



**ActionAid
Myanmar**

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2017 Annual Impact Report:

Empowering People For Change

Vision

A just, equitable and **sustainable** world in which every person enjoys the right to a life of dignity, **freedom from poverty** and all forms of oppression.

Mission

To achieve social justice, **gender equality** and poverty eradication by working with people living in poverty and exclusion, their communities, people's organisations, activists, **social movements** and supporters.

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

Equality & Justice in working to ensure equal opportunity for everyone.

Independence & Neutrality from any personal religious, party-political or identity affiliation in the conduct of ActionAid's work.

Transparency & Accountability at all levels for the effectiveness of our actions and openness in our judgments and communications with others.

Courage of Conviction requiring us to be creative and radical, bold and innovative — in pursuit of making the greatest possible impact on the causes of poverty.

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

At the same time, the focus on growth will remain, with an ambition to expand the geographical footprint to reach places where human rights, development challenges and the most excluded people intersect.

A programme-led fundraising strategy that prioritises long term unrestricted funding, complemented by short term projects and assertive investments in social enterprises and innovative work should give AAM enough freedom to achieve its ambitions.

The new strategy was developed to provide the enabling bedrock to these necessary shifts.

Elevating its thinking to a big picture strategic level, AAM adapted a new approach based on shading away from clustered ways of working on a few core themes, to enable the organisation to embrace complexity and flexibility and to approach its work in some core intersections.

The ultimate goal is to bring together the rights holders living in geographical hot spots, the change that they want and the AAM methodological triangle, in order for AAM to enhance its reputation as a high impact, creative and influential organisation that is supporting the transition that Myanmar has embarked upon.



"I joined ActionAid Myanmar as a volunteer in the Child Rights Development Unit in 2013 and continued to work as an intern in the Human Resource Unit. During my internship, I was trained to reach and realise my potential. Recommended by my line manager, I was entrusted and promoted to an HR Officer position in 2014 and now I have advanced to the position of HR Coordinator, which is one of the senior roles.

My internship at ActionAid improved my skills, capacity, as well as my attitude to be a better person. I have also gained the confidence that encourages me to carry out my daily responsibilities and achieve my goals. I am very proud to be a woman who manages and empowers youth, especially women, in the Internship programme at AAM."

— Naw Eh Kapaw Thinzar Thor (Jee Jie),
HR Coordinator

What's Next?



Brief summary of the 2018-2027 Country Strategy

The “2018-2027 Strategy: Action towards Social Justice” was initiated as a parallel process to the 2012-2017 CSP evaluation, with the ambition that the lessons learned from the 2012-2017 period review would feed directly into the new strategic plan.

The external reviewers’ recommendations encouraged AAM “to maintain its profile as a grass-roots organisation”, built around the methodological triangle of the Fellowship programme, the Village Book and community participation, and grounded in “rights-based work, campaigning and citizens movements working closely with the most excluded and oppressed people throughout Myanmar” while “building an organisation that propels itself forward with a technologically-savvy approach that is digital, highly adaptive and real time”.

One of the key strategic discussions that occurred all throughout the process of developing the new strategy was the question of growth v. consolidation. This was soon discarded as a “false dichotomy”.

Decision was made to continue developing constituencies and partnerships while deepening transparency and accountability to these groups, to enable AAM to emerge as a more sustainable and legitimate actor influencing change in Myanmar whilst retaining its internationalism.

Glossary

AAI	ActionAid International	MCCR	Myanmar Consortium for Community Resilience
AAM	ActionAid Myanmar	M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
CBO	Community Based Organisation	NLD	National League for Democracy
CBT	Community Based Tourism	NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
CRSA	Climate Resilient Sustainable Agriculture	NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
CSO	Civil Society Organisation	SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
CSP	Country Strategy Paper	SEDN	Socio Economic Development Network
DDM	Department of Disaster Management	SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction	SMT	Senior Management Team
DSW	Department of Social Welfare	VAW	Violence Against Women
GAD	General Administration Department	VB	Village Book
GBV	Gender Based Violence	VCBO	Village Community Based Organisation
GEN	Gender Equality Network	WCPA	Women Craft Producers Association
GRPS	Gender Responsive Public Services	WSHG	Women Self Help Group
HRBA	Human Rights Based Approach		
HROD	Human Resources & Organisational Development		
LRP	Local Rights Programme		

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Table of Contents

Senior Management Team's Foreword: 2017 in Brief	5
About Us	6
2017 Highlights Timeline	8
Village Book Milestone	10
Programme Priority 1: Sustainable Livelihoods	12
Programme Priority 2: Women's Rights	16
Programme Priority 3: Governance	20
Programme Priority 4: Youth and Education	24
Organisational Priorities	28
Financial Update	32
Working in Partnerships	34
Where We Work	35
Reflections on the 2012-2017 Country Strategy Paper	36
What's Next?	38



Reflections on the 2012-2017 Country Strategy Paper (CSP)

An extensive review of the 2012-2017 Country Strategy period was conducted in August 2017 by a team of highly experienced international consultants.

They assessed (1) the relevance of the theory of change and the success in realising the CSP's promises through an analysis of the programme approaches, (2) the evolution of AAM's strategy and ways of working and identified lessons learned and best practices innovations, (3) the organisational strategy, priorities and effectiveness and finally, they provided (4) recommendations for AAM's next strategy (2018-2027) to maximise impact, sustainability and innovation.

The review report recognised

the cornerstone role played by the "methodological triangle of the fellows programme, the village book and community participation", and recommended these tools remain central to AAM's work.

It was also acknowledged that the political context in Myanmar has changed drastically since the beginning of the CSP period in 2012.

This CSP was indeed drafted at the very early stages of what was called "disciplined democracy" under the former military government.

The 2015 elections marked the landslide victory of the National League for Democracy (NLD) and a long-awaited democratic

transition. The new government identified then three top priorities: peace building, democratisation and economic transition.

While space opened up for civil society these past 5 years, dark clouds still hover over the national reform process.

The progress is mixed and slow, and it remains uncertain what the next election cycles and development period will bring.

In this context, AAM is more committed than ever to remain an agile and strategically flexible and innovative organisation.



Senior Management Team's Foreword

2017 in Brief

2017 marked the end of the 2012-2017 Country Strategy Period (CSP), and the CSP review conducted in August gave us the opportunity to look back and learn crucial lessons.

During this 5 year period at ActionAid Myanmar (AAM), we managed to focus on strengthening our expertise and credibility amongst the development sector in Myanmar, building on the strong methodological triangle specific to our approach (fellowship programme, village book, participatory methodology).

This was done while maintaining space for innovation, both in terms of fundraising strategy, with the development of social enterprises, and in terms of tackling emerging challenges in Myanmar, such as rapid urbanisation.

Working in partnerships remains at the heart of AAM's approach, especially with grass root movements. We encouraged them to crystallize their commitment by

creating their own CSOs or groups (self help groups, adolescents clubs, etc.) to ensure the empowerment of the communities we work with, and the sustainability of our involvement in the LRPs areas.

