

# 2019 ANNUAL REPORT



Kayin State, 2019 Photo Credit: Ko Myo

# JOURNEY TOWARDS SOCIAL JUSTICE

## Our 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.

## Our 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.

## Our Values

**Mutual Respect:** Requiring us to recognize the innate worth of all people and the value of diversity.

**Equity and Justice:** Requiring us to ensure the realization of our vision for everyone, irrespective of gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, caste, class, age, HIV status, disability, location and religion.

**Integrity:** Requiring us to be honest, transparent and accountable at all levels for the effectiveness of our actions and our use of resources and open in our judgements and communications with others.

**Solidarity with the people living in poverty and exclusion:** Will be the only bias in our commitment to the fight against poverty, injustice, and gender inequality.

**Independence:** From any religion or party-political affiliation.

**Courage and 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, injustice, and gender inequality.

**Humility:** Recognizing that we are part of a wider alliance against poverty and injustice.

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**The ActionAid Federation has committed to applying a feminist lens and values in our work which will guide us in interpreting and advancing our mission.**



# Acronyms

<b>AAI</b>	ActionAid International	<b>IFRC</b>	International Federation of Red Cross & Red Crescent
<b>AAM</b>	ActionAid Myanmar	<b>INGO</b>	International Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>BRACED</b>	Building Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Extremes and Disasters	<b>KIO</b>	Kachin Independence Organisation
<b>CBO / VCBO</b>	Community Based Organisation / Village Community Based Organisation	<b>LIFT</b>	Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund
<b>CBT</b>	Community Based Tourism	<b>LRP</b>	Local Rights Programme
<b>CRSA</b>	Climate Resilient Sustainable Agriculture	<b>MCCR</b>	Myanmar Consortium for Community Resilience
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organisation	<b>MoHS</b>	Ministry of Health and Sports
<b>CSP</b>	Country Strategy Paper	<b>MoPFI</b>	Ministry of Planning, Finance & Industry
<b>CSS</b>	Comprehensive School Safety	<b>MPF</b>	Myanmar Police Force
<b>DDM</b>	Department of Disaster Management	<b>MWAF</b>	Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation
<b>DRD</b>	Department for Rural Development	<b>NGO</b>	Non-Government Organisation
<b>DRR</b>	Disaster Risk Reduction	<b>NRC</b>	National Registration Card
<b>DRRWG</b>	Disaster Risk Reduction Working Group	<b>NSPAW</b>	National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women
<b>DSW</b>	Department for Social Welfare	<b>OSS</b>	One Stop Services / Shop
<b>EAO</b>	Ethnic Armed Organisations	<b>PoVAWG</b>	Prevention of Violence Against Women and Girls
<b>EC-CSO</b>	European Commission – Civil Society Organisations project	<b>PRRP</b>	(AAM's annual) Participatory Review and Reflection Process
<b>EWS</b>	Early Warning System	<b>SDC</b>	Swiss Agency for Development & Cooperation
<b>GAD</b>	General Administration Department	<b>SDMC</b>	School Disaster Management Committee
<b>GBV</b>	Gender Based Violence	<b>SHG / WSHG</b>	Self Help Group / Women's Self-Help Group
<b>GEN</b>	Gender Equality Network	<b>TdH</b>	Terre des Hommes
<b>GP / GPM</b>	Global Platform / Global Platform Myanmar	<b>TDMC</b>	Township Disaster Management Committee
<b>GRPS</b>	Gender Responsive Public Services	<b>UNOCHA</b>	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
<b>HLDO</b>	Hualango Local Development Organisation	<b>VDMC</b>	Village Disaster Management Committee
<b>HR</b>	Human Resources	<b>WDMC</b>	Ward Disaster Management Committee
<b>HRBA</b>	Human Rights Based Approach	<b>YCDC</b>	Yangon City Development Committee
<b>HROD</b>	Human Resources & Organisational Development		
<b>HVCA</b>	Hazard Vulnerability Capacity Assessment		
<b>IDPs</b>	Internally Displaced Persons		

# Table of Contents

Mission, Vision, Value .....	1
Acronyms.....	3
AAM Country Director Foreword.....	4
About Us.....	6
<b>OUR COUNTRY STRATEGIC PLAN</b> .....	6
<b>The Cornerstones of Our Work</b> .....	7
Feminist principles .....	7
Intersectional approach.....	7
Youth empowerment.....	7
Long-term, grassroots approach .....	7
<b>How We Work</b> .....	8
<b>Where we work</b> .....	9
<b>2019: OUR PROGRAMME PRIORITIES</b> .....	9
<b>Programme Priority One: Realisation of Rights</b> .....	11
<b>WOMEN'S RIGHT TO PARTICIPATION</b> .....	12
<b>WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT</b> .....	12
<b>WOMEN'S FREEDOM FROM GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE</b> .....	14
<b>Programme Priority Two: Redistribution of Power &amp; Resources</b> .....	17
<b>EC-CSO: STRENGTHENING CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION AND ACTION</b> .....	18
<b>GOVERNANCE AND YOUTH PROJECT</b> .....	19
Tax justice and gender-responsive public services.....	19
<b>GLOBAL PLATFORM MYANMAR</b> .....	21
Digital Talk Show: Arloo Photo Kya Mae informing youth through technology.....	21
<b>PEOPLE-CENTRED PLANNING</b> .....	22
Working in uplands Myanmar.....	23
<b>Programme Priority Three: Resilience of Communities &amp; People</b> .....	26
<b>MYANMAR CONSORTIUM FOR COMMUNITY RESILIENCE (MCCR)</b> .....	27
<b>FISONG PROJECT: SUPPORTING THE MOST VULNERABLE URBAN DWELLERS</b> .....	28
<b>AGROECOLOGY</b> .....	29
<b>2019 MYANMAR CLIMATE STRIKE</b> .....	31
<b>HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE: RESPONDING TO FLOODS IN THE SOUTHEAST</b> .....	32
<b>CASH TRANSFERS PILOT FOR KACHIN IDPS</b> .....	34
<b>Child Sponsorship</b> .....	35
<b>Organisational Priorities</b> .....	36
<b>ORGANISATIONAL PRIORITY ONE: STAFF CAPACITY</b> .....	36
Organisational Development initiatives .....	37
<b>ORGANISATIONAL PRIORITY TWO: FINANCE</b> .....	37
<b>ORGANISATIONAL PRIORITY THREE: SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES</b> .....	37
Organisational focus towards evidence-planning and learning .....	37
Establishment of research hub: Evidence-based management .....	38
Establishment of Innovation hub: Making AAM more efficient, effective and agile .....	38
<b>What's Next?</b> .....	38
<b>References</b> .....	39

# AAM Country Director Foreword

2020 has so far been a profoundly challenging year for all of us. The global COVID-19 pandemic is a global crisis the likes of which we have never seen before. In Myanmar, we are currently witnessing a spike in the number of cases of infections, as well as growing mortality rates, dispelling earlier hopes that Myanmar had been spared the worst of the pandemic. Economic growth, whilst just about remaining positive, remains fragile and exposed to a coming global economic contraction. For a country with persistently high poverty rates, the economic fallout from the virus may be more deadly than the virus itself. And of course, the forthcoming general election on 8th November is reminder of Myanmar's dynamic political context. Like many international NGOs, civil society organisations and others, ActionAid Myanmar has put together an agile response to the pandemic. For many of us, the hectic past 10 months have gone by in a blur, and many of us could be forgiven for feeling that our work and achievements of 2019 are distant memories from another world entirely.

However, the challenges of today make it no less important to reflect on what we achieved in 2019 and provide a well of hope in the growing ability of communities and all stakeholders to respond to a crisis of such proportions. We must take pause to reflect, because our work in previous years is what has laid the foundations for our COVID-19 response.

