siblings. But my father wants me to stay at home due to my disability. There are no other blind girls in my school.

Daw Htee Moo,
Semisoda Village, Kayah State

were established and 280 paralegals trained. 23 cases of sexual violence were referred to the Legal Clinic Myanmar (LCM) that collaborates with ActionAid to provide legal aid to survivors of violence. A judgement of imprisonment was passed in six cases. Furthermore, a total of 760 cases were reported to LCM's legal aid hot-line. In order to further understand the deep-rooted social and cultural norms that often condone violence, we carried out a trends analysis to understand the cultural and institutional barriers to access justice.

2489

women and 572 men were engaged in our women's rights activities during 2015

Our endeavour to institutionalise gender equality and women's rights, we trained 50 officers from Myanmar's police force and 45 members of the Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation in basic and advanced level psychosocial support. In order to foster a culture of gender mainstreaming, we trained 25 community journalists and 19 journalists from various mainstream media houses to document and report on issues that impact women, resulting in six published articles. In challenging culturally regressive norms, we collaborated with the Association of Myanmar Disabled Women's Affairs to train 45 women with disabilities on their rights. This training challenged the traditional view that disability

is a consequence of 'bad karma' and emphasised self-belief. Presently 112 women with disabilities are members of paralegal community networks.

Recognising that women's economic empowerment is key to promoting women's leadership, and thereby enabling them to break the cycle of violence, we established 194 Self Help Groups and provided seed funds to women in 20 villages in order to explore alternative sources of livelihood.

The floods of July 2015 were a stark reminder of how disaster prone Myanmar is. Diversification of women's economic livelihood has been strengthened through initiatives undertaken in 56 villages under our climate change adaptation programme.

In developing a transformative programming framework for women's empowerment, we undertook an innovative approach to long-term community awareness raising and capacity development. The Tu Tu Twar Zoh (Let's go together) toolkit is a compilation of interactive games that foster critical analysis

and collective education. In applying participatory techniques to urban settings, we developed the 'Urban Book' for women – a gender responsive public service and safety-making tool.

Our concurrent undertaking of evidence based research and policy advocacy continue to underpin our multi-level approach to institutionalising women's rights. We contributed to the drafting of the Prevention of Violence Against Women law through our membership of the Gender Equality Network. Our Women's Rights team also contributed to GEN's research piece 'Raising the Curtain' that addresses deep-structure issues that systemically marginalise women in Myanmar, published in November.

Earlier in the year, we conducted research together with Oxfam, Care and the Women's Organisation Network on Gender Responsive Budgeting. Our aim was to urge Myanmar's government to allocate more budgets on sectors that especially impact women so that Myanmar will be better positioned to meet its international and national policy commitments towards gender equality.



UK MP VISIT TO DISCUSS VIOLENCE

Lynne Featherstone, member of Parliament for the UK, visited in January and met with staff, our partner LCM, volunteers and community members to discuss the state of violence against women and girls. Lynne Featherstone's ministerial portfolio includes tackling violence against women and girls overseas and her visit came at a particularly exciting time, in light of Myanmar's recent endorsement of the UN Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, and its commitment to enacting anti-violence legislation. In conjunction with her visit, she launched the UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security Burma Implementation Plan.



'SHE CAN' PROGRAMME

SheCan is a three-year multi-country programme to support urban poor women in Myanmar, Bangladesh, Kenya and Zimbabwe.

In Myanmar, the programme aims at improving safety for women in seven townships of Yangon.

Community based paralegal volunteers will use ActionAid's participatory Urban Book tools to map areas that are 'safe' and 'unsafe' and link this with gaps in gender responsive public services.

Legal aid is also offered via partner organisation LCM.

Further, the project incorporates the ActionAid Safe Cities Campaign to mobilise social media and raise public awareness.



“MORE LIGHTING IS NEEDED”

A Paralegal from Daw Pone successfully petitioned the Yangon Regional Parliament to allocate USD 36,000 for new electric poles in his township

Ko Soe Moe Kyaw works for the township electricity board in Daw Pone Township and is also a volunteer community paralegal with ActionAid's SheCan project.

Eager to serve his community, Ko Soe Moe Kyaw participated in ActionAid's trainings on Leadership, Gender Responsive Public Services (GRPS) and Women's Safety.

During the trainings, the community volunteers used a traffic light tool – included in ActionAid's 'Urban Book' – to identify safe (green), unsafe (red) and semi-unsafe (yellow) areas and their linkages to public services.

In undertaking this mapping, the paralegals of Daw Pone Township identified lack of electricity as the number one factor that negatively impacts women's safety.

Armed with this information, Ko Soe Moe Kyaw approached U Wai Zin, an MP at the Yangon regional Parliament, to discuss plans to improve women's safety in his township.



There are 14 wards where more lighting is needed; we need a total of 37 new electric poles so that our community is safer for our women and girls.

Remarked Ko Soe in conversation with U Wai Zin.

Based on Ko Soe Moe Kyaw's proposal, Daw Pone Township received USD 36,000 to install electric poles and light fixtures on five streets in each of its 14 wards.

COLLABORATION WITH POLICE TO COMBAT HUMAN TRAFFICKING

In 2015 we experienced an increased interest in collaboration from public authorities, notably the Meiktila Police Anti-Trafficking in Persons Task Force

A close collaboration between ActionAid and the Meiktila Police Force on tackling human trafficking has had considerable success during 2015; key activities included facilitating trainings and providing legal aid. On 13 September, Meiktila Township observed the Myanmar Anti-Trafficking in Persons Day. The event was led by the General Administration Department and the Police Force and supported by ActionAid and our local partner LCM.

In October we organised a 'Local authority awareness raising' workshop to promote effective service provision for survivors of violence against women and girls. Paralegals, fellows, ActionAid staff, village authorities, and government officials participated.

Police captain U Myo Lwin of the

Anti-Trafficking in Persons Task Force expressed great pride in a particular case, when a human-trafficker was brought to justice as a result of this partnership.

“

The human-trafficker had a good lawyer, so originally I feared he might get away. However since ActionAid and LCM provided proper legal aid to the victim, the perpetrator got sentenced to 10 years under the anti-human trafficking law.

Said U Myo Lwin.



PROMOTING ACCESS TO JUSTICE

ActionAid started “Promoting Access to Justice: towards a violence free environment for women and girls” in January 2013. Under this programme, ActionAid works with women and girls - and male role models - in 40 target communities in Myanmar. The aim is to decrease the incidence of violence and improve access to justice for women and girls experiencing violence through responsive, remedial and environment building interventions with stakeholders in communities, civil society, the media and the government.





The day clock



How do adolescent males spend their day in the village?
 “Now-a-days boys and girls always use the Internet on their phones; they sleep at 12 am - that is very late”



Women spend 14 hours a day in unpaid care work (from 6 am to 9 pm) with only 1 hour of rest in the afternoon



From 2 to 4 pm young women wash clothes and cook dinner



LET'S GO TOGETHER: AN INTERACTIVE AWARENESS RAISING TOOLKIT

In developing a transformative programming framework for women's empowerment, we undertook an innovative approach to long-term community awareness raising and capacity development. The **Tu Tu Twar Zoh** (Let's go together) toolkit is a compilation of interactive games that foster critical analysis and collective education.

GAMES INCLUDED IN THE TOOLKIT:

WHAT IS A GIRL? WHAT IS A BOY? will in-



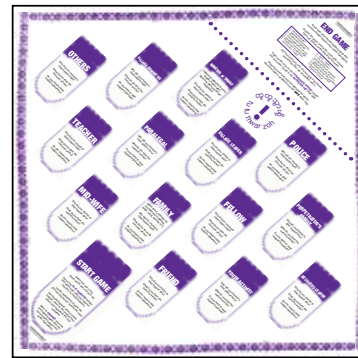
We can use these games to educate men and women on referral pathways; communities can see why using compensation to solve cases does not always work. We can think for ourselves.