The 4 programmatic areas identified as priorities in 2012 (livelihoods, women's rights, governance, youth and education) all had very successful projects in 2017, while we moved towards mainstreaming our women's rights work across the whole programmatic activities, to remain faithful to our feminist values.

Large multiyear donors funded projects were implemented and wrapped up in 2017, with a focus put on diversifying our funding sources, thanks to the development of innovative initiatives such as MBoutik or Community Based Tourism (CBT).

Building on a strong staff base nurtured by years of dedicated investment in internal capacity building, we developed solid

frameworks to improve the quality (M&E, QA) and security (IT) of our work.

This last CSP was again a valuable opportunity to take stock of the successes and challenges, and mainly of the learning, to drive the shifts necessary to deliver on the next CSP period 2018-2027. This is essential to ensure that AAM continues to grow and remains agile and flexible, to be able to embrace new opportunities as they arise in the complex and rapidly changing context in Myanmar.

The Senior Management Team would also like to take this opportunity to thank all of the staff, partners and allies that supported AAM in 2017 and beyond, and to reiterate its commitment to ActionAid's values and ethics, to be of service to the people of Myanmar, especially the most vulnerable and excluded groups. We are counting on your renewed commitment to work together in the next strategic phase.

External Review Team's Main Conclusion

"This has been an incredibly successful period for ActionAid Myanmar.

AAM has an incredible story to tell and we are privileged to have had the opportunity to tell some of it. A story that is based on organisation building, programme building, innovation and growth. (...)

AAM has enjoyed striking levels of growth in its programme, its revenue and most importantly its reputation with communities, partners, government, INGOs, the UN and the donor community. This success

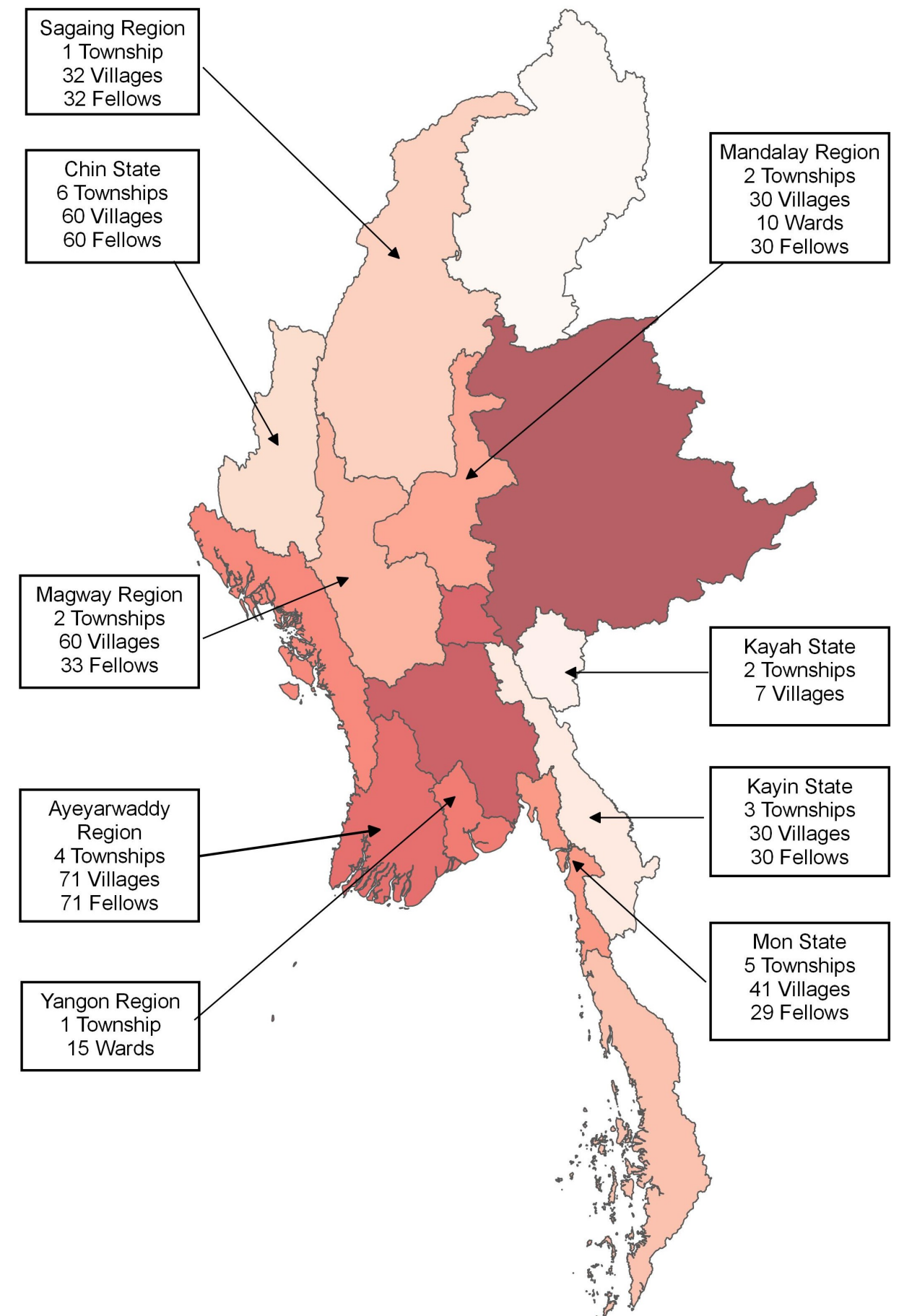
has been anchored in grounding the programme in communities through a remarkable fellows programme.

There have been excellent fundraising results and an outstanding relationship has been forged with the government.

Importantly, there is a clear focus on women's rights and responding to gender based violence. (...) The AAM programme has achieved a lot of what it set out to achieve and more."

From "Little Things...Big Things Grow", Review of ActionAid Myanmar Country Strategy 2012 – 2017 (August 2017)

Where We Work



About Us

Our Theory of Change

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.



Working in Partnerships

AAM is a grass root organisation that has gained credibility and legitimacy as an actor of change in Myanmar, while maintaining its international outlook.

Working with partners is at the core of AAM's approach, and successful long term partnerships were established with a wide range of organisations and institutions, focusing on shared values and on having a positive impact on people's lives.

These include local grassroots CBOs and NGOs, national level CSOs, other INGOs and alliances, media houses, academics, government representatives, UN agencies, donors, private companies and their foundations.

AAM recognises the value of partners with different strengths and we explore relationships across the development, corporate and private foundations sectors.

AAM has also been able to nurture engagements with the central government and to attract interest for partnerships from a broad range of donors and other stakeholders.

In the future, AAM is keen to strengthen these partnerships by deepening its accountability to these groups.

Across the ActionAid International Federation, the Global Platform, a partnership initiated in 2012 between AAM and ActionAid Denmark has proven highly successful.