By supporting the leadership of women and other marginalised or vulnerable groups we have laid the foundations of local governance mechanisms better equipped to listen and respond when a crisis like a global pandemic hits. By building up our governance work with youth and community organisations we have forged new relationships – even across international boundaries – helping us all to appreciate the interlinked nature of crises in a globalised world, and the value of strategic alliances. And of course, by focusing on the resilience of people and communities we have equipped many with the capacities to respond, and build back better, after major shocks.

We also remain committed to our major programme to reform of the organisation, designed to make us more reflective of the communities we serve and support, and more responsive and agile in support of their needs. I continue to be heartened by the adaptability

and professionalism of our staff, who face seemingly insurmountable challenges with good humour and dedication.

Looking forward to 2020 and 2021, we will be required to continue to adapt to changing circumstances, turning our attention to the longer-term challenges presented by the COVID-19 recovery, whilst also remaining focused on entrenched power imbalances and marginalisation that are sadly a feature of so many communities.

Real and lasting change comes from within. AAM can only be a platform or a facilitator of change that must be led by the people – particularly the women, young people and ethnic minority communities – currently most disenfranchised. I am in awe of the capacities and energy of our partner organisations and the communities we work with to drive change, and in spite of the challenges we face, I look forward to continuing to work with you in the years ahead.

Best wishes,

**Araddhya Mehta**



Painting Training for Four Days in Patheingyi

## About Us

### OUR COUNTRY STRATEGIC PLAN

Action Aid Myanmar's (AAM) [2018 – 2027 Country Strategic Plan](#) (CSP) provides our long-term strategy and commitment to a broad change agenda, while enabling us to be sufficiently agile to respond in a rapidly changing context. Now in the second year of its implementation, the CSP also links our priorities to the ActionAid Federation, and ensures that our work is:

“[R]ooted in local contexts at the country level, working with people, and especially women that are socially excluded and living in poverty. AAM seeks to address the structural causes of poverty, including power imbalances, injustice and inequalities, while applying a feminist lens to our work. We have a particularly strong commitment to the empowerment and leadership of women and youth through community-led participatory development processes that influence policies nationally and internationally” (AAM CSP 2018-2027, Pp. 4).

Our CSP keeps us focused on understanding and shifting power to ensure that every person can enjoy a life of dignity, and freedom from all forms of oppression. In 2019, AAM prioritised leadership by women and young people, especially those living with poverty and exclusion, as essential ingredients for achieving social justice, gender equality and poverty eradication. We seek to create opportunities for collective action and solidarity across the region and enable people around the world to unite and contribute to their struggles for social justice in various ways – as citizens, supporters, staff and volunteers.

# The Cornerstones of Our Work

## Feminist principles

ActionAid Myanmar is guided by its [feminist principles](#). These principles seek to transform the dynamic generated by male dominance and subordination towards women and other minorities. Our feminist principles seek to transform this dynamic by reminding us all that we can become powerful by making those around us feel empowered, able and respected. It emphasises power *with* others, rather than power *over* others.

## Intersectional approach

To address the structural causes of poverty and to challenge and defeat patriarchal structures, AAM follows a [human-rights based approach](#) (HRBA) and considers other systems of oppression based on race, class, caste, age, geography, sexual orientation, gender identity and people's political views. We encourage discussion, and adaptation of policies that focus on gender equality, including with people in power, in order to recognise all forms of bias, and challenge how and where power results in oppression.

## Youth empowerment

AAM believes that investing in [youth](#) is key to sustainable community development and leadership. Involving young people in AAM work is achieved through two programme areas. First, youth-led community plans are supported by AAM through the 'Local Rights Programme', in which we facilitate implementation of youth-led plans through engagement with local authorities. Second, the Fellowship programme deploys 'Change Makers' (youth leaders) in target communities in Chin and Kayin States. The village-level process analyses local needs and access to resources, helping people to define their priorities and develop action plans for developing their community.

## Long-term, grassroots approach

Our local rights programmes (LRPs) are human rights focused and emphasise the roles of women and youth in these communities. AAM works through our LRPs over a 10-year commitment with 183 communities in the following townships:

- LRP 1: Pyapon in Ayeyarwaddy;
- LRP 2: Meikhtila township in Mandalay;
- LRP 3: Pathein West, Pathein and Ngaputaw township in Ayeyarwaddy;
- LRP 4: Myaing township in Magway region;
- LRP 5: Sarlingyi township in Sagaing region; and,
- LRP 6: Pakokku township in Magway region.

The work in LRPs covers a range of activities to enhance social cohesion, build community capacity, promote women's empowerment and improve the provision of public services in education, health, livelihoods, infrastructure and environment. Our LRPs stay true to our principles of accountability, transparency, power sharing, women's rights, and learning.

Since its inception, LRPs address development priorities identified in the village plan, following a bottom-up, participatory methodology. LRP staff and community representatives use these plans to actively advocate for their priorities to relevant government authorities.



# How We Work

AAM believes that to be innovative, effective and to bring about lasting positive change, it is essential to work with a range of stakeholders. This includes civil society, the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar (GoUM), ethnic armed organisations (EAOs), donors, academic institutions and international agencies, including international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) and the private sector.<sup>1</sup>

AAM works with grassroots, community-based and national civil society to promote collective action and peoples' participation in decision-making processes, helping to build decision-making structures that are more inclusive. AAM partners with civil society organisations to participate in policy formulation that is based on local evidence. We support the government through technical advisory support for policymaking. We also seek to hold government accountable for delivering basic services, protecting people's rights, and for monitoring the implementation of their policies.<sup>2</sup>

AAM works closely with the GoUM through a range of approaches. We have Memoranda of Understanding with the Department of Social Welfare (DSW), with the Department of Rural Development (DRD) and with the Department of Agriculture Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock & Irrigation (MoALI).

AAM strives to work with EAOs that are signatories of the National Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) to build their capacity as legitimate governance actors as part of the interim arrangements and hold them accountable to the people they serve. ActionAid believes that to promote lasting change it is essential to adopt 'do no harm' principles in programme design and in the way we engage with both government and non-government actors.

AAM believes that the private sector can play an important role in deepening democracy and sustainable change. We aim to promote responsible business and encourage

- 1 A 2018 report defines 'interim arrangements as 'service delivery and governance in conflict-affected areas, including the relationship between EAOs and government systems, during the period between initial ceasefires and a comprehensive political settlement' (Convenant Consult, 2018)
- 2 'Do No Harm' refers to a framework for analysing the impacts of aid on conflict—and for taking action to reduce negative impacts and maximize positive impacts. The "Do No Harm Framework" came from the experiences of people participating in consultations and feedback workshops carried by an organisation called CDA and a book by Mary B. Anderson called Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace – Or War (CDA Collaborative, n.d.)

collaboration where there is a shared vision for change. However, we will be bold in advocating for improvements needed in the private sector to ensure their choices protect the needs and interests of communities and are not extractive or exploitative.

AAM works closely with research institutes and academia to embed research in programme design. This ensures a closer connection between policy and practice, evidence-based programming, greater learning, and informed action for change. Through multiple such partnerships, AAM seeks to constantly review and refine its approach and work towards programming that is responsive to the changing context.

AAM also works with donors, INGOs and other international civil society organisations to support strategic alliances and greater coordination for impact on the ground. Stronger bonds of solidarity across civic society – national and international – will provide a more effective platform for lasting change.