Ma Khin Mar Oo, Meiktila

crease understanding on sex and gender. **WHAT IS NSPAW?** and **WHAT IS CEDAW?** are designed to improve participants' knowledge on current policies and conventions on gender equality. **WHAT IS THE TIME?** is a game that helps communities understand gender-specific roles and chores including women's unpaid care work responsibilities – in daily life and in times of emergency.

SEE PWA YEH A TU TU LOKE CHA ZOH means “Let's do business together”. Through this game, participants will practice and reflect upon the tactics needed to generate more income through saving resources, building and consolidating small scale businesses. The game touches upon the positive effects of self help groups and the importance of diversification of livelihoods and disaster preparedness as well as the negative effects of borrowing through money lenders and the devastating impacts of natural disasters on livelihoods.

THE TU TU THWAR ZOH TOOLKIT



ABOVE: The **SEE PWA YEH A TU TU LOKE CHA ZOH**, **CHAMA BA WAH AA CHOW** and **KO CHIN SAR PAR** games. **BELOW:** The **WHAT IS A GIRL? WHAT IS A BOY?**, **WHAT IS CEDAW?**, **WHAT IS THE TIME?** games and the Human Rights Based approach poster

CHAMA BA WAH AA CHOW means “My life story”. This game focuses on identifying and exploring various opportunities and barriers to undertaking leadership. What role does education, economy, empowerment and gender equality play in the equation? And how do social-cultural norms influence an individual?

KO CHIN SAR PAR means “Sympathy to empathy”. This game uses ‘role play’ to place participants in someone else’s situation. The game introduces different forms of violence (psychological, physical, economic and emotional) and talks about how violence impacts people of different ages, gender and economic status. It also

helps community members identify different referral pathways and the importance of accessing institutional mechanisms of justice as opposed to relying on traditional practices.

MA NAN - AN INSPIRING STORY is an illustrative inspirational story meant for communities to identify women’s roles in disaster preparedness and response.

The toolkit also includes posters about our Human Rights Based approach and 10 tips for providing psycho-social support; booklets for monitoring and evaluations; and tokens such as bracelets, whistles, and stickers.



Women discuss various referral pathways to access justice using the Ko Chin Zar Par, sympathy to empathy, tool



What is a girl? What is a boy? - through illustrations community members understand, sex, gender and social stereotypes



The TU TU THWAR ZOH toolkit has been developed by ActionAid Myanmar’s Women’s Rights team in consultation with communities in the Dry Zone and Delta regions of Myanmar.

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GOVERNMENT STARTS USING 'VILLAGE BOOK'

ActionAid signed momentous memorandums of understanding (MoU's) with both the Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development and the Ministry of Rural Development.

Through these agreements, the government adopted our Village Book process as a tool for nationwide bottom-up planning and development.

ActionAid will be responsible for village development plans in 95 townships of 12 states and regions, while government departments will undertake these in the rest of the country with technical assistance from ActionAid.

The governments of Ayeyarwaddy Region, Kayah State, Kayin State, Magway Region and Sagaing Region have already completed 'Village Book' pilot projects in a total of 470 villages.

2015: OVERVIEW

From a governance perspective, the year 2015 will be remembered primarily for its landmark elections in November. A milestone on the road to a fairer, more democratically ruled Myanmar. Through a partnership with media house Mizzima we engaged strategically in the process of facilitating free and fair elections (read more on pages 16 and 17).

154 citizen journalists, 292 civil society organisation members and 46 journalists from various media houses were trained on electoral knowledge and election reporting, while 82 women were trained as political candidates. Additionally we conducted stakeholder workshops at regional level to strengthen the role of women in political parties. We also helped launch a television program called "Youth and Elections", to increase awareness of free and fair elections.

1604

people in the communities we work with engaged with our governance activities

Since 2013, we have organised biannual budget roundtable discussions at national level to promote accountability and transparency and advocate for an increase in public sector spending. These events are attended by a wide array of stakeholders: government officials, members of parliament, private sector, media, civil society and academia. We consolidated all the budget analy-

sis (2012-15) and prepared a resource book in Myanmar language in order to strengthen the knowledge and information base. During 2015 we took the budget advocacy work forward from the national level to states and regions.

We organised workshops and seminars for government officials in the capital city Naypyitaw to build the capacity of the planning department to take lead in developing a common understanding of the concepts of decentralisation of local governance, and bottom up planning in the current reform context. A series of seminars were organised for parliamentarians with presentations and discussions on experiences and learnings from other developing countries.

We also collaborated with the Graduate school of Administration and Development (GSAD), which provides post-graduate diploma courses for government officials and with the aim to build the capacity of government officials under the ministry of national planning and economic development. Another training course was conducted for 23 senior government officials from different departments to learn about policy reforms in developing countries based on the concept of 'Decentralised development planning'.

Our engagement with the government aims to encourage a pro-poor, community-driven attitude among civil servants. Meanwhile, we focus much attention on supporting community members on how to initiate contact with their local government to make their needs heard. As one of the activities of developing bottom-up plans, fellows and village volunteers from selected villages across the country were given trainings to develop village

books, which reflect the priorities of their communities.

Further, ActionAid engaged in a variety of policy advocacy, research and capacity building activities to advance the democratic rights of communities to access and control land, forests and water bodies. We were actively engaged with the Land Core Group (LCG) a national multi-stakeholder group that coordinates a partner network who have a common vision of pro-poor land reform. ActionAid was involved in consultation in regard to the development of key laws and policy reforms related to land including the drafting of the National Land Use Policy, and the Investment Law. We also shared research, technical knowledge and tools on participatory land mapping at various LCG events and attended two internationally organised academic conferences to share research findings.

Participatory Action Research was conducted in five states and regions in Myanmar to gather community perspectives and inform policy advocacy, and programming. 30 participants were involved in a two month training programme aimed at building the capacity of national

staff, Fellows, partners and International participants, on the Myanmar legal and policy context, best practice and human rights based approaches to Land Governance and land rights; advocacy and campaign techniques; accountability and research skills. Participants conducted field research and presented reports which were synthesised and captured in a comprehensive research report titled “Land Governance and Community Perspectives”. Out of this document a policy brief was generated and shared widely amongst key stakeholders including the new government to support its revision of existing laws and promote reform for democratic access to and control over resources.

Additional capacity building occurred at the field level, including five Land law, policy and land mapping trainings with participant representatives from four states and regions. At the field level there have been several case study examples of achievements with regard to supporting women and vulnerable peoples access to land including mobilisation for farmers groups for land registration, community forestry, and support to groups impacted by land grabbing.

EMPOWERING WOMEN AND YOUTH LED CSOs

ActionAid has initiated a new four year project called “Strengthening a responsive, diverse and democratic civil society in Myanmar”. The project aims to strengthen the organisational and technical capacity of civil society organisations in rural and ethnic areas, through trainings on human rights based approach, gender, conflict sensitivity and all aspects of organisational management, governance and communications.

The aim is for the civil society organisations to enhance their participation in local governance processes and policy dialogue; collectively undertake evidence based advocacy and campaigning work and monitor government implementation and spending; and enhance communication and cooperation with the media as well as government at all levels.



ENGAGING NON STATE ACTORS

We initiated the *Capacity Advancement of Non State Actors in Development* project in 31 villages in Kayin State in January 2011. One year later the *Active Citizenship for Accountable Governance* project was added. Both projects were supported by the European Union and enacted in partnership with local organisation Knowledge and Dedication for Nation-building (KDN) and implementing partners Karen Anglican Development (KAD), Taungalay Social Services (TGSS) and Kyar Inn Karen Baptist Association (KKBA).



REFLECTIONS ON CONTINUING CHANGE

In 2015, ActionAid successfully completed two projects in Kayin State. A year later it is encouraging to see that the initial intervention continue to create positive changes in people's lives even after the funding has ended – which further validates the innovative approaches employed during the four years of project implementation.

The projects were designed to complement each other in providing a context specific and sustainable response to the severe lack of public services after decades of armed conflict in Kayin State. All interventions were based on the theoretical framework of Paulo Freire's positive alternatives to existing power structures: The power within, the power with, the power to, and the power over. Read more about power analysis here.