It provides youth trainings in line with programme priority four "to encourage and support young people to become change-makers, driving peace, democracy and development in Myanmar" and globally.

The partnership with ActionAid Greece enabled capacity building activities for AAM's staff in 2017, and EU Aid volunteers will join AAM in 2018.

In 2017, AAM has increased its focus on urban areas, including more direct work in Mandalay as well as Yangon, through the women's safety and access to justice work, and resilience programming on earthquake preparedness.

To strengthen women's access to justice, AAM is looking towards improving coordination with government representatives and other NGOs, CSOs and service providers, through both formal and informal mechanisms.

It requires advocacy and changes across the police,

courts, governments (ward and township), national level policy, laws, community awareness, and community practices informed by socio-cultural norms.

It has been essential to join up with other initiatives and actors working towards the same goal.

Collaborations with the private sector have also been explored in 2017, often within the frame of their Corporate Social Responsibility work.

A partnership with KBZ Bank, prominent by its reach, was developed to bring small loans opportunities to the most excluded women farmers in rural communities.

Who We Work With

AAM continues to focus its engagement with the most vulnerable people: landless, daily wage labourers, small scale fisherfolk, marginal and small-holder farmers, internally displaced people, ethnic minorities, people with disability — and among these groups — particularly women, youth and children, in remote rural areas, and vulnerable young women in urban areas.

First, we value the knowledge and wisdom of local organisations. We acknowledge their role in the struggle against poverty and injustice, and recognise their legitimacy in promoting and claiming the rights of people in Myanmar.

Second, through partnerships we can reach a wider variety of groups and areas and work collectively to address key issues and concerns.

How We Work

AAM's core approach in Myanmar since 2006 has been the Fellowship Programme. We believe in young leaders as drivers of change; empowering and mobilising communities to address their priority needs and engaging with local government to secure their rights.

The human rights based approach (HRBA): AAM is committed to asserting the indivisibility and interconnectedness of rights, recognising that for people to enjoy their rights we need to work with them to change policies and practices but also discriminating attitudes and behaviours.



"After over a decade of operation in Myanmar, 2017 marked a milestone in the quality, the reach and the depth of our impact, as we remain deeply rooted in the communities we work with, to deliver on our ultimate goal of empowering people for change."

- Shihab Uddin Ahamad,
Country Director

2017 Highlights Timeline

January

- Staff retreat in Ngwe Saung, Ayeyarwaddy Region
- CBT received an ASEAN Award

March

- International Women’s Day #BeBoldforChange
- Citizen Journalism Training

May

- Country programme model development workshop for AAM’s staff by ActionAid International senior managers

April

- Road Safety Campaign across urban Yangon

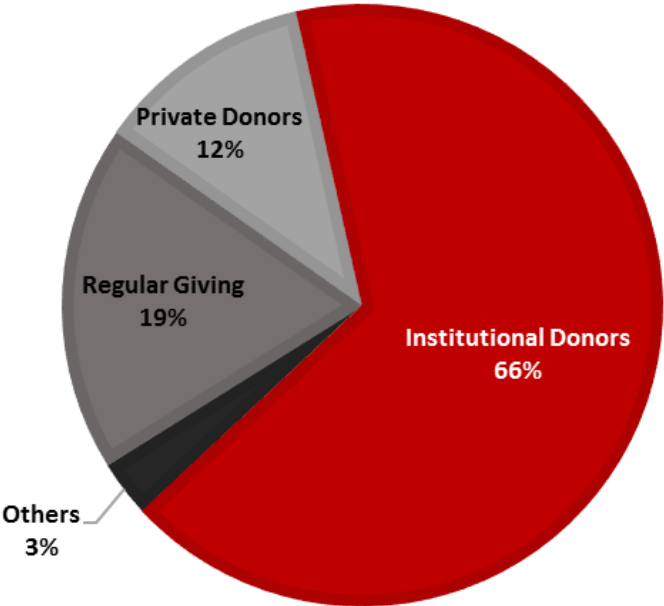
February

- Budget analysis workshop at Union Parliament

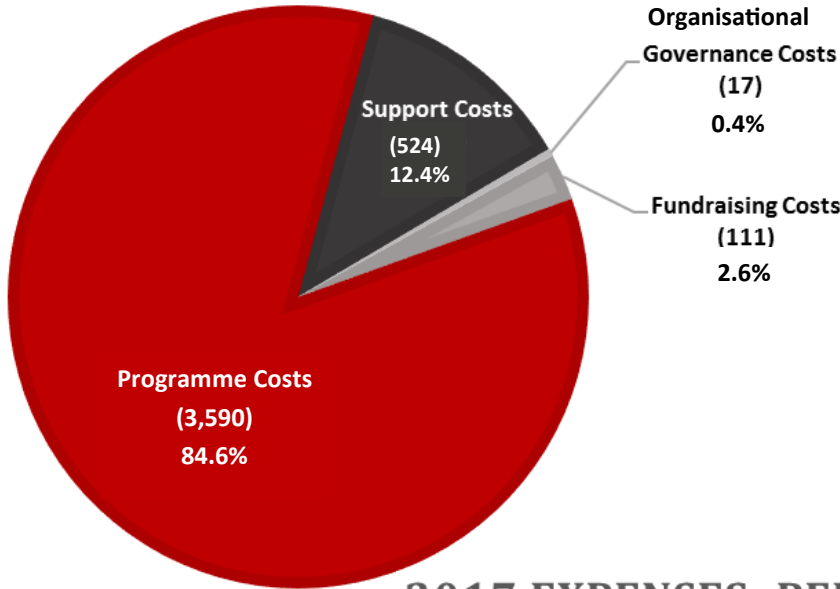
June

- AAM hosted the ActionAid Federation International Annual Assembly and Directors Forum in Yangon
- Garment factory workers Safety Audit released

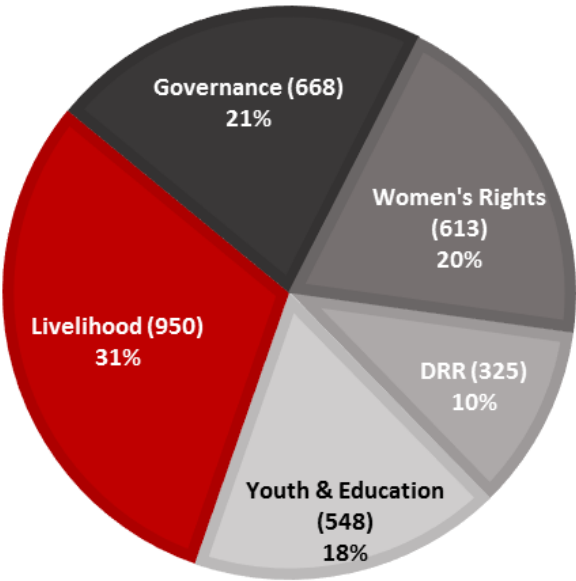
2017 INCOME = 3,846



2017 EXPENSES = 4,242



2017 EXPENSES, PER THEME



Notes:

- * All figures are in '000 GBP (Great Britain Pounds)
- * Amount carried over from previous years to the opening of 2017: **1,925**
- * Amount at the end of 2017 to carry over to the opening of 2018: **1,448**

Financial Update



The 2012-2017 CSP period was initially marked by a steady growth. Until 2015, fundraising efforts allowed to exceed the CSP projected income.