# Where we work

## 2019: OUR PROGRAMME PRIORITIES

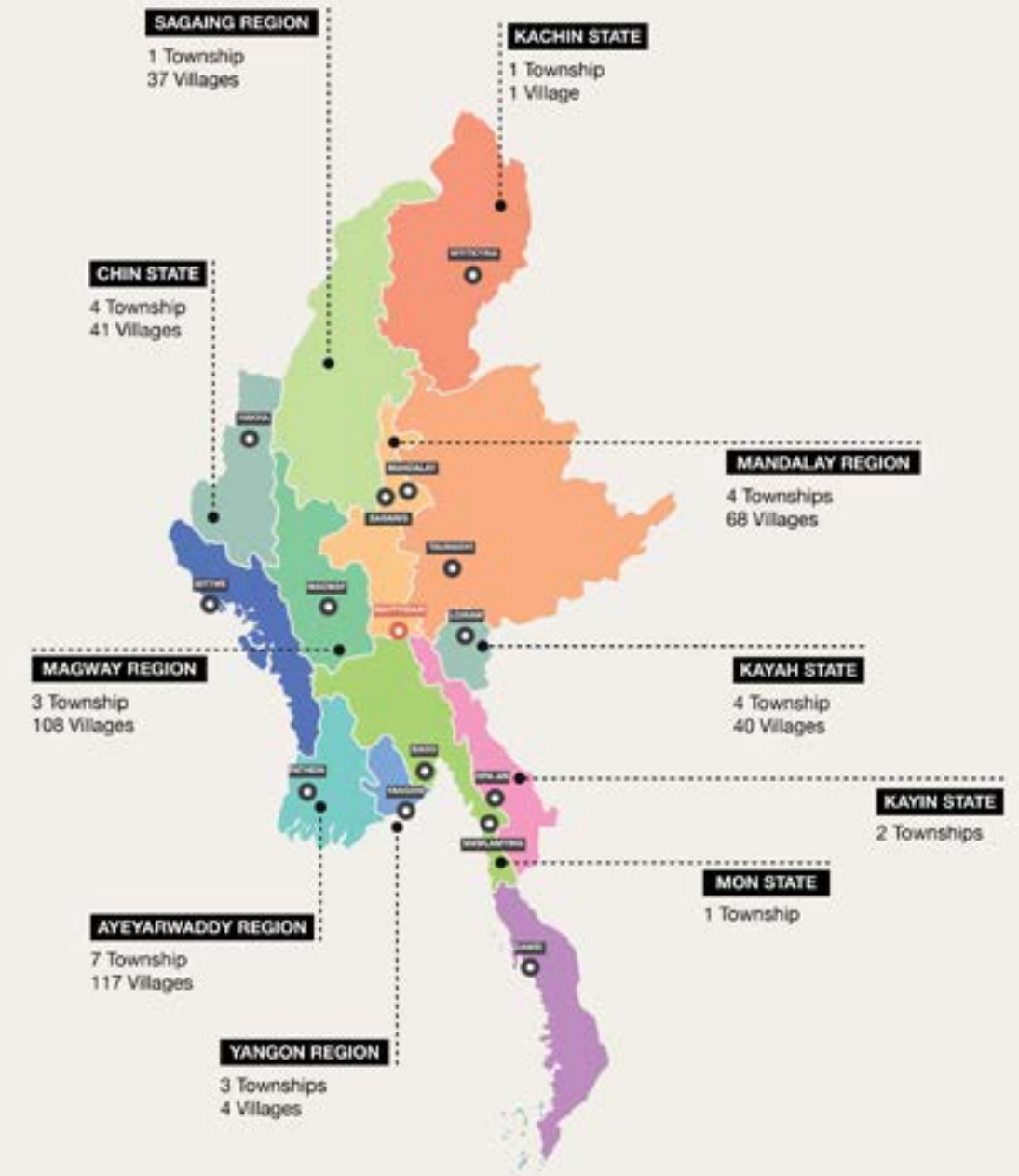
In 2019, AAM reached 302,772 people across 5 States and 5 Regions of Myanmar. We worked across the following three thematic areas to achieve our mission. These three areas are interdependent and indivisible:

- Realisation of rights:** AAM was able to focus on reducing violence against the most vulnerable, particularly women. In 2019, we reached 24,039 people in our work responding to, and preventing, gender-based violence. We also worked with 55,373 people through our local rights' programme and as part of our child sponsorship programme.
- Resilience of communities and people:** We supported 65,632 people and their communities to prevent and respond to disasters. This work included supporting alternative livelihood strategies through agroecology, as well as responding to various shocks and stresses, such as protracted crises like conflict and climate change, that affect livelihoods and food sovereignty.
- Redistribution of power and resources:** AAM worked with 135,449 people through its governance and youth agenda. In addition, we worked with 22,279 people in upland areas. This work focused on securing Myanmar's most vulnerable and marginalised people an equitable share of resources.



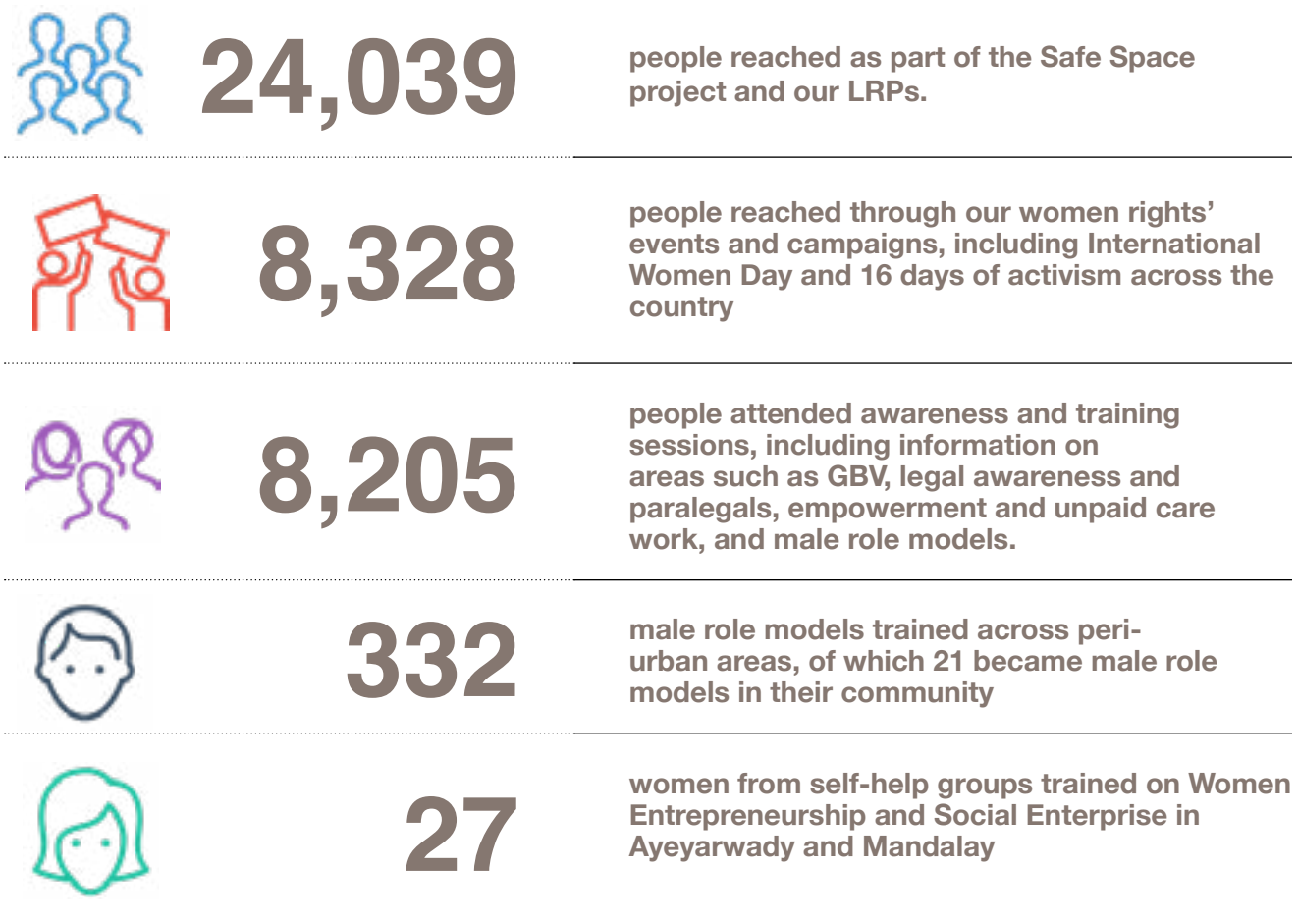
Good Governance & GRPS Training given by Global Platform

# Where we work



# Programme Priority One: Realisation of Rights

Women living in poverty and exclusion are often the most severely affected by issues such as climate change, migration, conflict and lack of employment. In this context, the focus of our work remains on the rights of women and girls. In 2019, AAM Women's Rights programme prioritised issues of women's labour, decent work and unpaid care work. It also focused on violence against targeted and excluded women and girls.