We provided capacity building to various stakeholders on how to deliver public services such as education, health and basic infrastructure. At first through engaging with non state actors – later, when the country embarked on democratic reforms, local and state government were also included. Meanwhile, young Fellows received training on how to facilitate a participatory process in

their communities aimed at empowering people to identify their needs and claim their rights to public services and justice.

Today Fellows continue to work with their communities; and non state actors as well as the government are piloting their own projects based on our approach to bottom-up planning and development.

In retrospect, the methodologies and interventions of these two projects complemented each other and the synergy effect led to results above and beyond our expectation.

ActionAid will use these experiences in designing new projects, and we strive to share our findings with the communities we work with as well as other organisations and the government.

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION: VILLAGES AS IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

ActionAid Myanmar is committed to make the communities we work with become our implementing partners. We believe this will further improve both ownership over and efficiency of our programmes.

Ever since we established a presence in Myanmar we have implemented our programmes in partnership with local organisations and aimed to involve community members to the highest possible degree in all activities.



We find, that poverty often remains because the causes are not well understood by the development actors as every village has its own unique problems and thus their own unique solutions

Shihab Uddin Ahamad, Country Director of ActionAid Myanmar

ActionAid has now committed to take the community foundation to the next

level by encouraging the communities we work with to form their own village based organisations that will function as our implementing partners.

“If ActionAid or partner staff lead the implementation like spoon feeding, the community members do not get the chance to prove that they can do it themselves. Based on my experience through the last decade in this country, I am confident that the majority of community members are very sincere and engaged and have the capacity to implement their own projects if we believe in and support them,” said Shihab Uddin Ahamad.

ActionAid will also facilitate communities coming together around large scale advocacy projects or accessing bigger funds for common issues like electricity, railways, roads or dams.

BRINGING BUDGET CONSULTATIONS TO STATES AND REGIONS

Citizen interest in participating in the national budget process is on the rise like never before. For the past three years, ActionAid has facilitated twice-yearly national budget roundtable discussions in Myanmar; because of public demand, we are now expanding these consultations to cover states and regions as well. In collaboration with various partners, ActionAid has already organised consultations in Ayeyarwaddy Region, Kayin State and Kayah State. The main themes of all three consultations centred on how to improve the understanding of a community-led budget process and the cooperation between national level and regional / state level stakeholders as well as how to promote more people-centred budgets.





COVERING THE ELECTIONS TOGETHER

Watch Mizzima Dialogue: Youth and elections part 1 and 2 by scanning below QR codes with your phone:



The 2015 elections presented a unique opportunity for ActionAid to support the democratic transition.

In partnership with Mizzima we sought to promote democratic practice through capacity building of journalists on a variety of topics: electoral reporting, trainings of civil society organisations on electoral education, public awareness raising on election procedures, facilitating dialogue between political parties and the public / media on election manifestos, training to political parties on inclusiveness of women and underrepresented groups, and particularly training women as political candidates. Mizzima produced a monthly Myanmar Media Monitor report on the elections, circulated to key stakeholders inside and outside the country; 28 regular supplements

292

members of civil society organisations received election monitoring training

on 'Women and Elections', inserted into Mizzima's regional tie-up publications in major cities; and commenced production of a television program called "Youth and Elections" to highlight youth agenda in post election development processes.

Our strategy was designed to reach a wide network of journalists and citizens across the country, since media is cur-

rently heavily concentrated in Yangon.



Debate through ‘Mizzima Dialogue’ programs (events and discussions shown on TV) involving all main stake holders (political parties, the Union Election Commission and civil society organisations) created a culture of dialogue and debate within the Myanmar society

U Soe Myint, Editor-in-chief, Mizzima

“We were able to discuss political manifestos during TV debates, town-hall meetings with party representatives. Certain important issues such as gender equality, disability, youth, minority, women candidates, pro-poor issues and promoting such issues through discussion and reporting were highlights in the 2015 election,” said U Soe Myint.

“From a civil society and media point of view, it contributed to the greater capacity of journalists and citizen journalists in specific skills of election reporting (and for many of them for the first time in their

life) across several areas. Through their reporting the citizens were informed of electoral process, election campaigning and election results. I believe these trained journalists and citizen journalists would be able to do better job in future,” said U Soe Myint.

Mizzima’s Facebook page was the number one in readership in the country on election day, 8 November.

ActionAid’s Global Platform spent a week training 30 political parties and 50 young women and men political party members and election candidates on voter education, election monitoring and observation. Using small group discussions, creative facilitation techniques and participatory methods, ActionAid in collaboration with the Danish Institute for Parties and Democracies (DIPD) empowered these young women and men with tools and knowledge to carry out voter education and election monitoring in a transparent and ethical manner.

The young women and men who attended the training held the responsibilities for voter education and election monitoring in their parties.

GENERAL ELECTIONS

When the people of Myanmar went to the ballots on 8 November 2015 it was to vote in the first openly contested election in the country since 1990 (which were annulled by the military government after a landslide victory to National League for Democracy). General Elections in 2010 were marred by boycotts and fraud allegations. In 2015 The National League for Democracy won 86 per cent of the contested seats; enough to appoint U Htin Kyaw first civilian president for more than half a century.



COST OF 'FREE' EDUCATION

Even though primary education is supposed to be free in Myanmar, parents face significant financial problems when sending their children to school, especially in rural areas. We engaged in an investigative discussion with key stakeholders in Htee Tan Auk Kaba village, Pyapon Township, and found that the parental cost per child per year varies from 74,400 to 86,400 Myanmar Kyat, depending on what grade a child attends. The biggest expense is for snacks, followed by private tuition. The cost of private tuition is a threat to quality public education that requires immediate attention. If full enrolment is a priority, we need to ensure that poor and marginalised children and their families do not face financial burdens beyond their means.



2015: OVERVIEW

In 2015 we developed our Education strategy through workshops with staff, partners, government, the communities we work with and other key stakeholders.

We provided 14 senior staff with Rights to Education training of trainers during which they also learned about our Education strategy and conducted a field visit each to study the situation at village level. We also introduced 'Rights to Education' to 277 school management committees and parent teacher associations. 615 community members and 235 Fellows received trainings on the concept as well. Further, ActionAid provided right to education trainings to participants from 19 organisations. This is a regular capacity development programme that we are offering. Interested organisations and education rights practitioners are welcome to contact our Education Team for further details on the training and its contents.

We introduced the 'Education Book', a new tool to develop school based education plans and budgets. Then organised township level workshops with related Government Departments to scale up the concept, build awareness and enhance community ownership. A total of 27 villages developed their own Education Book in 2015.

The Education team was also involved in implementing Child Centred Climate Resilience in 10 middle and high schools, reaching 1,209 children.

In October, 21 young women and men from across the country participated in the YPG (Gender Equality) course. The participants gained knowledge, experience and practical tools on gender

responsive public services, feminism, gender based violence, policy analysis, power and accountability.

2728

people engaged in our education related activities at community level

Throughout 2015, ActionAid's Global Platform partnered with the Danish Institute of Parties and Democracy to engage young political party members, candidates and supporters. The aim was to increase the participation of youth in political parties and the election process; facilitate the creation of platforms for multi-party dialogues on youth policy, women's participation, coalition building; increase understanding, leadership and capacity about electoral processes, voter education and election monitoring.

The Global Platform also partnered with BBC Media Action to train and facilitate an election debate with 100 Myanmar youth and candidates for the 2015 election.

In March 2015, ActionAid mobilised 60 youth from across Myanmar as part of the Activista Gathering, which aimed to make a strategic plan for Activista Myanmar, strengthen the network and define the meaning of Activista.

In response to the earthquake in Nepal and the Myanmar floods, the Global Platform team, Youth Mobilisation team, Activista and TurningTables created a youth led group to raise awareness and funds. Known as Ta Moe Out – Under One Sky – the group raised more than USD 8,000 for affected people in Chin, Rakhine, Dry Zone, and the Ayeyarwaddy delta.