Reduced partnership income and the end of ActionAid International unrestricted funds are the main explanations for the recent declining income trend.

This decline was not part of a strategy to shrink activities (in opposition to an expansion strategy), but rather is also due to a conscious decision to not bid for projects that are too rigid or demand disproportionate management and to focus on consolidating existing core expertise.

AAM is aware of the challenges posed by a short-term and project-based fundraising culture that relies heavily (more than 80%) on institutional and major donor project-based fundraising and where less than 10% of the base income comes from regular giving income and longer-term programming.

The organisation therefore decided to embrace its successful entrepreneurial culture that has been a model for other ActionAid Country Programmes.

The social enterprise MBoutik and the Community Based Tourism (CBT) initiative have been prioritised as alternative funding methods, thanks to the essential support of the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA).

2017 closed a 2.5 year partnership with SIDA who offered AAM core funding that was crucial to enabling innovation and the piloting of new initiatives.

The development and implementation of a robust contract management system which is recognised as the best within ActionAid Federation and excellent donor relationships also remain AAM's strengths and pride.

July

- Climate change resilience and sustainable agriculture workshop
- Community Journalism Training
- MoU signed with RMIT for joint research projects

September

- International Day for Disaster Reduction
- One-Stop-Shop (OSS) awareness raising workshop

November

- Conference on SDGs in Myanmar co-organised with the Australian Myanmar Institute at Yangon University
- 28th anniversary celebration of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

August

- 2012-2017 CSP external review
- Review and reflection workshop on Women Self Help Groups (WSHGs)
- Earthquake evacuation simulation in schools in urban Yangon

October

- "2018-2027 Country Strategy: Action towards Social Justice" finalized.

December

- LRPs review and impact assessment
- 16 days of activism to end Violence Against Women (VAW) in rural communities

Village Book Milestone

What is a Village Book?

The Village Book (VB) was designed as an information sharing, planning, implementing and monitoring tool. It allows communities to claim funds and resources from the local government, such as: funds for building large dams to collect rainwater used for irrigation and the provision of electricity, schools, etc., and to monitor the implementation of community plans designed through participatory processes. Building on this acquired national reputation, there have been discussions at the Parliament to scale up its use across the country.

Due to its success, the VB methodology has been replicated across other areas, with the launch of the Urban Book and Education Book.



Township Planning



Village Book Process



Fellowship



“I started out as a volunteer and shortly after became an intern. My supervisors gave me opportunities to attend relevant trainings that equipped me with the necessary skills and confidence to progress and gain field experience.”

— Reena Htoo,
M&E Officer
(Village Book Monitoring & Assessment)





Staff Capacity

“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.”

AAM ended 2017 having delivered on the 2012-2017 CSP commitment to grow its people’s strength enormously both quantitatively and qualitatively.

It continues to provide its staff with a plethora of internal and external trainings opportunities. AAM has invested heavily and consistently in building the capacity of inexperienced national staff.

The result is the organic growth of individuals who have climbed up the responsibility ladder and now occupy important and senior positions.

The culture of the organisation is largely shaped by home-grown youth (below 35 years of age) of whom a significant majority are women (59% in 2017) at all levels of management because of a deliberate strategy and plan.

In 2017, AAM managed to stabilise the turnover rate below the INGO average of 25%, at 19%, compared to previous years where it had risen to approximately 30 – 40%.

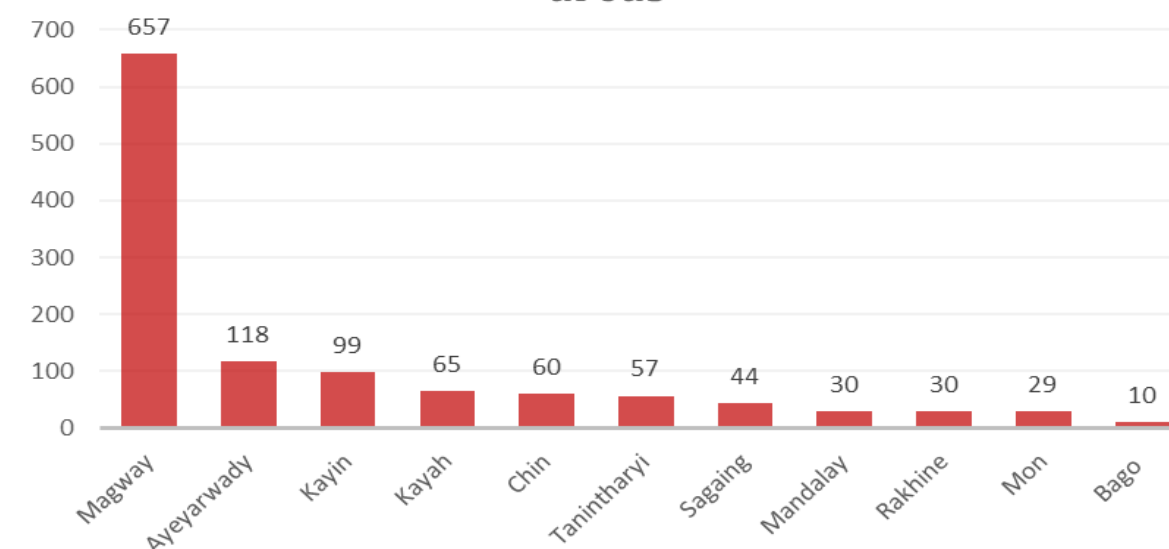
The 2012-2017 CSP review was an opportunity to collect staff’s perception of the working culture. In 2017, staffs describe and

appreciate a family-like, friendly, flexible and nurturing culture.

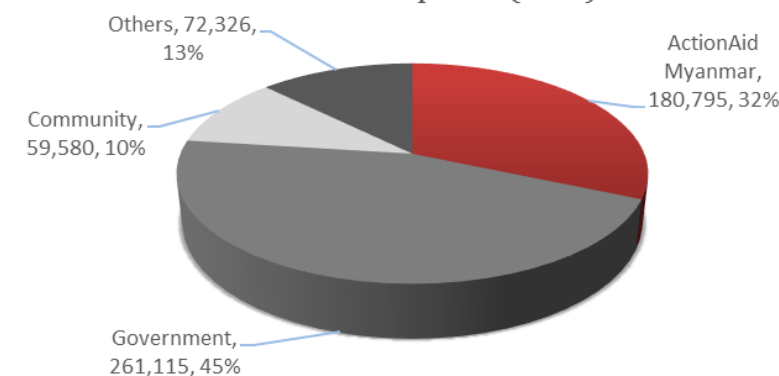
The ethnic mix of staff, interns and volunteers includes all eight of the main ethnic groups (Bamar, Chin, Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, Mon, Rakhine, Shan) and the organisation is described by staff as “ethnic friendly”.