## WOMEN'S RIGHT TO PARTICIPATION

Our focus is to ensure that women in the communities we work with have the skills, capacity and space to participate in institutions – including by seeking elected office – at community, local, regional and national levels. In 2019, our participatory 'review and reflect' process across LRPs 1 to 4 showed that the AAM participatory model had played a key role in bringing women into meaningful community decision-making. Women's inclusion was attained through a three-step process:

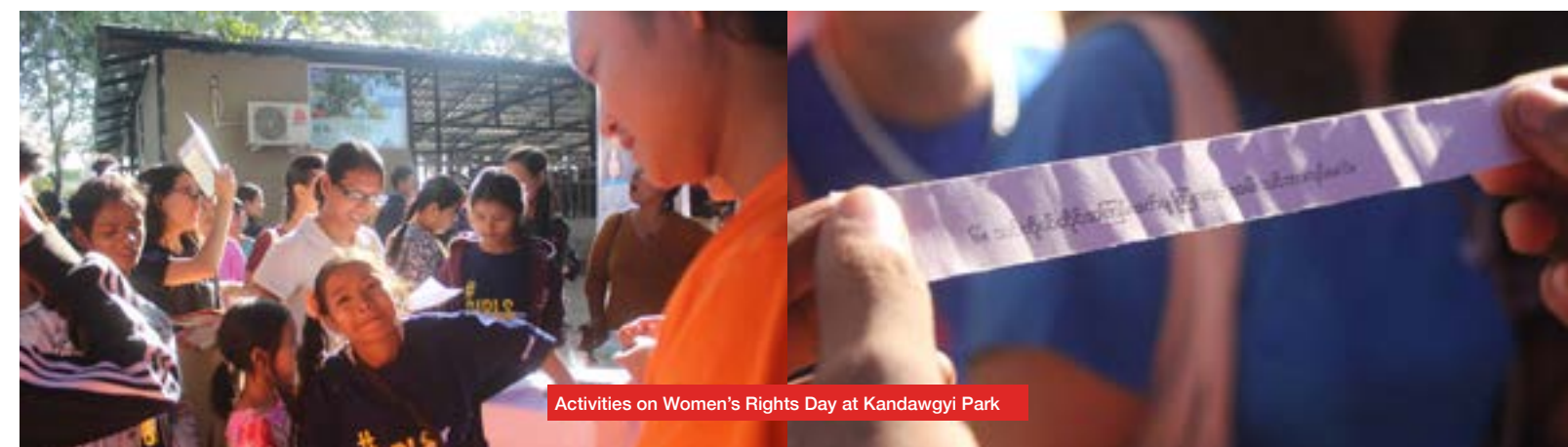
- Formation of self-help groups (SHGs)
- Grants provided to SHGs to raise their profiles within their communities
- Supporting women to join decision-making structures to build their leadership skills.
- Strengthening the women's rights and women-led civil organisations contributing and influencing the civic and political space of Myanmar.

Following the formation of women's self-help groups, participants receive training from AAM on accountability, responsibility, paralegal work and gender. Women in LRP villages better understood their rights and developed the courage to speak out against gender-based violence. LRPs worked closely with the SHGs to help them develop economic opportunities, and to increase their profile within communities. As SHGs became more prominent, their members were invited to participate in community decisions.

Gender training is reshaping long-established social norms that see women as incapable of taking community decisions. In all four LRPs consulted, women mentioned being more involved in village affairs and decision-making processes. They were also present during discussions about infrastructure projects, and in village planning and budgeting processes. One significant win for LRP2 women's rights work was when six women became 10-household leaders. Their engagement extends beyond the community as these women leaders are involved in ensuring that women also benefit from voter education and participate in advocacy and electoral campaign events.

## WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Economic empowerment for women focuses on women's access to, and ownership of, assets/capital as well as their skills and capacity to own or engage in business. It also includes recognising the need for unpaid care work to be reduced, redistributed or remunerated. In 2019, communities and women's groups from LRP4 appreciated the establishment of the Community Based Tourism (CBT) project, which provides an alternative livelihood opportunity. CBT presents an alternative livelihood model for other LRPs. In addition to CBT, women in LRP3 also started a pig-rearing business.



Activities on Women's Rights Day at Kandawgyi Park

## Case story:

### A Win-Win for visitors and local community, the Community-based Tourism Lodge in Myaing Township

"My name is Ma Khin Moh Moh Swe. I live in Inn Yaung village, in Myaing Township. I am 30-years old and work as a supervisor at Community Lodge. I was working in Yangon when ActionAid Myanmar, in collaboration with Intrepid, an Australian travel company, supported four villages, including Inn Yaung, to launch a community-based tourism (CBT) project in 2015. Before this project, my aunt was encouraging local young women to train and learn about basic hygiene and sanitation, food preparation and hospitality for the hotels and tourism industry. I decided to come back home to join the training together with three other young women from nearby villages. It was a 28-day long training held in Magway city, a 4-hour drive from my village.

"After the training, I was offered a job as a supervisor in the Community Lodge. Intrepid Travel company regularly sends international visitors throughout the year. As time passed, more visitors from other travel companies started to arrive, making us busier especially during peak season. Now I am married, and I have a 9-month old daughter, I feel lucky to be able to work and have my family with me rather than having to travel back and forth from Yangon.

"Things have changed a lot since I joined the CBT project. In 2019, the lodge introduced a no-plastic zone policy. We had to re-think the materials we were using. As a result, improvements took place in terms of room decoration, lighting, landscaping, etc. The no-plastic

zone also meant that the environment became cleaner and the CBT started exploring other environment-friendly upgrades, such as using solar lights around the buildings, and only using natural materials for decoration and construction. Chairs at the dining hall have traditionally made cotton covers too, woven and sewn by my sisters. Light shades in the rooms and dining hall are made with bamboo leaves, which give a unique and traditional touch to the place. We have also introduced an irrigation piping system to water plants that saves us time and water.

"Before this, we used plastic chairs for visitors during the evening cultural performance. And outdoor lights were not always switched, wasting electricity. Watering the plants around the lodge also consumed a lot of my time prior to the installation of the new irrigation system. All these improvements have helped me learn more and care for the environment, while also having more time to spend with my daughter. I feel very proud of the work we do at the Lodge."



Ma Khine Moh Moh Swe, a supervisor at the CBT Lodge in Myaing with her daughter.

## WOMEN'S FREEDOM FROM GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

AAM's Safe Spaces project worked with communities to increase women's access to the justice system. The project worked to prevent and respond to gender-based violence (GBV) in a peri-urban context.

The Safe Spaces project worked closely with government institutions – including the Myanmar Police Force, General Administrative Department and ward authorities, and officials from the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) – to improve institutional and community responses to GBV and improve women's safety.

ActionAid Myanmar (AAM) partnered with Terre des Hommes (TdH) and worked closely with Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation (MWWAF) to deliver training and development activities focused on identifying and reducing risks for women, girls, children and other vulnerable groups. The Safe Spaces Project shared the analysis of AAM and its collaborators with government and other service providers to increase their awareness of women's safety concerns and encourage change in their practices.

A multi-stakeholder approach was used to identify and act upon the needs of women and girls to prevent, and respond to, physical and sexual violence in their communities. The central purpose of the project was to motivate key organisations to listen to the safety needs of women and girls, and respond in collaboration with community representatives. The project employed three primary strategies:

- Increase the capacity of **women and girls** to individually and collectively identify their needs and share them with institutions;
- Increase the capacity of the most **at-risk groups** – such as disabled women, LGBTQI people, sex workers, street children, and children engaged with law enforcement – to individually and collectively identify their needs and share them with institutions, and;
- Increase the understanding of **institutions** of the safety needs of women and girls, and the vulnerabilities of the most at-risk groups.