Activista also celebrated the World Environment Day on 5 June in Magway, Ayeyarwaddy, Mandalay and Mon state and regions by planting seeds, cleaning up plastic waste and general awareness raising activities such as giving talks and handing out pamphlets. A total of 6,058 plants including teak, mango, jack fruit, tamarind, and banana were planted by the 1,134 participants. The network also organised a bicycle ride to spread

awareness of climate change around the COP21 and facilitated two rounds of “campaign and volunteer leadership” trainings.

131 new fellows from Kayah, Magway, Kayin and Chin states and regions graduated after receiving comprehensive trainings from ActionAid and partner organisations. An additional 30 fellows in Dawei received refresher training.

In partnership with UNICEF, we trained 185 fellows and 227 adolescent leaders in 8 states and divisions. The training was part of a bigger project which aims to empower adolescent leaders as change agents in their communities. They will organise activities for other youth, and represent the voices of youth to other actors such as local authorities, NGOs, and community leaders.

VOICE OF THE YOUTH FESTIVAL

ActionAid Global Platform, in partnership with Turning Tables, the Danish Embassy and French Institute celebrated “Voice of the Youth” Music Festival in June. International bands Dune (Denmark) and My Name is Nobody (France) performed alongside popular Myanmar bands such as Side Effect, Cyclone, and KultureShock.



ENGAGING WITH ADOLESCENTS

We initiated a 10-year-long adolescent engagement project in partnership with UNICEF, reaching 5,000 youth between the age of 10 and 19. The objectives of the project are: 1) to enhance adolescent engagement in their communities (by equipping adolescents with life skills, knowledge and space (adolescent clubs)). 2) to establish platforms or mechanisms for active adolescent participation and networking nationwide (by engaging adolescent leaders to represent their village peers on a regional and national level).



MAKE FRIENDS AND KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

One of ActionAid's main focuses has always been on child rights and community development. With our new adolescent engagement programme we provide trainings that will help the young participants engage their peers and establish adolescent clubs.

Participants also learn how to facilitate events in the community. The aim is to prevent abuses such as child labour, child marriage and provide access to education and leadership opportunities.

“Prosperous development will not happen unless we empower, engage and invest in adolescents, especially girls and groups that are marginalised by society”, affirmed Shihab Uddin Ahmad, ActionAid Myanmar Country Director.

“Short but crucial, the transition to adulthood is such a beautiful and adventurous journey that shapes a person's world view - they could create great social impact within a short period of time.” Without proper attention, adolescents are often subject to discrimination and negative attitudes due to social cultural norms or unequal power relations.

Therefore, to help them go through this journey towards adulthood, we need to address the challenges adolescents face and respond to their needs at the earliest stage of their lives”, added Shihab Uddin Ahmad.



This training made me change, before I found it difficult to make friends with others. I was used to be alone and I was not interested in listening to others. But now I am happy to spend time with others and listen to them

Nay Htet Lin, 17, Kwin Kalay village, Patein Township.

TRANSPORT = ACCESS (SCHOOL + MARKET)

One tractor had immense impact on life in Ma Tawt Kone village - from education, to livelihoods and healthcare.

After completing primary school, children in Ma Tawt Kone village must travel one and a half mile to a neighbouring village if they wish to attend middle or high school. Most students used to carry several kilos of books in their backpacks as they walked along heavy traffic on the highway — one hour each way. Rainy season made the commute miserable.

“It took me about one and a half hours. I felt tired after walking for so long. Sometimes I was late for school. I didn’t want to study. After returning from school, I felt exhausted and did not want to do homework,” said 11-year-old Naw Tar Lu Moo.

In 2013 the women in Ma Tawt Kone started a self help group with an initial deposit of 400,000 MMK from ActionAid.

The members takes loans in turn, primarily to invest in livestock breeding.

In 2014 the group expanded to buy rice in bulk and distribute it among its members. The next plan is to establish a rice bank.

In 2015 ActionAid provided the group a three wheeled tractor. The main purpose was to provide school transportation, but during the school day and after hours, the group rents out the tractor for transportation of goods and occasionally as ambulance.



Now it has gotten so convenient for me to take the tractor to school. I arrive to school on time. I can play with friends before school. I can concentrate on my studies. Even my grades has become better

Naw Tar Lu Moo, 11

FELLOW REFRESHER TRAINING

We organised a five days Fellows Refresher Training in October. Participants came from 89 communities in conflict affected areas of Kayin State, Mon State and Tanintharyi Region. Reflecting on their community work, the Fellows explored how they could continue their social service after their placement ends.

UNIVERSAL CHILDREN'S DAY

We celebrated the day on 20 November in collaboration with the Child Rights Working Group, UNICEF and the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission. The event called “Turning Commitments into Actions” aimed at giving children an opportunity to meet elected members of parliament and to hold them accountable for the commitments they have made during the recent election campaigns.





CHIN STATE: ENGAGING WITH THE MOST POOR AND REMOTE AREA OF MYANMAR

In early 2015 we finally expanded our work to northern Chin State, where Fellows received training from our partner organisations.

The people of Chin State has seen little benefit from the democratic reform process till now because of its isolated location in the mountains of western Myanmar.

ActionAid has long wanted to engage with this extremely poor and remote state. In 2015 we finally found an opportunity through a partnership with local organisation Hualngo Land Development Organisation (HLDO).

The intervention in Chin State builds on our Fellowship Programme, piloted in Myanmar in 2006, which is now a central part of all our work. Our analysis showed that this would also be the optimal approach for engagement in this particular context.

The Fellowship Programme views communities as inherently resourceful and capable in identifying their own needs, formulating ideas, initiating

FELLOWS IN CHIN STATE



solutions and leading change. Fellows facilitate participatory planning processes with communities to assess and prioritise their needs and resources, agree on priorities and make concrete village development plans.

This process and the results are documented in “Village Books”, which are designed to be integrated with the local government’s development plans to ensure sustainable local development.

The pilot project in Chin State is taking place in 30 villages across Falam, Tedim and Tonzang Townships.

We plan to expand to other parts of Chin State in the near future.

During the floods in August, the Chin Fellows came to their first test and succeeded to bring vital emergency aid to barely accessible villages across the area where we work.



MARKET ACCESS FOR WOMEN

Market access is crucial to poverty alleviation, yet it remains a significant challenge in Myanmar, especially when women are concerned. ActionAid has drafted the Access to Market Handbook, which aims to provide practical tools in seeking better ways for producers to connect with the market. Based on this ActionAid conducted a 5-day workshop on 'Access to Market: Gender Sensitive Value Chain' Training of Trainers. The training aimed to explore access to market methodologies through a gender sensitive lens in order to reshape the dynamics of markets and create mutually beneficial collaborations between suppliers and buyers. The 38 participants from 17 countries all had profound experience working with communities on access to market. Thus, the training also served to generate feedback and enrich this living document.

2015: OVERVIEW

ActionAid Myanmar implements a broad range of livelihoods interventions, with the overarching goal to aid vulnerable people, especially women, in rural communities in developing sustainable income through improved access to and control over natural resources and capital, alternative livelihoods practices, and community resilience to withstand disasters.

To achieve this we target our interventions towards realising the following three outcomes: That farmers and fishers adopt improved sustainable practices to increase production; that women-headed households have access to alternative livelihoods and affordable credit through self-help groups; and that communities become more resilient to natural and human made hazards, including climate change.

Myanmar is a disaster prone country, which has a disruptive effect on rural livelihoods. During the course of 2015, we conducted disaster risk reduction activities in 133 villages in six townships.

Our climate change adaptation pilot programme conducted trainings on the challenges of small holder and women farmers, various types of sustainable agriculture, sustainable water management, seed preservation, livelihoods diversification, gender and women's rights. Orientations about climate change and child rights were introduced in 10 schools.

Our alternative livelihoods activities is women-oriented, and centred around women's self help groups, which are provided funds and trainings on savings and loans, sustainable agriculture, fisheries and livestock, as well as small scale

entrepreneurship for youths. In 2015, over 144 women-headed households got access to alternative livelihoods and affordable credits through the self-help group approach. As of the reporting date, 330 self-help groups are extant and over 190 are consistently active in benefiting their communities through alternative livelihoods and credit building activities.