The culture of the organisation is well aligned with AAM’s values and its feminist, human rights based, grass roots community-oriented approach.

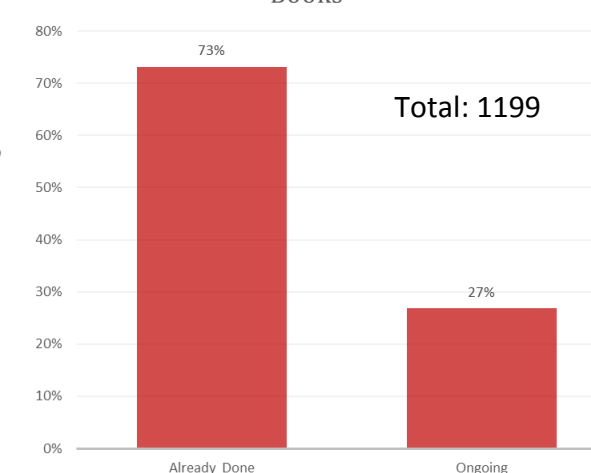
Number of Village Books developed in different areas



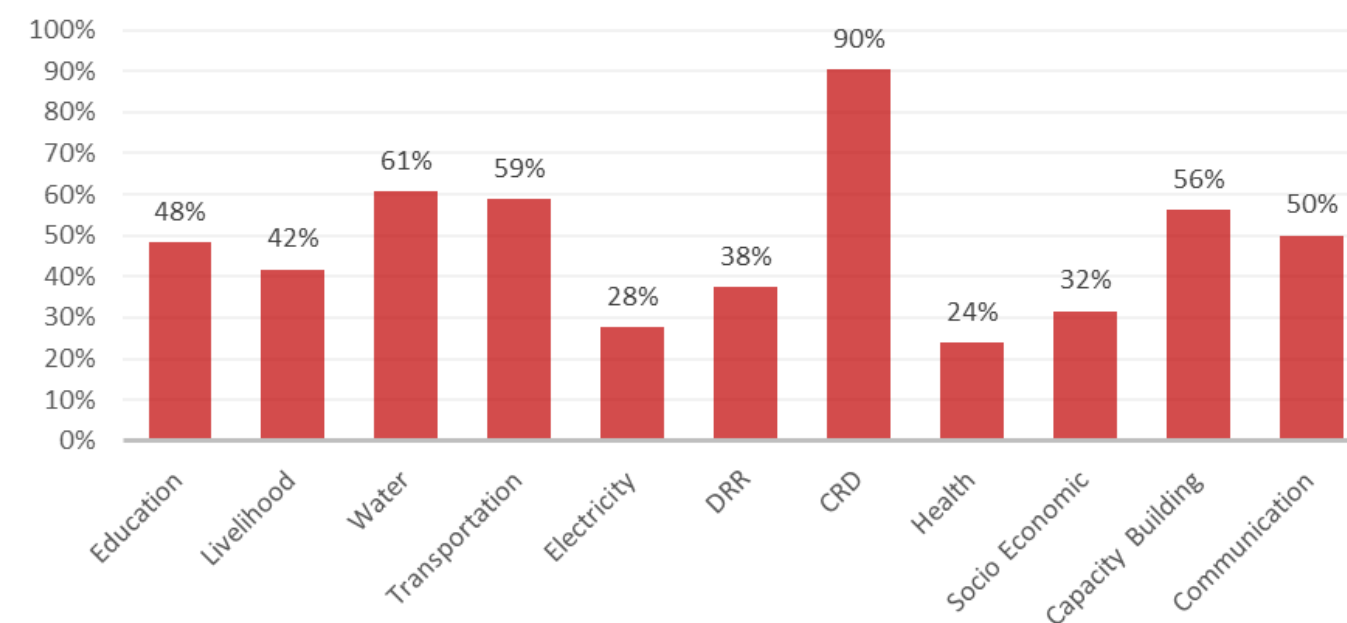
Funding amounts and sources for Village Book action plans (USD)



Accomplishment status of Village Books



Percentage of Village Books action plans implemented by sectors





Sustainable Livelihoods

Objective:

To promote (1) sustainable income through improved access to and control over natural resources and capital, (2) alternative livelihood practices, and (3) build community resilience to withstand disasters.

2017: Overview

(1) To improve access to sustainable incomes, AAM facilitated the creation of farmers and fishermen groups that established revolving funds for investments in agricultural seeds and equipment to increase production and productivity.

(2) Self-help groups allow women to gain access to affordable credit while providing opportunities for vocational trainings, and access to services such as education and health.

(3) The third priority deals with how to increase communities' resilience to natural and man-made disasters. Myanmar is highly prone to natural disasters which in turn have an adverse effect on both rural and urban livelihoods, with higher risks of earthquakes and fires in urban areas.

In Yangon, which hosts 20% of Myanmar's population, many productive business institutions and a high population density are increasing vulnerabilities.

As a result, AAM's resilience mandate has made the need for better preparedness a priority, deepening the work with urban institutions and communities for better response in 2017.

Community resilience

In 2017, we partnered with more than 25 Disaster Management institutions at the township and regional levels for resilient development and risk reduction.

We worked on improved Mass Casualty Management at Yangon General Hospital, and brought together relevant actors to coordinate responses for earthquake preparedness in Yangon.

AAM brought its expertise to the Department for Disaster Management (DDM) to test their township preparedness with real scenarios and models developed through township contingency plans.

A series of simulation for earthquake preparedness were facilitated in schools, hospitals and with urban communities.

Community Based Tourism (CBT)

AAM and the community saw an opportunity to develop tourism offers in rural villages in the Dry Zone (Myaing LRP), as an alternative to regular touristy sites around Bagan heritage site, enabling stronger empowerment mechanisms for the community. 2017 was the second year of operation, that included

Systems & Processes

AAM is committed to strengthening "organisational systems and processes to promote and measure our accountability, efficiency and effectiveness" with a "focus on organisational systems, monitoring impact and communications."

Impact Monitoring and Evaluations (M&E)

In 2015, AAM developed a comprehensive programme quality, monitoring and evaluation system framework and guidelines modelled around the ActionAid International (AAI) framework.

Even though the framework is still being implemented, there is already greater awareness and improvements as the M&E system is geared towards more accountability.

During the CSP period, AAM has fundamentally re-organised and improved its M&E systems, including:

- bringing an overarching and integrated approach to monitoring and evaluation in place of different systems and practices previously attached to donor funded projects;
- bringing programme quality to the centre of the monitoring, evaluation and accountability systems;
- building decentralised responsibility centres for quality, monitoring and evaluations in donor funded projects and particularly in the LRPs;
- bringing the organisation's communication function into the management of the programme quality, monitoring, evaluation and accountability systems.