Among the achievements identified from this project, was how paralegals improved relationships with the government and ward administrators. These relationships allowed them to approach authorities to resolve and respond to women's safety needs and incidences of GBV. We found that government authorities become more aware of violence-related issues, including rape of adults and children. As a direct result of this, ward authorities were managing cases more rapidly and becoming more willing to provide GBV survivors with information about their legal rights. This improvement in relations with officials is exemplified further by the fact that ward administrators are now asking for paralegal support on community issues. This is in stark contrast to the previous negative behaviour of ward administrators reported by paralegals.

The ward administrators, alongside the women's forum and community self-help groups, have also made the environment safer for women by clearing bushes, repairing roads, and getting lighting installed, resulting in fewer accidents and a decrease in criminal behaviour.



## Case Story:

### Changing behaviour, one Male Role Model at a time

"My name is Htut Aung. I am 24 years old and I stay at a hostel in Hlaing Thar Yar Township, Yangon. I am in my second year of Philosophy at the Yangon Distance Education University. My father and mother passed away while I was school-aged. I lived initially with my two sisters, but now they are both married and have their own families.

"In 2019, I started working as a volunteer. I joined the Hlaing Thar Yar Youth Network and Local Library as a volunteer. During that time, a paralegal asked me to become a male role model. The reason why I became a role model is because of the cases of violence in my community. Male role models are part of Hlaing Thar Yar Network, and we gain and share knowledge and skills on how to protect women and girls in our communities from the gender-based discrimination they face every day. I believe that we can reduce violence against women if people from the community come together.

"Before joining this program, I thought women and girls are narrow-minded and lack knowledge or awareness, compared to men. I used to harass women and girls in the past with my friends because we thought it is normal, and we found it as a usual practice in our neighbourhood.

"Action Aid Myanmar provided a five-day course which completely changed my mindset, attitude and behaviour. I learned about gender concepts, feminism, patriarchy and other topics. I decided that if I wanted to be a male role model, I needed to change myself first.

"I followed my own decisions and I participated actively in the male role model programme by conducting awareness raising sessions, community activities, partnership activities and involving in Action Aid's interventions.

"I faced a lot of challenges and difficulties when participated in the activities mentioned above. Some men walked away from the meeting, especially men who believe in gender stereotypes and accept male privilege. When this happened, I tried to change their views of gender inequality using various methodologies. My close friend was abusive to women in the past. After receiving awareness sessions hosted by me, he has completely changed! He treats his wife respectfully and is giving a helping hand with housework. Moreover, he is even supporting women's rights interventions and the Safe Space project with me. That's a proof of how I have changed my friend positively, by changing myself first.

"If I get married one day, I will create a happy family without gender discrimination, since I have developed a mindset of gender equality, and related attitudes and behaviours. I think violence issues and negative situations have been reduced in our communities."



Ko Htut Aung, a member of Male Role Model program delivering awareness session on gender equality in Hlaing Thar Yar Township

## Case story:

### A Paralegal responding to GBV survivors

"My name is Daw Myint Myint San. I am 63 years old and I live in Hlaing Thar Yar Township, Yangon. I am interested in participating in activities for the benefit of my community. I joined as a volunteer at Myanmar Women's Affairs Committee, as well as in the Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association. In 2017, I heard about AAM's paralegal training from a team leader of the Women's Affairs Committee. I became a paralegal because I wanted to learn how to protect women from violence. I attended the training with my friend but at first I was too shy and did not have the confidence to start a conversation with others. After attending the training, I learnt a lot about human rights and gender equality. Now, I know who to contact to seek for support if there is a gender-based violence case in my community.

"In early 2019, one of my close friends told me about a rape case near my house. It happened between close relatives in the same family. When I heard this, I reported it to a member of the Women's Affairs Committee. We went to the house where the rape took place, to check the health condition of the rape survivor. Following the consent of the survivor, we informed the 10-household leader and the Ward Chief Administrator. Then we reported the case at the police station. The police officers investigated the case according to their procedures, including medical examination of the survivor. To cut a long story short, the criminal was given a 5-year jail sentence.

"It was an unforgettable experience to be able to help a gender-based violence (GBV) survivor and help her access the formal justice system. I noted all the details of the process in my diary, with the exact dates. Since then, I have learned more about how to support survivors of child rape, marital rape, and learned about the Code of Criminal Procedure. This knowledge helps me serve my community better.

"Because of the activities of paralegals with support from a large organisation like ActionAid, GBV cases have reduced in our neighbourhood. I feel that people in my ward have changed and they are willing to accept paralegals' suggestions to better respond to GBV."<sup>1</sup>

1 Ten-household heads or leaders are traditional an elected position in Myanmar. Amendments to the Ward and Village Tract Administration Law removed this position from the formal local governance hierarchy. However, many communities across Myanmar continue to elect these positions and see them as an important part of local governance and administration.

# Programme Priority Two: Redistribution of Power & Resources

Throughout 2019, AAM focused on promoting and protecting civic space through two programme areas. First, AAM worked on increasing civil society capacity, collaboration, and influence, at all levels from local to international. Second, AAM used a participatory planning approach, including monitoring and analysis to support poor and excluded women and young people.



## EC-CSO: STRENGTHENING CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION AND ACTION

The EC-CSO (European Commission – Civil Society Organisation) project was an ambitious attempt to build the capacity of 83 CSOs and 10 CSO networks to engage with the Myanmar government on policy issues. The 4-year project was implemented by a consortium including ActionAid Myanmar (AAM), [Phan Tee Eain](#) (PTE) and [Capacity Building Initiative](#) (CBI), with partial funding from the European Union (EU).

and greater confidence in their own abilities. Trust among CSO partners was enhanced but their engagement with local authorities on policy matters remained limited. However, CSOs still faced many challenges. A key area of learning of this project was that despite contributions made to a wide number of CSOs, more tailored strategic and operational assistance was required. To address this issue, the project divided the groups into a number of campaigns enabling like-minded CSOs to work together. This was a major undertaking that was considered of great value by some of the organisations, allowing them to clarify their purpose, strengths and weaknesses.

In 2019, this project was in its final year of implementation, during which time the team focused on consolidating gains made up to this point. The CSO partners had gained experience, knowledge and skills in project management,



## GOVERNANCE AND YOUTH PROJECT

Thanks to a grant from ActionAid Denmark, AAM continued its work with CSO and youth networks from across the country, including AAM LRPs, to engage more effectively with local government on policy matters. This work included the promotion of gender responsive public services and tax justice, youth leadership and accountable governance.

In 2019, communities from our LRPS appreciated all the governance work done at Township, District and Regional level. Communities said they were more aware of government services, thanks to initiatives such as the Citizen's Charter, and sharing of information about one stop services (OSS).<sup>3</sup> At township level, communities highlighted changes in the relationship of villages to government authorities. This engagement had developed since the establishment of the village books and has continued through the annual updating of action plans. Relationships between villages, township authorities and MPs are not always easy, as government officers and political representatives can be slow to respond to communities' requests. However, communities understand the importance of collective action through citizen networks and can lobby district and regional authorities through campaigns/events such as the Youth Forum, the CSO Platform, and the Fellows Day.

<sup>3</sup> The emphasis of the Citizens' Charter is on citizens as 'customers' of public services, and the levels of service provision they could expect to receive. It is not a uniform "blueprint" for service provision, but allows citizens to identify ways to raise standards appropriate to their local areas and the service concerned.

## TAX JUSTICE AND GENDER-RESPONSIVE PUBLIC SERVICES

ActionAid Myanmar hosted a series of events to build awareness of CSO partners on gender responsive public services (GRPS) and tax justice. This was a year-long engagement between CSOs and township authorities, beginning with developing a shared view of gaps in public services, through to identifying pathways to achieving GRPS and tax justice.