1310

women headed households had access to alternative livelihoods and affordable credits through self help groups

2015 was also a productive year for a number of novel and innovative alternative livelihoods interventions which go beyond the self-help group approach.

The Socioeconomic Development Network (SEDN), which provides vocational skills training and access to markets to marginalised women-headed households, was expanded to the new Sarlingyi project area, in response to livelihoods affected by Cyclone Komen. Overall, beneficiaries during 2015 totalled 976 women. Revenue derived from sales, which is directly received by beneficiary producers, totalled USD 42,364.

Our Community-Based Tourism and Community University are new liveli-

hoods interventions designed to address the impact of climate change on livelihoods as well as to give rural communities an opportunity to generate income from the tourism sector. We are working in over 200 villages near the Bagan tourist zone, which had more than 300,000 visitors in 2014. The tourism project is for adventure-oriented travellers who wish to experience authentic Myanmar culture, and is implemented in partnership with Peak/Intrepid Travel Company. The university is a more academical-

ly-oriented program for travellers with an interest in development studies, using the tourism facilities and implemented in partnership with a range of international academic partners.

Part of the profit will go towards community funds through which community businesses may be started and sustained, and guest facilities are staffed by local women who have received hospitality training from a vocational training centre in Yangon.



Before, when I went around the village and asked other women to work on social activities with me, they would run away. The reason was that their mother or father didn't want them to be involved in those kinds of activities — because of the social norms on how women should behave. After they attended the trainings, many of them proactively participate in village development work and lead discussions

Daw Ma Ma, a woman village leader from Kyone Kan village.



LINKING POOR COMMUNITIES TO THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Following years of economic isolation under previous regimes, Myanmar has become one of the poorest countries in South-east Asia, with the majority of the poor population living in rural areas. Rural development is key to reducing poverty. In February 2015 we organised a seminar in collaboration with the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFC-CI), and Myanmar Consumer Union (MCU) to link rural communities with private sector opportunities.

PADDY SEEDS PROVIDED

In May, ActionAid provided high quality paddy seeds and vegetable seeds to farmer groups from 27 villages in Pyapon Township to enable them to increase and vary their annual yield.



WOMEN PRODUCERS NETWORK

A significant proportion of women in rural Myanmar lack livelihood / income generating opportunities, access to basic services (education, health), as well as social support. The Socio-Economic Development Network (SEDN) is designed to address these needs. The programme provides poor rural women vocational training in the production of quality hand-crafts and market access complemented with, for example, literacy, numeracy, HIV prevention, hygiene and gender training.



334 WOMEN COMPLETED SEDN VOCATIONAL TRAINING

ActionAid has provided high quality trainings on weaving, rattan-crafting, tailoring and jewellery-making as alternative livelihoods for women in the Dry Zone for the past three years. 334 women completed the training in 2015. The handicrafts they produce are sold in a shop in Bagan, and pop-up shops in Yangon, Naypyidaw and other big cities, the profit naturally goes to the women producers.



FLOODS LEADS TO COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS

In the aftermath of devastating floods during the rainy season, ActionAid in partnership with Prudence Foundation, supported communities in Pakokku Township setting up ten community foundations, with a total of 1,672 members. Nine focused on chilli farming one on corn. The foundations purchased produce from local farmers and will sell in bulk when the prices are good. The profit will be reinvested into the foundations, and the members will receive dividends. The chilli plant was selected because they are widely grown in the region during dry season and can be easily dried and stored, ensuring that the foundation can sell them when the price is highest. Each foundation received USD 1,750 as seed funding.

FORMER FELLOWS TURN ENTREPRENEURS

ActionAid initiated trainings of former Fellows that will enable them to build social enterprises in their communities. The aim is to create small-scale businesses that will enable sustainable development independent of foreign aid.

When Fellows have completed their three year placement, ActionAid already encourage them to establish their own community based organisations.

Now, these organisations will receive additional training on entrepreneurship. The social enterprises they establish can help local small-scale farming and fishery by mobilising people to collaborate. This holds the potential to reduce cost of production and increase income in rural villages.



The farmers are stronger if they buy seeds and equipment together, sell their harvest together. The Fellows will bring people together to do this.

Shihab Uddin Ahamad,
Country Director, ActionAid Myanmar

The social enterprises can act as buyers, offering small-scale farmers and fishermen a fair price for their produce; or add value to local produce buy processing and packing on site in the villages. Some will also offer low cost, environment friendly electricity supply such as village wide solar power systems.

“Currently, buyers are often exploiting farmers and fishermen. We are not interested in chasing them away, only in giving them competition through social enterprises; to ensure that people receive a fair price,” said Shihab Uddin Ahamad.

The Fellows already have extensive training and experience. ActionAid will now add a component of entrepreneurial skills to help them prepare business plans, manage finances and link with retailers and markets.

ActionAid is currently negotiating with private Myanmar banks to offer small-scale capital investment.

A CASE FOR FAIR CRAB TRADING

One group of former Fellows already set up their own social enterprise. Labutta based Mobiliser Based Organisation, MOBO, identified exploitation by crab traders as one root causes of poverty in their villages. Fellows and local volunteers therefore decided to become traders themselves:



The livelihood of poor people is to catch crabs but they do not get the full price, so we wondered: how can they get the full price? So MOBO pay a higher price to them, and we do not cheat on the weight. Since then the poor got interested in our group and we have shown our action plan to them

Win Pa Pa Kyaw,
member of MOBO



PLANTING SEEDS FOR THE FUTURE



COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM IS OPEN FOR BUSINESS

In November we launched an exciting new community-based tourism initiative, which represents the culmination of years of fruitful engagement with the communities we work with combined with high-level dialogue and engagement with the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism.

The initiative embodies both ActionAid's human-rights based approach and the innovative, entrepreneurial vision for which ActionAid Myanmar has become known. The overall goal of the project is to establish a tourism destination in Myaing Township that is minimally disruptive to the local environment and existing way of life in local communities, but also allows for increased economic opportunities in a manner that is sustainable, community driven, and implemented so that it benefits the wider community.

Myaing Township is just a 30 minute drive from Bagan, one of Myanmar's most popular tourist destinations. Yet, the area experiences virtually none of the benefits of the burgeoning industry. Job opportunities are limited, and severe

poverty is common. Most villagers work as farmers and unskilled labourers, and it is common for youth and working-age adults to migrate elsewhere within Myanmar or abroad in search of work. Community members have often expressed their desire to find a way to benefit from the influx of tourism revenue in nearby Bagan. Given the close proximity of the Bagan tourism market, the desire of Myaing villagers to capitalise on that market, and the desires of government and private tourism industry stakeholders to expand tourism destinations to new areas, establishing a community-based tourism project is a viable avenue for fostering alternative livelihoods in the Myaing area.

The specific objectives of the project are to foster alternative livelihoods opportu-

COMMUNITY BASED TOURISM

nities by providing hospitality skills training and employing interested community members, to benefit the wider community by creating a community fund in which a portion of tourism revenues can be used to fund community-wide development projects, and to create a model that can be replicated for use in future community-based tourism initiatives throughout Myanmar.

The concept of community involvement in tourism is understandably gaining popularity in the international development field, given the ease of which tourism can add wealth to communities, diversify local economies, and offer alternative livelihoods opportunities and job skills in a growing economic sector.

The tour is billed as adventure travel and targeted towards Intrepid Travel guests who wish to “get off the beaten path” and experience the true local culture that exists outside generic tourist routes. After a much-publicised opening ceremony on 30 November, Journeys Adventure Travel in partnership with ActionAid began taking small groups of tourists visiting the Bagan area on exclusive two-day adventure tours of villages in nearby Myaing.

Guests are housed in local-style accommodations adjacent to the villages, and during their stays have multiple opportunities to experience the area’s beautiful ecosystem, participate in cultural exchanges, and experience village life.