Communication

The CSP promised to improve the communication framework to focus on five key areas:

- 1) building alternative development perspectives;
- 2) promoting AAM's identity;
- 3) promoting learning on good models and practices;
- 4) promoting AAM's programmes for fundraising;
- 5) and communication during emergencies and crises.

AAM has reached an excellent media presence through nurtured relationships with media and media houses, that have built profile and promoted the organisation.

Total global Facebook followers (main page, MBoutik, women's rights, CBT, village book, global platform, child sponsorship):

45,798

Twitter followers:

236

IT systems

2017 saw the piloting of the migration to Office 365 for 50 users. The roll out was successful and the remaining 140 users will be migrated by mid-2018.

The electrical system serving the IT equipment has been dissociated from the central electrical network, allowing for the servers to remain on while everything else is shut.

The Wi-Fi access points have been replaced across the Yangon office, enabling a faster and centrally managed Wi-Fi connection.

A finger print device was installed for attendance management, with adequate training provided to HR colleagues.

The IT team supported the development of the Safe City mobile application for iOS and android.

14,392

People, 96 teachers and 728 students trained on disaster preparedness in Pyapon township.

3,517

Students in 4 urban schools in Yangon trained on disaster preparedness.

38,761

People covered under climate resilient action plans benefits.

1,230

Students in 10 schools received climate change and climate resilience orientation.

964

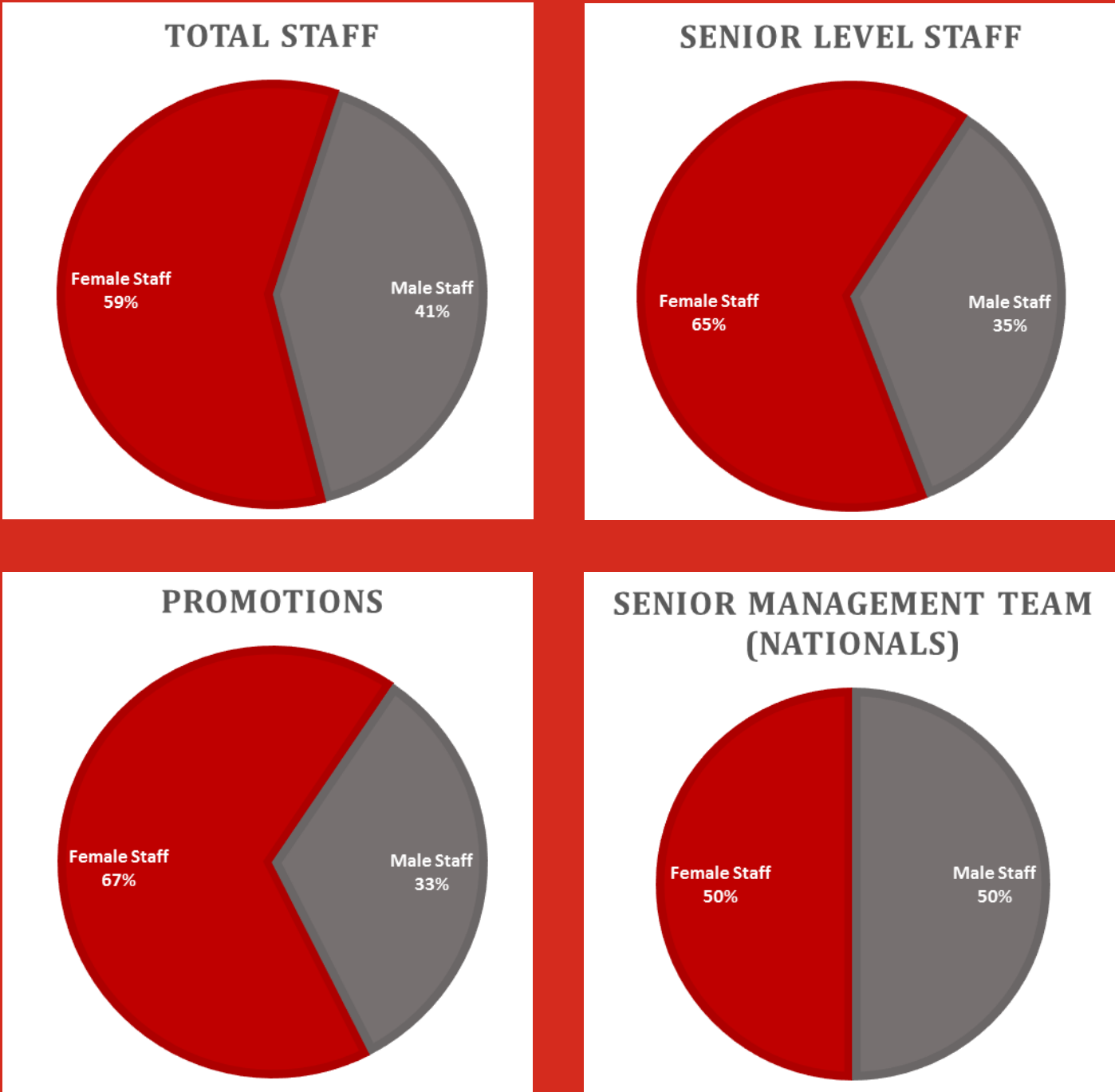
Women received a loan of 30 million MMK via the WSHGs.

2,500

Women accessed government services and business trainings with SEDN.

Organisational Priorities

AAM is committed to promoting women leadership and applying feminist values to its ways of working. The graphs below show how conscious we are about the recruitment, promotion, management and capacity development of our female staff.



presentations of community development plans and storytelling to tourists by the village's mothers groups and food, souvenirs and accommodation business development, ensuring profits go directly to the community. Package tour groups contributed to a newly created community development fund.

The top five provenance countries of the 760 visitors welcomed in 2017 are the USA, the UK, Australia, New Zealand and Canada. Links are made with other local projects, for instance in the hope that these visitors will engage with child sponsorship.

Both the government and the community have reported high levels of satisfaction with this new experience.

Promoting sustainable agriculture and food security

Climate Resilient Sustainable Agriculture (CRSA) is based on the identification of the major risks and challenges local communities now face, and are likely to face in the future, and on the design and implementation of site-specific adaptation strategies aimed at reducing vulnerabilities and increasing the resilience of smallholders production systems to climate change.

Under CRSA, we introduced zero budget farming methods, promoting sustainable agriculture and food security without using any chemical fertilizer. WSHGs achieved food security through traditional yet innovative farming methods.

Women producers network stronger than ever

2017 marked the successful completion of the Phase 1 of the Socio Economic Development Network (SEDN).

As a result, the Pakkoku & Myaing Women Craft Producers Association (PM-WCPA), an association registered with the regional government, was formed and organised its first annual meeting in December 2017 in Bagan-Nyaung U, attended by 145 members of the association.