Participating CSOs identified key issues and strategies for promoting GRPS and tax justice. The changes and issues they discussed included a need to:

- Promote understanding by GAD and local authorities on GRPS.
- Support communities to access services and interface with township authorities.
- Increase women's participation in public service provision and decision-making
- Implement key recommendations to improve gender responsive health services, including quality of services, staff training, infrastructure and accessibility of medicines.
- Implement key recommendations to improve make education services more inclusive for disabled children and girls. Recommendations included improvements to infrastructure, and participation of women in school decision making bodies.

### Case study:

#### Advocacy for tax justice by like-minded international non-governmental organisations (INGOs)

AAM and OXFAM Myanmar worked together to convene a workshop that aimed to identify areas for cooperation between INGOS working on tax justice. Various staff participated including Country Directors and Programme Leads from Oxfam, The Asia Foundation, Renaissance Institute, Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business, and Myanmar Institute of Gender Studies (MIGS). These organisations presented their background and current work on tax reform. Additionally, they discussed types of taxation, taxation reform, attitudes towards tax, and how to incorporate gender equality perspectives into the budget process. The workshop also looked at how to improve transparency and compliance in key industries (agriculture, forestry, extractives) to address tax avoidance.

As part of this workshop, OXFAM in Myanmar and ActionAid Myanmar agreed to produce a report on fair finances. The report was to be produced in close collaboration with the Ministry of Finance and the Internal Revenue Department, to stimulate discussion about the need for financial management policy tools, including taxation and budgeting, that can lead to improvement of public services.

### Case study:

#### Incorporating gender responsive services into law enforcement in Pakokku

In November 2019, the Pakokku CSO platform organised a workshop on law enforcement and GRPS in Pakokku. More than 600 people came together, including representatives of the GAD, Police Department, banks, community leaders and representatives from other CSOs. This was first time these stakeholders had come together to discuss how to make law enforcement gender responsive. As a result of the workshop a GRPS plan was developed by the police. In addition, the traffic police department helped 157 workshop participants to get motorbike licenses and 528 people to get new identity cards.



## GLOBAL PLATFORM MYANMAR

[Global Platform](#) (GP) is a worldwide network of training hubs for empowerment and activism. Its primary objective is to provide innovative training and capacity building for youth organisations and young people who wish to take positive action in their societies. The platform aims to provide young people with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to be active global citizens, and become catalysts for social and political empowerment.

The Global Platform Myanmar (GPM) has been present since 2012. In July, GPM launched a Youth Hub by inviting different youth-led organisations who organised and planned budgets for activities such as a “Music for Change” workshop.

## DIGITAL TALK SHOW: ARLOO PHOTE KYA MAE INFORMING YOUTH THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

A talk show programme has been developed called “[Arloo Phote Kya Mae](#)”, a term used colloquially to describe ‘idle chitter chatter’, selected to counter the dismissive perceptions facing youth today. Designed and produced through a series of focus groups and activities, the series is a space for young people to share their concerns, ideas and desires. The show will be available online alongside a relevant collection of material resources for viewers. The presenter for the series is Thinzar Shunlei Yi, youth advocate, political activist and recipient of the Emerging Young Leaders 2016 and Women of South East Asia 2019 awards. The pilot episode of this talk show was developed by the AAM Communications Department, with the help of Global Platform. GPM has been using Facebook Messenger, encouraging young people to tell Arloo Phote Kya Mae what they would like to see from GP and offering to phone them if they have any questions about GP current activities, applications and programmes. The series of talks shows can be found [here](#).

## PEOPLE-CENTRED PLANNING

Since 2012, AAM has facilitated bottom-up planning through our ‘Village Book’, which serves as a mechanism through which the community can approach government and claim the resources they are entitled to. The village book captures the social, economic and demographic conditions of a village. It includes information on the most excluded and vulnerable groups, social and cultural practices, gender relations and power dynamics, and disaster preparedness. By the end of 2019, 106 community development plans had been developed by communities through village books, from 88 villages in the dry zone, Kayin, Mon and Chin States. Thanks to extended engagement with the government, almost a third of these plans (319) have already been implemented in 86 villages with financial support from AAM, Government departments, other agencies and communities’ own contributions.



Launch of Youth Hub in July 2019.



Village Book introduced across 11 regions and states up to now



2,743

community development plans have been produced in 240 villages



934

community development plans have been implemented in 226 participants including village leaders, civil society organisations (CSOs) and youth



816

fellows trained, including 391 male and 425 women



233

community development plans in the process of implementation in 142 villages

## WORKING IN UPLANDS MYANMAR

In 2019, we had six projects managed by the Uplands Team, operating in minority ethnic areas of the country such as Chin, Kayin, Kayah and Mon States. The objective of the projects is termed 'every-day peacebuilding' and seeks to encourage more inclusive decision-making processes by involving women and youth. Through the Fellowship programme and using bottom-up participatory processes, such as the village book, AAM works together with a wide range of stakeholders to ensure that there is community ownership of development and peacebuilding activities.

### Key lessons from Communities for Mon & Kayin

This project aimed to increase democratic space and community cohesion through placement of 'Change Makers' in mixed control areas<sup>4</sup> in Mon and Kayin states. The project faced two challenges. Firstly, delays in livelihoods training, and secondly, challenges faced by Fellows in mobilising community members. Despite these challenges, the project encouraged local authorities to commit to deliver services required from the communities. The following are key lessons from this project:

- If women and young people are given the opportunity and support to effectively participate in bottom-up planning and community mobilisation, they can contribute effectively in village book action plan implementation and holding governance actors to account.
- The combination of various approaches such as bottom-up participatory planning; the fellowship approach; capacity development of CBOs, community and governance actors; community mobilisation and working on demand (people) and supply (duty bearers) in strengthening the local governance, have synergistic impact.
- The project support structures are non-traditional, entailing flexibility and ensuring sustainability. For example, the capacity development and deployment of Fellows and young volunteers, and establishment and enhancement of village and community-based organisations (VCBOs) and women's self-help groups (WSHGs) are nurtured through ownership and participation, and organically evolve and are likely to stay functional beyond the project lifecycle.

<sup>4</sup> 'Mixed control areas' refers to many parts of Myanmar where adjacent or overlapping territories are formally or informally under different governance arrangements, including the Union Government and various ethnic armed organisations.

- The beneficiary-centric transfer of leadership approach has yielded a greater ownership and participation of community members, especially of women, who traditionally are excluded from the village affairs. For example, ensuring 50% women among Fellows, youth volunteers, and providing space for women to be the leaders of VCBOs and WSHGs has provided them with opportunities, capacity and motivation to participate and lead.
- The combination of vertical community development approach and horizontal advocacy approach has been effective. For example, in this project the village level bottom-up planning (village book) was also transformed to township level which allowed opportunities for engagement with governance actors at multiple levels.
- Engaging with communities, CBOs, governance actors and implementing the village book action plan demands resources and time to manifest intended change. These types of project needs to longer a term engagement, ideally of 3-5 years.
- Trainings/workshops when delivered directly in the first language of participants was found to be far more effective. Therefore, wherever possible it is suggested to have experts with proficiency in the local non-majority language. It is also suggested as much as possible, to have materials and information produced in local/regional languages.



Identifying Non-Safety Areas in Ward 6-Women Forum in Hlaing Thar Yar, Safe Space Project

## Lessons from Building Resilience in Chin State

Together with the Hualango Local Development Organisation (HLDO), this project supported Change Makers to encourage and mobilise their communities to form community-based organisations. The project found the following:

- In communities, where village affairs were seen mostly as arenas belonging to village leaders, elders and household heads, local youth from the villages have become central actors of community development.
- Communities that used to have weak structures for collaboration, have become more organised and united, gained more self-sufficiency, and the ability to negotiate improvements to the village.
- Traditional views regarding community development have started to change. Community development, that used to be seen more from a service delivery perspective and as something that produced mainly infrastructure, is now seen more as a participatory process that improves community members skills and knowledge and requires the entire community's contribution.