MYANMAR TOURISM

Myanmar is a rapidly emerging tourist destination, with the industry consistently proving itself to be a driver for growth in the developing economy. For the first time in its history, the country received over 1 million international visitors in 2012, an increase in over 30% compared to visitors in 2011. Tourism income rose from 319 million USD in 2011 to 534 million USD in 2012. The economic gains from tourism have been significant, but they have not been widespread. They have been localised to tourist hubs such as Yangon, Mandalay, Bagan and Inle Lake.



DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

EMPOWERING PEOPLE TO REDUCE DISASTER RISK

ActionAid has been involved with disaster risk reduction and emergency relief since Cyclone Nargis in 2008. The main objective is to ensure that targeted institutions and vulnerable communities in coastal and urban areas have increased capacity to prepare for a range of hazards and manage disaster risk. ActionAid now leads the The Myanmar Consortium for Community Resilience (MCCR), which implements the current DIPE-CHO Action Plan.



DISASTER RISK REDUCTION: WHERE WOMEN BECOME LEADERS

ActionAid has been working on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) in Myanmar since 2008. Our focus on women's leadership in disaster risk reduction grew from a recognition that women are disproportionately affected by disasters — based on evidence from multiple disasters not only in Myanmar but around the world.



People think men can do more than women because they are men. But women's participation in preparedness is vital. They are the people who have to cope when there is a disaster

Htay Htay Kywel, community development volunteer, Pyapon Township, Ayeyarwaddy Region.

Natural disasters have been shown to increase the vulnerability of women living in rural communities, they also provide an opportunity for women to demonstrate their leadership skills in reducing the risk of disaster and emergency response efforts. Women are often better

connected to their family groups and have stronger social networks through which to disseminate information on impending disasters.

“Without women and girls, nothing would be accomplished. They know about household needs more than us,” explains Zay Lin Htun, a development worker from Kyone Kan village.

The promotion of women's leadership is a key component of all ActionAid Myanmar's work on disaster risk reduction.

Working in collaboration with international as well as local partner organisations, ActionAid Myanmar is currently supporting communities across Myanmar's hazard-prone coastal regions to implement disaster risk reduction activities.



CASE STORIES AND TESTIMONIES

Our approach involves raising awareness of hazards such as storms, cyclones and fires; increasing understanding of why and how men, women and other sections of the community are vulnerable; and helping communities recognise how both men and women can contribute to preventing, preparing for and responding to disasters.

Involving men in activities that promote women's leadership is key to transforming attitudes and ensuring change is sustained.

In the Ayeyarwaddy Delta awareness-raising sessions on gender and trainings on women's leadership in disaster risk reduction have helped men and women understand the positive contribution women can play to disaster risk reduction and wider community development work. At the same time, these activities have opened up space for women to join — and indeed lead — community disaster risk reduction structures, such as Village Disaster Management Com-

mittees and Task Forces responsible for pre-disaster early warning, post-disaster search and rescue and first aid activities. But perhaps the most significant change is experienced by the women themselves.

“Before, when I went around the village and asked other women to work on social activities with me, they would run away. The reason was that their mother or father didn't want them to be involved in those kinds of activities — because of the social norms on how women should behave,” says Daw Ma Ma, a woman village leader from Kyone Kan village.

“After they attended the trainings, many proactively participate in village development work and lead discussions.”

Note: Some of the quotes included in this article were documented by Oxfam, working in partnership with ActionAid under the ActionAid-led Myanmar Consortium for Community Resilience DIPECHO IX project.

EDUTAINMENT PROGRAMME

During May and June a village level Disaster Risk Reduction / Climate Change Adaptation edutainment programme was carried out in 15 villages in Labutta Township. Almost 6,000 people participated.



RESILIENCE WORKSHOP

A regional workshop was organised in Patheingyi in July to review the government's resilience policy, practices and budget. The workshop was jointly organised by the Ayeyarwaddy Region government, ActionAid and local partner Patheingyi-Myaung Mya Association (PMA).



DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

CHIN STATE: FELLOW RELAY RACE RESPONSE

On the morning of 3 August a small team of field assistants and Fellows (village mobilisers) set off to survey the damages of cyclone Komen in Falam Township, Chin State.



The terrain was really bad – muddy and plenty of leeches. Everyone got drenched walking the five to 10 miles between each village. All bridges had collapsed so they had to find big logs along the path to cross the streams. One Fellow hurt the wrist, another injured the leg, and they all reported body pains afterwards

Pi Zirthan Hnuni,
project director,
HLDO



THE WORST FLOOD IN DECADES

Heavy monsoon rain in July caused severe flooding and landslides in Myanmar. When cyclone Komen exacerbated the situation by the end of the month, a state of emergency was declared in Chin, Rakhine, Sagaing and Magway.

The situation was dire: more than one million people were affected; their homes and fields as well as important infrastructures were damaged or destroyed. ActionAid provided relief to the affected communities we work with, both immediate life-saving aid such as shelter, food, clean water and basic healthcare, but also early recovery livelihoods support. We also supported emergency preparedness interventions in Ayeyarwaddy. Our Fellows, staff members and volunteers worked tirelessly in difficult conditions to provide a community driven emergency response.

Early on, ActionAid recommended that the following three steps were considered during the response: 1. During the floods: Support communities with cash to purchase lifesaving items such as food, water and fodder for livestock – according to their own needs and priorities. 2. After the

floods: Equip the communities with cash grants to rebuild important infrastructure such as cleaning and repairing roads, water sources, and schools. 3. Long-term: Allocate further cash grants for poor and small holder farmers to buy seeds and equipment required for them to restart their livelihoods.



In this situation it is crucial to provide not only immediate aid but also post-emergency support for people to rebuild homes and access income generating opportunities - by the philosophy of 'build back better'

Aung Min Naing, Dry Zone Manager,
ActionAid Myanmar.

MYANMAR FLOODS: YOUTH LED ACTION

ActionAid responded to the floods by working with a network of young people who have been trained to facilitate community-led development and respond in emergency situations.

Fellows as well as former Fellows and independent youth organisations teamed up to deliver the emergency relief operation and early recovery interventions. They distributed cash assistance to the most vulnerable flood affected villagers, which they could spend according to their own needs. The priorities – from soap to cow fodder – reflected the diversity of people's needs, the main reason why cash assistance is often the most beneficial aid.

In Yangon, Sai Than Zin Thun, also known as Gu Gu, was at the heart of relief efforts. Showing solidarity with youth across the country, Gu Gu a 23 year old man from Shan helped mobilise local youth groups including members of ActionAid youth and Global Platform teams, Activista, TurningTables and Gaihahita to form a youth led emergency response group known as

Ta Moe Out or translated into English, Under One Sky.

Ta Moe Out worked day and night, often without sleep, raising money, delivering relief and raising support from the private sector and international community. This included a massive fundraising concert with some of Myanmar's best bands, an online fundraising platform and local fundraising efforts.

After 10 days, Ta Moe Out raised \$7,994,420 Kyat, \$1748 AUD & 360 Baht to support immediate relief in Moe Nyo and Thar Baung, and local relief and reconstruction efforts in Chin, Rakhine, Dry Zone, and the delta. The experience of Ta Moe Out and Gu Gu shows the power and impact that youth led responses to emergencies can have.

POST-FLOOD RELIEF IN CHIN AND MAGWAY

ActionAid launched post-flood relief and recovery efforts to assist 34 villages and more than 13,000 people in Myanmar in partnership with Prudence Foundation, the community investment branch of insurance company Prudential in Asia.

The project focus on the two regions worst affected by the floods, Magway Region and Chin State, providing vital recovery assistance to those affected by flooding in Pakokku township and Falam Township. We provided funds to help repair and rebuild physical infrastructure that was damaged as well as support for the long-term recovery of people's livelihoods.

This includes improving shelters, providing seeds and agricultural inputs to regenerate land that was washed out in the flooding, and providing grants to help those affected re-establish their livelihoods.