MBoutik, the business and brand of the Women Craft Producers Association, met its sales targets and secured its first international contract with an Australian social enterprise in 2017: a key achievement in creating alternative livelihoods for PM-WCPA members.

Miracle in the Dry Zone

AAM has prioritised promoting sustainable income through improved access to capital and alternative livelihoods for women's empowerment.

A partnership with KBZ Bank was launched in November 2017 to pilot a programme aiming to improve financial inclusion by making affordable finance more accessible to women farmers in the Dry Zone.

In the pilot phase, members of the Women's Agro Producers Network received around MMK 80 million across five villages from Pakokku township, AAM providing the initial collateral to underwrite the credit.



Danish students participating in the community university initiative in Myaing.

26 Teachers

77 Children

86 Fellows

100 School Management Committee-Parent Teacher Associations (SMC/PTA) members trained on basic concepts of education financing, the right to education and promoting rights in school (PRS).

right to participation.

A drawing training was also an integral part of the programme to develop their creativity and spirit of activism.

Overall the programme was a huge success and the children's understanding grew significantly.

A Child Centre Climate Change Resilience Students Group was formed and a township level advocacy workshop on its success and challenges was conducted (LRP 2 and Laputta).

5) Youth & Education highlight: the Global Platform

2017 witnessed a significant development and expansion of the Global Platform, an ActionAid youth space and training centre. Global Platform Myanmar has

developed two different kinds of trainings in 2017: the Global Volunteer Course and the Global Citizen Course.

The Global Platform facilitates the visit of people from around the world who come to learn from AAM's empowered community through the community university in Myaing.

The trainings equip participants with skills to be able to work in an intercultural context, with knowledge about the structural causes of poverty and inequality, and inspires them to be engaged, responsible citizens.



Urban explosion

Myanmar's rapid social, economic and democratic recent changes have led to an inevitable urban explosion. Yangon is already experiencing an increase of precarious housing.

Within a consortium funded by Agence Française du Développement (AFD), AAM and Women for the World are aiming at a shift in mindset of the city administrators and urban policymakers, and are implementing community resilience and empowerment projects in Dagon Seikkan township, South-East of Yangon.

As technical lead for this project, AAM's core priorities are community development building, climate resilience, disaster risk reduction and income generation activities.



Programme Priority #2

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.

2017: Overview

2017 has seen a focus of the women's rights work on the two core programmatic themes of urban safety (1) and access to justice (2), with large scale multi-year projects.

A large part of the projects activities were implemented in urban areas. However, AAM remained determined to place women's rights at the core of its work across all programmes and locations.

Partnerships with feminist organisations are key to ensure the mainstreaming of women's rights. SIDA for instance, as a feminist organization and donor, was a strategic partner in creating the flexible conditions to roll out women's rights across all programmes.

Strengthening and building new relationships with institutional partners was also a key priority (3).

1) Urban Safety

• Safe Spaces, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), (December 2016 – March 2019)

The Safe Spaces project, launched in 2017, has enabled AAM to continue the work on raising awareness and prevention of violence against women and girls.

Continuing its work in Yangon region, AAM also established a presence in Mandalay Region.

Through paralegals and ward volunteers, AAM has conducted ward level safety mappings with the community, service providers and ward administrators. This mapping has been shared with the township level government to build awareness around women's safety concerns.

2) Access to Justice

Two main access to justice projects crossed paths in 2017 in AAM's portfolio of activities.

As the She Can project was wrapping up towards the end of 2017, the British Council-funded MyJustice project gave another dimension to access to justice work, focusing on Mandalay and Mon states.

• She Can, UK Aid (2015 – 2017)

The She Can project increased activities based on access to justice, women's safety and gender responsive public services.

By the end of 2017, 278 paralegals had been trained to act as a support network in their communities and as intermediaries with



Leading by example goes a long way in villages. These activism methods allow for great involvement in regional and national platforms, encouraging creativity, activism and collaboration among the youth.

3) The Education Book

AAM's team, with the support of fellows, partners and township level education authorities, completed 61 education books.

Borrowing from the Village Book methodology, the main objective of the education book is to provide the School Management Committees (SMC), Parents Teacher Associations (PTA), and education book officers with tools to proceed to a needs assessment of individual schools as well as to develop plans and budgets.

The education authorities of several townships encouraged AAM to conduct the same process in another 100 villages. Mainstreaming good practice would enable schools and communities to gather evidence on which to build claims for their rights from the authorities.

4) Child rights training initiative in Pyapon township

The Child Rights Development team initiated a child rights awareness training for child groups and fellows in Pyapon Township.

The key objective of the training programme was to educate children on their basic human rights such as: right to survival, right to development, right to protection,

189

Paralegals trained in Yangon and Mandalay.

12

Paralegals trained in Mon state.

91

Male role models trained and acting as advocates to address VAW in their communities.

38

Lawyers from the Bar Association trained in Mawlamyine (Mon State) on Gender Responsive Public Services (GRPS) provisions and GBV, in partnership with Avocats Sans Frontière (ASF).

16,000

Global viewers (online and print) of the panel discussion organised with representatives from the government, research organisations, GEN, media and the private sector, during International Women's Day 2017.

Programme
Priority
#4

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.

2017: Overview

The Youth & Education work is the cornerstone of ActionAid Myanmar's programmatic approach.

Fellows, who are mostly young women, play a major role in facilitating our activities in the communities. 2017 saw a steady growth of the fellowship programme.

Fellows are required to undertake two introductory rounds of fellowship training in order to graduate. Each training lasts one month, and covers a vast array of topics such as development concepts, leadership and facilitation, human rights, active citizenship and democracy, gender awareness and child development, disaster risk reduction, poverty and vulnerability.

In 2017, we developed a set of training module books around development concepts, leadership and facilitation, case story writing and child development.

1) Education financing: raising awareness and building evidence on budget spending for education at ground level (NORAD project)

Education financing is not popular yet within Myanmar's civil society.

Building on education financing awareness raising workshops that AAM conducted in all LRPs in 2016, the education team collected data and evidence on education budget allocation and spending at ground level.

The team is currently writing a report, and continues to advocate to the government.

2) Adolescents groups raising their own funds with handmade bracelets

About 5,000 members of adolescents clubs across Myanmar raised funds through a bracelets making initiative.

These groups of young people initially came together as support systems and to discuss various topics, such as the benefits of a good education.

In villages, kids often drop out of school at an early age. The support group system helps children to convince their parents that although it might be a hard undertaking, having a good education is a long term investment definitely worth the effort.



public and private services providers.

AAM also provided trainings to duty bearers in collaboration with the Department of Social Welfare (DSW), including the police and representatives of the General Administration Department (GAD) on women's rights, legal procedures and how to process cases of VAWG and sexual abuse.

Moreover, AAM conducted trainings in Nay Pyi Taw for the anti-trafficking police, representatives of the DSW, the Myanmar Women's Affairs Association (MWAF), the Child Welfare Federation and lawyers from the General Attorney's office.