- Women, whose role used to be strongly connected to the private household sphere, who are used to not having the ability to speak in public, and whose influence in village matters was not valued, have become organised at village level and started to take part in decision-making processes within the villages. Women have become central actors of the village development process, whose work has produced profit for the entire community. Community members have begun to analyse critically the position of women in the villages and women have gained more confidence to voice their own opinions and ideas as well as question the ones of men.



2019 Training on search and rescue in case of emergency

## Case study:

### From teacher to community leader

Ma Win is a private teacher in Ye before becoming a fellow in 2013. She is one of the selected Fellows due to her fluency in Burmese, because her native language is Mon. I sat with Win Htay to understand her journey as a fellow.

When I asked about her engagement in the project in the community:

“My job is to ensure women’s participation in leadership and decision making. Since my involvement as a Fellow, I have been receiving various trainings. I believe I now have a better understanding of development concepts, financial management and an ability to implement the project activities. Over time, I have developed social skills which are essential for community work. Furthermore, I have learned to be open minded and empathetical. Through engagement in the project, I have earned facilitation skills and I am confident delivering trainings to community members and clusters. All these qualities are the strengths and uniqueness of the Fellows that AAM believes in.”

These personal changes are important to Win Htay because it has contributed to the changes in her community. It needs skilled people like Myint Htay, for instance in bottom-up planning, engaging with authority and identifying the needs of community and taking actions.

When asked what she feels she gained from the fellowship program:

“I feel the changes that I have experienced in my ability has made me more confident for community work. For instance, through the work of Fellows and efforts from everyone, the community now has a better water distribution system, due to the village book there are solar powered lights, roads are being constructed and a high school was renovated with the funds from SDC (Swiss Agency for Development & Cooperation).”

Being a fellow has also unlocked new avenues for her. For instance, currently she is the spokesperson for the village to liaise with government and other organisations who are working for community development. This leadership role has provided her with robust knowledge on human rights.

While she is doing best with community for community development, she feels that there is still a lot to do. For example, more awareness programmes are necessary to inform the community about various kinds of problems such as gender discrimination, drug use etc., that they are facing. It is equally imperative to build the capacity

of community members through orientation and training programmes.

When asked what she learned through her journey:

“What I have learned in my journey as a Fellow is that learning from the experiences of others is key to achieving change. I am keen to meet other Fellows across the country, to know them, to know about their culture, problems and success stories, to connect with them and to share my story.”



2019 training for Kayin Fellows for participatory township planning of AAM Mawlamyaing office

# Programme Priority Three: Resilience of Communities & People

Most communities in Myanmar are dependent on agriculture for their livelihoods, making them vulnerable to droughts, floods and tropical cyclones, all of which will increase in frequency and intensity with climate change. AAM works with people and communities to develop capacities, create opportunities, and build the resources of people living in poverty and exclusion to withstand, recover from, and transform the systems that underlie and increase their vulnerability.

This year, we worked on earthquake and climate change hazard (flood and drought) risk reduction and building community resilience in urban and rural areas. We advocated for inclusive, decentralised and adequately resourced disaster risk reduction (DRR) policies that build community resilience. We also piloted tools, such as cash transfers, to reduce the vulnerability of women and children during conflict where, poor, marginalised and excluded communities are most affected.

We raised awareness about climate change, and the devastating impacts it has for the poorest, including women and girls. Extreme patterns of weather – caused by rising global temperatures – are destroying livelihoods and displacing millions of communities from their homes. Through its call for climate justice, ActionAid Myanmar joined a chorus of voices across the ActionAid federation to lead rapid climate action and support developing countries to cope with climate impacts and a transition to greener economic models.



# 32,813

people benefitted from resilience projects



# 1,676

people received resilience training on topics such as disaster risk reduction, livestock training, agroecology and climate change resilient agriculture.



In 2019, AAM activities under the MCCR targeted 6 schools, 5 villages and 5 wards in Dala Township and 2 factories in Dagon Seikkan Township, Yangon.



Disaster risk reduction awareness actions took place in Dala, Dagon Seikkan, Magway, Meiktila, Pakokku, Patheingyi and Salingyi Townships.

## MYANMAR CONSORTIUM FOR COMMUNITY RESILIENCE (MCCR)

The Myanmar Consortium for Community Resilience (MCCR) was formed to support institutions and the Government of Myanmar to manage disaster risks in line with local, regional and national policies and frameworks. The disaster preparedness approach is reinforced and inter-linked through information sharing and awareness raising at community, township, state and national levels. The consortium consists of 6 partners including ActionAid Myanmar, Plan International Myanmar, Oxfam, Humanity & Inclusion, UN-Habitat and the International Organisation for Migration. The MCCR works in four townships of Yangon: Latha, Lanmadaw, Dala and Dagon Seikkan. AAM works in these urban and peri-urban areas of Yangon to raise awareness and build the capacity of these communities to be better prepared for possible disasters.

### Achievements of MCCR project by end of 2019

- 100% of school-aged boys and girls accessed learning opportunities relevant to emergencies in the 6 AAM targeted schools. School-based DRR strategies, namely contingency plans, evacuation plans and mitigation activities, were developed and implemented, resulting in more disaster resilient schools, particularly in relation to earthquake and fire. Teachers and students (total: 10,400 individuals) have acknowledged and recognised the importance of school preparedness activities and committed to continue to update and review the plans through School Disaster Management Committees (SDMCs) during the next academic year, demonstrating the sustainability of these activities. The schools' management and teachers have been consulted about the implementation of a Comprehensive School Safety (CSS) model. An earthquake simulation exercise in particular required the involvement of all the students, teachers and parents to enhance their coordination in disaster preparedness, participating in practical exercises. At the sharing and learning workshop, teachers and students highlighted the benefits of Hazard Vulnerability Capacity Assessment (HVCA), mapping of schools and simulation exercises to make them aware of the schools' risks and what to do in case of disasters.
- The Yangon regional awareness strategy was designed and validated with the Yangon Regional Disaster Management Committee, in collaboration with the Disaster Risk Reduction Working Group (DRRWG). The strategy was approved by the Committee, which committed to putting it into action and update it yearly.

- Five Ward Disaster Management Committees (WDMCs) and 5 Village Disaster Management Committee (VDMCs) were created with related mitigation plans. A participatory community-risk assessment was completed in all target villages and wards in Dala to increase a sense of ownership of the DRR actions taken. Consultation with the communities and the local governments were regularly carried out when planning and implementing activities. Village/Ward Disaster Management Committee members shared the findings of participatory assessments with the Township Disaster Management Committee (TDMC) and agreed on the implementation of mitigation plans, which was not part of the initial project's scope. Among the activities, it was decided to conduct a cyclone simulation in the villages and a fire simulation exercise in the wards. The government departments from the DMC, such as General Administration Department (GAD), Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC), Ministry of Health and Sports (MoHS), Police, Law, Fire Service Department and other civil society organisations, like Myanmar Women Affairs Association, Army Retired Group and urban volunteers, actively joined to simulation exercises. The mitigation plan allowed the community to be aware of the importance of functioning disaster resilient infrastructure – 6,903 Dala village and ward level members were directly involved in HVCA, trainings, awareness raising and simulation exercises for community-based disaster-risk management, and indirectly the 30,670 inhabitants of the wards and villages benefitted for this action.
- Positive levels of women's participation were achieved in this project. Fifty per cent (8,712) of beneficiaries involved are women. Specifically, 50% of the members of the disaster management committees at village and ward levels as well as in the schools are women. Most of the participants in raising awareness activities and task force trainings are women.

## FISONG PROJECT: SUPPORTING THE MOST VULNERABLE URBAN DWELLERS

AAM, together with [Green Lotus](#), worked together in peri-urban areas with communities to identify common priorities they can then present to city administrators and urban policy-makers.