ORGANISATIONAL PRIORITIES

ORGANISATIONAL PRIORITIES 2012 – 2017

STAFF CAPACITY

OBJECTIVE: To empower our staff, equipping them with knowledge and skills and creating an organisational culture which promotes the internalisation and practice of ActionAid's values, with a special focus on building women's leadership.

SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES / OBJECTIVE:

To strengthen organisational systems and processes to promote and measure our accountability, efficiency and effectiveness.

RESOURCE MOBILISATION / OBJECTIVE:

To mobilise adequate financial resources to fund our programme priorities from compatible funding partners.



2015: OVERVIEW

We are committed to create a work environment that appeals to women, providing space to grow professionally and take leadership of the organisation.

We furthered our commitment of gender equality and women's representation at leadership level through the following initiatives:

- Bi-annual Women's Forums organised by a committee elected by staff.
- Female staff received transformative feminist leadership training.
- Our dedicated Women's Rights team undertakes programming in leadership, economic empowerment and anti-violence and supports other program teams in mainstreaming gender.
- Half the senior management team are women.
- 61% of total staff are women (77 male and 121 females).
- 65% of leaders are women (28 of 43 Senior level staff).
- 29 female staff were promoted during

2015 - this represented 66 per cent of all internal promotions, the highest percentage across the federation.

We strive to maintain a working culture as inclusive and diverse as Myanmar itself. In our recruitment we prioritise women and inclusiveness: our staff comprise all eight ethnic groups of the country (Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, Chin, Mon, Bamar, Rakhine, Shan).

It is a challenge in Myanmar to find experienced staff. Therefore, we debuted an internship program as soon as we established a presence in the country. During 2015, 15 Myanmar youths had the chance to get hands-on work experience in the development sector. A total of around 200 young interns have now completed a minimum

of 6 months internship and many went on to join our general staff.

We also conduct capacity building such as trainings, mentoring and exposure visits abroad for existing staff as well as partner staff. Opportunities for capacity building were of high priority. An accumulated 902 staff members attended a total of 55 trainings, workshops and meetings in Myanmar and abroad to improve their understanding and skills within a wide variety of topics — from land rights to photography, from women's rights to tax education.

Our Human Resource department also conducted in-house trainings for

managers and supervisors on staff management.

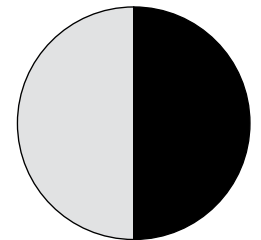
We continued our collaboration with ActionAid Denmark's People4Change programme around placements of international advisors and inspirators, who disseminated their knowledge, skills and experience across the organisation.

The Global Platform also continued to provide high quality training to ActionAid staff, partners, Fellows and external participants.

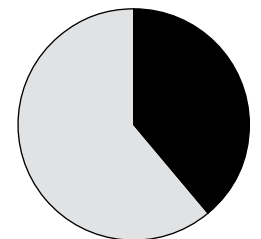
We opened a creche in office to support working mothers, further honouring our commitment to make our workplace more accessible for female workers.



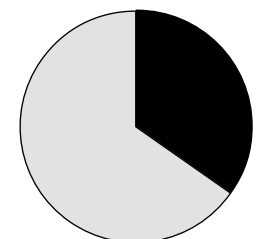
50 % of our enior management team are women



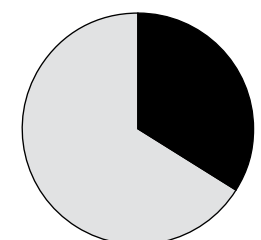
61 % of our total staff are women



65 % of our senior level staff are women



66 % of all promotions went to women





OFFICE CRECHE INAUGURATED

In July 2015 ActionAid opened a creche in office, further honouring our commitment to make our workplace more accessible for female workers.

Programme Coordinator Yi Yi Win was one of the first staff members to enrol her child, Moe Myu, in the creche.

Returning from a six months maternity leave, it was a great relief for her:



None of my friends have a creche in office. Most of my female friends have to quit their jobs when they have babies. But for me working is very comfortable. I can focus on work because I feel secure that she is well and I can see her anytime I want.

Yi Yi Win, Programme Coordinator



CASE STORIES AND TESTIMONIES



WOMEN'S FORUM

The Women's Forum is an ActionAid International initiative, an integral part of every country office. Our aim is to provide a platform within the organisation for women to share challenges, learnings and experiences.

ActionAid International has also launched a Feminist Leadership Monitoring Group to mainstream gender throughout the organisation's structure and programming and with particular emphasis on building a cadre of feminist male and female leaders.



The women's forum is a space for ActionAid's female staff to engage at multiple levels and to share their experiences. It cultivates solidarity and leadership towards achieving the organisation's feminist mission.

Melanie Hilton, Women's Rights Advisor, ActionAid Myanmar





2015: OVERVIEW

In 2015 we introduced a new funding concept; we encourage donors to support our general programming rather than funding on a project-to-project basis. The Embassy of Sweden in Myanmar was the first donor to adopt this approach, which allows for a more flexible long-term programme design that will benefit the communities we work with.

ActionAid is committed to financial transparency and accountability to our

donors, partners and the communities we work with. Our total income of 2015 was USD 6,342,000 which was 107 per cent of our forecast, but only 73% of our 2014 income. From regular giving we received 132 per cent of 2014, while major and institutional donors saw a downward trend.

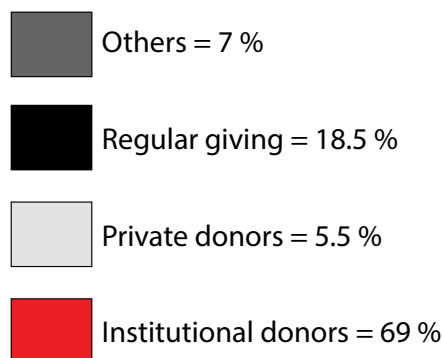
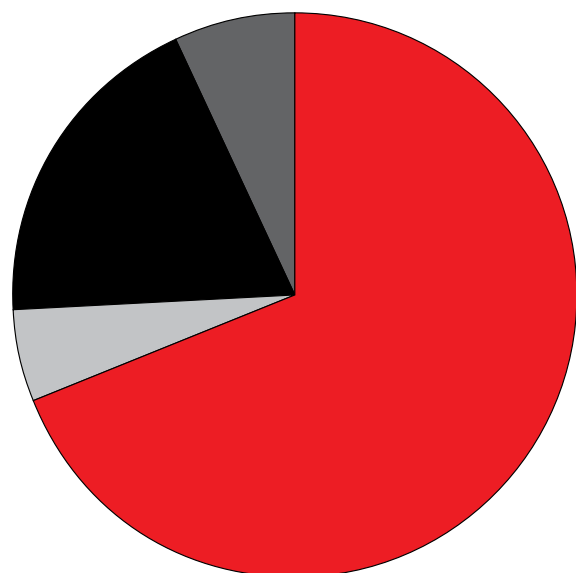
We utilised around 98% of our budget, of which 61,5 per cent was direct community support.