Within this project, the Safe Cities campaign, launched in October 2016, created a high level of

awareness on issues of women's safety and VAWG through grass roots activism and government advocacy.

Women's Urban Forums identified the lack of street lighting and the dangerous transport situation as key issues. Safety mapping analysis briefings were produced and shared with the Yangon Chief Minister and government representatives.

As a result, 5 out of 7 target townships in Yangon were successfully lobbied to install street lights, improve road infrastructures, and increase police presence.

One of the activities of the She Can Project was the launch of AAM's Safety Audit on women workers in garment factories in June 2017.

Shedding light on this important issue led the Yangon regional authorities to conduct their own research. Both analysis have been submitted to the Myanmar Garment Manufacturers' Association, and AAM is hoping for its recommendations to be adopted by the relevant actors, to improve working conditions for garment factory workers.

MyJustice, British Council, (February 2017 – January 2019)

This project aims at improving women's access to justice in Yangon and Mon state. Across both urban and rural areas, the initiative hopes to ensure that women and girls are supported to claim their rights through community-led support systems, including paralegal networks and networks of service providers.

It enables quality legal aid services that are holistic and client-centric, and provided to survivors through a well-established referral system, and develops evidence based advocacy to influence national policies and the law reform process.

In its work to strengthen and democratise referral pathways for women and girls who have experienced violence, AAM recognises that survivors face crucial challenges as legal proceedings can be difficult and dangerous. In some cases, AAM has seen survivors being pressured into dropping charges as they cannot afford legal fees, or being threatened by the perpetrator into retracting their statements or accepting unofficial compensations settled outside of a court of law.

Trained paralegals have supported 83 cases of violence against women and girls, with 12 of those cases proceeding to court.

The initiative is also supporting male role models, to act as supporters and advocates for women in their communities, and conduct peer to peer sharing on gender and GBV.

In September and October, AAM held referral workshops for key government representatives and, through ASF, AAM has delivered trainings to various service providers including lawyers, health care workers, and other CSOs and NGOs, on case management, establishing referrals networks, gender, GBV, client centered lawyering and HRBA.

3) Empowering partners

Women's rights groups in Yangon, initiated by paralegals without AAM's trigger, are now collaborating with other NGOs and entities working on women's rights.

The success of the women's groups and their expansion after the project finished is a testament to the sustainable nature of the programming implemented, and the comprehensive trainings accessible to all, empowering communities to claim their rights to the relevant authorities.

AAM has been strengthening its work and partnership with the Myanmar Women's Affairs Association (MWWF), supporting them through trainings on human trafficking and laws and policies advancing women's rights in Myanmar.

Further trainings will be supported in 2018 to enable their role as a first point of contact (psychosocial support and counseling) for women who have experienced violence.

Within the European Commission (EC) CSO project (March 2016 – February 2020), looking at strengthening the local civil society through organisational and capacity development and sub-granting, we have prioritised women and youth led organisations as subgrantees. A vast majority of them focus on gender equality and women rights (43/83).



"In the past, I did not know how to manage finances but now I gained knowledge about financial management and it was very handy for being a treasurer. Regarding my learning and understanding, a treasurer should be accountable to check the community's spending and to encourage transparent information."

— Daw Naw Htoo Saw, 53,
A treasurer from Oo Shi Kone village, Karen state.



24,933

Participants (from local communities) involved in bottom up planning processes in 7 townships.

102

Women and youth trained on community journalism to raise voices from under-privileged communities.

Citizen charter - Proactive accountability tool for accountable public services

Officials of over 21 departments at the township level joined AAM's initiative to develop the Citizen Charter, an easy-to-read document aiming at providing all necessary information (eligibility criteria, process of availing services, time-limit, etc.) for citizens to access government services, such as applying for land certification, identity card, admission into school or hospital services.

The final document was submitted for endorsement by regional government level officials who provided their ascent to sharing this information with the public. This dynamic document will have to undergo periodic updates.

"We have to share our knowledge and our practices with young people in orders to sustain and promote the accountability and transparency of the work for our communities. I have full confidence to practice the social audit tool in my village."

— U Saw Htoo,
Administrator of Yi Maing village,
Karen State, member of the road
committee.



Governance

Programme
Priority
#3

1,465

Township and district level officials trained on decentralisation.

327

Township and district level officials trained on accountability and transparency.

94

CSO/CBOs participants trained on decentralisation.

499

Village action plans developed by communities were implemented.

4

Budget discussions conducted at regional and national levels.

Objective:

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

2017: Overview

ActionAid Myanmar's Governance team's activities revolved around connecting the rural communities and local governments to bring about community-led, bottom-up planning, public services delivery and access to social justice.

The governance programme has been anchored in empowering youth, women leaders and communities to address structural inequalities and concentrations of power. They are built on the double objective of (1) challenging duty bearers on issues of local governance and accountability at the field level and (2) engaging in evidence-based advocacy on issues of pro-poor and redistributive development policies, domestic resource mobilisation and fair taxation.

AAM has engaged with the Union Government as well as parliamentarians on issues of decentralisation (fiscality), budget advocacy (technical support on budget scrutiny process) and related governance issues.

AAM recognises that regional disparities and inequalities are important aspects closely related to decentralisation.

A study bringing out inequalities within the regions as well as across regions based on 14 indicators of economic and social development was shared with the Ministry of Rural Development.

It identified patterns of disparities especially prominent within Chin, Rakhine and Kayah states.

Other governance engagements include:

1. **Participation** in Public Finance Management (PFM) working group meeting to review the progress of these reforms in the country.
2. **Technical support** to the Chin state government on accountability, bottom up planning process and policy understanding.
3. **Technical input** to the partners of UNDP on AAM's experience of social accountability as practiced by communities.
4. **Training and technical support** to citizen journalists on governance and accountability as part of the European Commission (EC) CSO project.
5. **Sharing experience of bottom up planning** with Learning and Action Group for Local Governance (LAG-LOG) members and network at the "Local governance practices in Myanmar; experiences sharing forum", whose aim is to support the decentralisation process.
6. **National level** CSOs forum organised.



Gender Responsive Public Services (GRPS)

GRPS are critical for advancing good governance. AAM published a safety audit which is an accountability tool to address gender based violence in the urban context. It also developed a mobile app that enables the identification of safe spaces for women and reporting of any instances of violence against women.

All these are aimed at mainstreaming governance work across sectors.

Village action plans to advance transparency and accountability

Village Community Based Organisations (VCBOs) are critical for the

overall development of the villages. They mobilise youth and women leaders to take the lead in addressing issues in their own community, applying the HRBA.

AAM conducted trainings on financial management, accountability and transparency to VCBO members attended by village administrators, track leaders, young fellows, and teachers.

A central focus was on understanding the role of citizens' participation in the governance process and the importance of information accessibility and knowledge sharing, to monitor the financing and transparent management of development activities at the community level.