6,342,000 USD

was what we spent on implementing our programmes in 2015, a slight decrease from the year before

2015 INCOME:



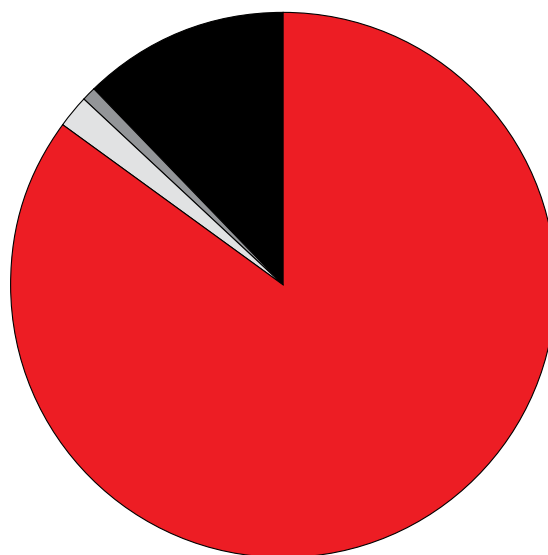
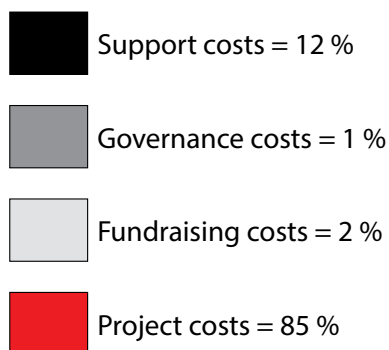
Institutional donors:

Embassy of Sweden in Myanmar, European Union, European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO), UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women, UK Aid (DFID), Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO), Danish International Development Cooperation Agency (DANIDA), Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund (LIFT), UNICEF, Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), Australian Embassy (DAP)

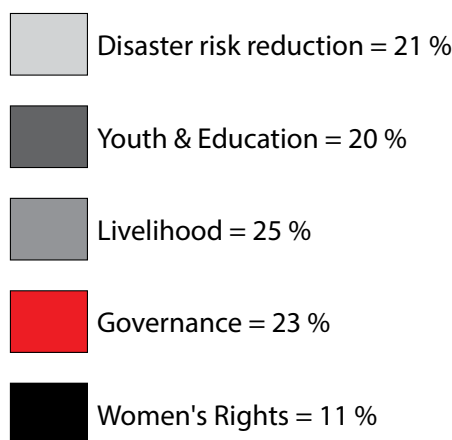
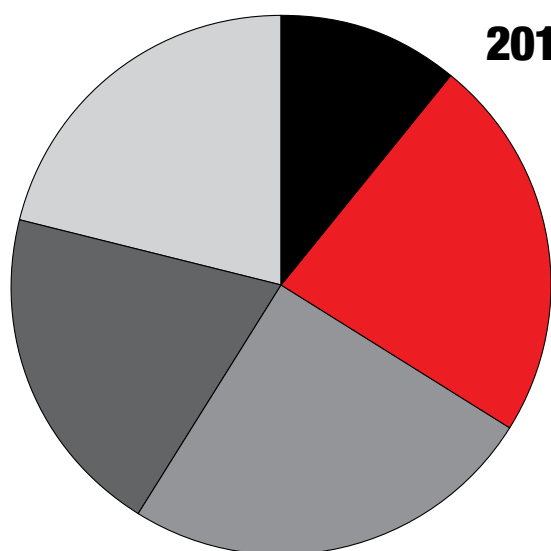
Private donors:

English Family Foundation, Corti Foundation, Planet Wheeler Foundation, Kadoori Charitable Foundation, Tan Chin Tuan Foundation, Prudence Foundation, Hilton Worldwide, Asia Pacific Adaptation Network, GDS, Intrepid Foundation, Nick Weeden, Alex Graham, Paul Dacam – ans Action-Aid affiliates in Italy and Denmark and about 3,400 regular supporters from the UK and Italy.

2015 EXPENSES:

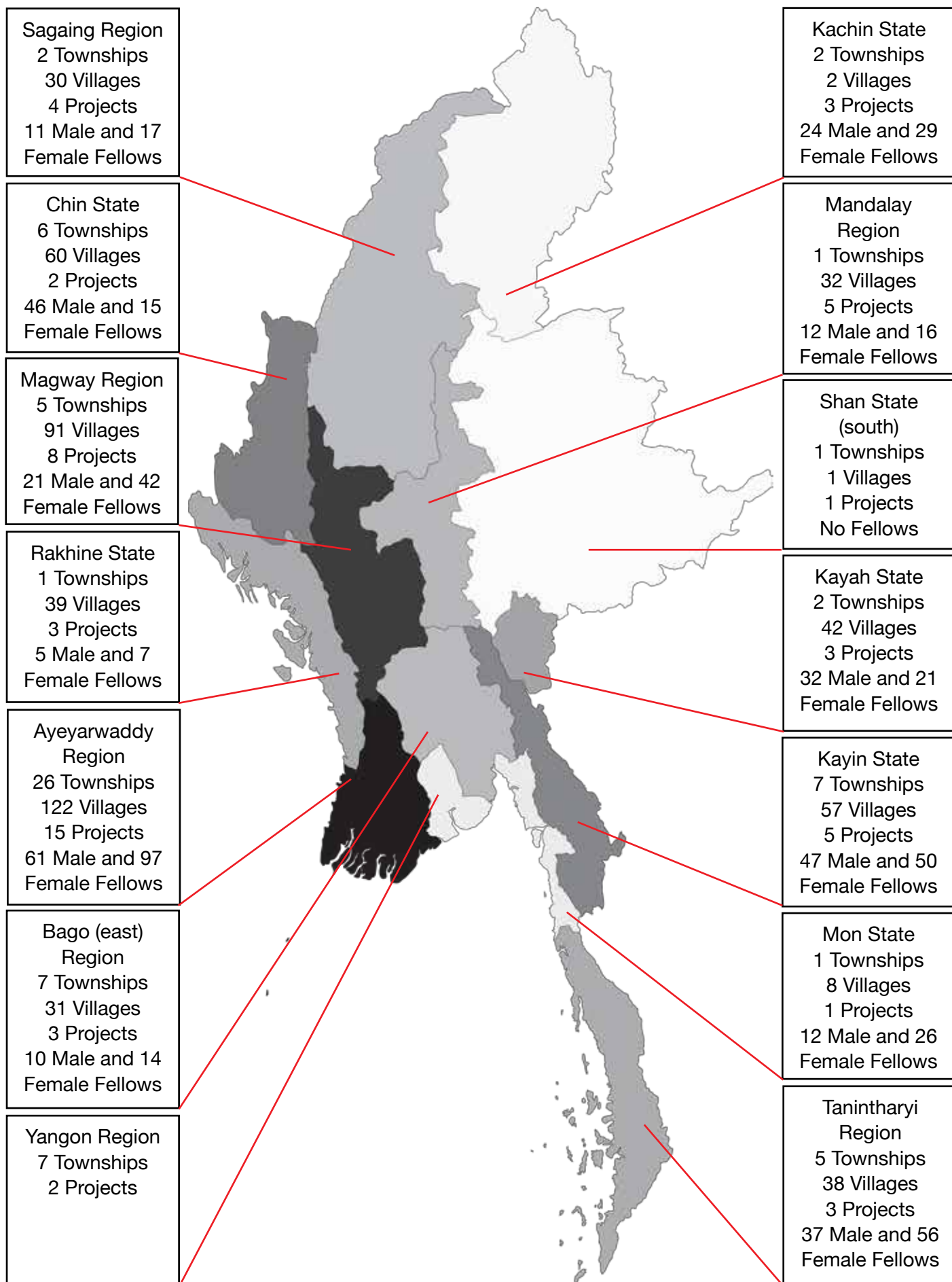


2015 EXPENSES, THEME BASED:



Please note that the Women's Rights expenses above is a standalone figure - each of the other teams' expenses include work on Women's Rights

WHERE WE WORK



PUBLICATIONS, VIDEOS, AND ONLINE RESOURCES

This annual report only provides a snapshot of all the activities and results of 2015. Please feel free to visit our website and Facebook page, download publications and videos or contact us for more information about particular issues of your interest. Scan below QR codes with your smartphone and you will be linked directly to publications and social media:



Empowering People
for Change

ActionAid Myanmar's Strategy 2012 – 2017



**COUNTRY
STRATEGY**



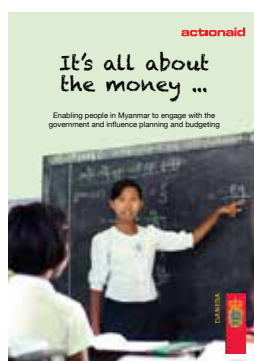
**FROM CONFLICT
TO COOPERATION**



**POWER IN
PARTNERSHIPS**

ActionAid Myanmar
Annual Report 2014

**ANNUAL REPORT
2014**



It's all about
the money ...

Enabling people in Myanmar to engage with the
government and influence planning and budgeting

**IT'S ALL ABOUT
THE MONEY**



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