The project was implemented in an informal settlement, Ward 67, in the peri-urban area of Yangon, in Dagon Seikkan Township. In this area, the inhabitants are particularly vulnerable due to lack of support or recognition from the government – most lack a National Registration Card (NRC) and household registration. People lack access to basic infrastructure and services, including water, waste management and sewage. Moreover, the area is particularly exposed to hazards such as fire and flooding – risks further exacerbated by climate change.

In 2019, AAM created the Ward 67 Disaster Management Committee and related taskforces, including early warning, first aid and search & rescue. We conducted a HVCA in the ward and created a related action plan to mitigate, prepare for and respond to disasters. 1,002 women and girls participated in these activities. DRR & climate change awareness sessions were conducted at community level, together with the implementation of small-scale mitigation actions.

Migrants workers face enormous hardships when living in peri-urban areas, that are considered informal dwellings by the government. The reasons for this vulnerability include:

- Informal settlements have a very high population density. In those places, people live in 10' lengths and 15' breadth houses or very small hostels. One house can be shared by several families.
- Access to clean water is limited. For these reasons, they are vulnerable to communicable diseases.
- Although people in urban areas are not far from clinics, hospitals and medical services, they lack resources to access government medical services.
- Migrant workers tend to lack official documentation, which in turn puts them at risk.
- Almost all people in informal settlements are daily workers. Almost all family members must work every day for daily family livelihood.
- Because of the irregular working patterns, people living in Ward 67 have poor nutrition.



Distribution of DRR kits to WDMC



2019 Community based assessment in FISONG project

## AGROECOLOGY

AAM prioritises making agricultural livelihood sustainable and resilient to climate induced disasters, including flood, drought and loss of biodiversity. This requires us to focus on promoting and ensuring climate resilience, sustainable and agroecological farming approaches.

In 2019, communities from LRP 1 to 3 mentioned the importance of receiving new agricultural methods, and how this translates into higher income for farmers. Communities appreciated LRP activities related to agroecology, such as community funds, seed banks, and agricultural support. Despite these wins, the communities mentioned that more is needed to address the negative impact of climate change on farming. Some of the issues mentioned were the need for more training on climate resilient sustainable agriculture (CRSA) and a need for infrastructure development that can address the impact of drought and flooding. LRP3 required support for implementation of DRR plans. The communities in LRP4 requested agroecology training.



Big Breeding, Pathein



Agriculture, Pathein

## Case study:

### Organic Farming for Sustainable Agriculture in Chin State

AAM livelihoods programming is based on our analysis of the root causes of poverty in Myanmar and three primary interlinked factors:

- Low and unsustainable sources of income and assets to attain necessities.
- A sense of powerlessness and not being heard as a result of the deep-rooted exclusion of women, youth and ethnic minorities.
- Vulnerability to shocks, as a result of limited coping capacity of individuals, households and communities. This approach to livelihoods through agroecology has been taken by AAM's partner Hualango Land Development Organization (HLDO).

Ni San works with HLDO. She has always had a passion for agroecology. After she came back from studying organic farming in Japan for 9 months, she wanted to put her new knowledge into practice with the communities they work with.

"When I visited one of the villages in Northern Chin, Kawilam, I saw that they already had resources that they could use to create organic fertiliser. Cow manure can make a good fertiliser, it is rich in minerals, and supports the growth of beneficial microorganisms when mixed with soil.

"I wanted to work with them, but they were skeptical about the idea, mainly because the cows eat thorns and the villagers did not want to handle the thorns. As they lack information in organic farming, they did not accept the idea of using cow dung right away. Another challenge was budget constraints.

"When I went back a second time to advocate about organic farming, I succeeded. I explained the importance of cow manure and how it linked to organic farming. Also, how they could already use what they had in their village and maximise it. They practiced making organic fertiliser named Bokashi, a method that Ni San brought from my organic study which avoids using pesticides, fertilisers, genetically modified organisms, antibiotics and growth hormones."

Promoting organic farming was one of the main objectives for Ni San, as it can be successful in agriculture. The villagers learned the benefits of organic farming. They learned to protect nature and soil. Healthy

soil is the key that can help to grow healthy food. It supports farming in sustainable ways, which means meeting society's present food and textile needs, without compromising the ability for current or future generations to meet their needs.

When one uses chemical fertiliser, it kills the soil. If one treats the soil with harmful chemicals, it destroys the land and you can end up with soil that cannot flourish on its own. The leaders in organic farming were the self-help group (SHG). This group was started by ActionAid through HLDO. It focuses on women's rights, importance of and barriers to participation, and village level decision making. The SHG started to use compost for organic farming of mustard, garlic and orange and, it was a success. They mobilised meetings in the village. Thanks to the village book that was implemented through HLDO, villagers had opportunities to gather to discuss matters related to their village. Since farming with cow dung was successful, the village is now called "Cow Dung Village"! Cow dung has become gold to the village.



Ms. Ni San and Kawilam villagers working out Bokashi compost pit



## 2019 MYANMAR CLIMATE STRIKE

During the Global Climate Strike week (20-27 September 2019), ActionAid International sought to coordinate the federation's climate mobilisation plans across multiple country offices. They provided a mobilisation toolkit and visual materials that could be used in meetings and events with partners and to share ideas for collective action. AAM took part in discussions about climate change issues specifically related to Myanmar and shared ideas about activism and protests in Myanmar, linked to the climate strike movement globally. On Sunday 22 September, more than 300 people attended the Climate Strike organised by AAM and other civil society organisations working on climate change awareness. AAM staff, urban volunteers for DRR awareness and community members from Ward 67 took part in the initiative. Posters and messages prepared by AAM were distributed before the beginning of the march, providing good visibility to the messages we wanted to deliver.

It was a great achievement for a grass-roots level environmental movement in Myanmar to be able to engage so many people in such a short amount of time.

The demands declared by the organisers included the following:

- We demand the government officially recognise the climate emergency and take adequate actions to effectively tackle the climate crisis.
- We demand from the government to immediately stop projects that cause environmental degradation and climatic disorder.
- We demand environmental justice for every community.



Participants at the rally carrying placards demanding action on the climate emergency, including some resources produced by AAM in September 2019

## HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE: RESPONDING TO FLOODS IN THE SOUTHEAST

In mid-July, torrential monsoon rains and rising river levels caused flooding across Myanmar, forcing thousands of people to evacuate their villages. Mon and Kayin States were the worst affected areas, with 145,000 people evacuating their homes. By the 24th of September 2019, UNOCHA announced:

“More than 231,000 people have been affected in various states and regions including Chin, Kachin, Magway, Mandalay, Sagaing, Rakhine in the first round (July), and in Ayeyarwaddy, Bago, Kayin, Mon, Tanintharyi and Yangon in the second round (August to date). The flooding caused the closure of more than 500 schools, destruction of at least 375 houses, infrastructure, crop harvests, and livestock. This also triggered landslides, particularly in Paung Township, Mon state affecting 175 people, and led to at least 75 deaths with around 40 persons reported to still be unrecovered” (IFRC, 24 September 2019).

The most significant impact of the floods was on the short and medium-term livelihoods of affected populations, as paddy fields were washed away. In the short term, the decrease in agricultural activity reduced the demand for

casual agricultural labour which many families rely on for income. The medium-term impact of the floods significantly increased the vulnerability of affected populations for the next monsoon season; farmers will need a lot more time to gather funds to re-invest in agricultural production. Agricultural investments were further impacted by the damaged and disrupted communication and infrastructure links such as roads and bridges resulting in some economic standstill.

During the early days of the emergency, many of those affected in ActionAid's project areas were not receiving aid because of their remoteness and the lack of telecommunications. After the floods, many of the affected population returned home from temporary shelters. While the immediate threat to lives was no longer present, significant needs remained among the most vulnerable including food and water. ActionAid Myanmar emergency response supported communities to cope with the immediate impact of the floods and landslides in coordination with Fellows from the disaster-affected villages. AAM successfully held meetings with community members to form groups for emergency response in their respective villages. In early September, AAM humanitarian response covered 562 households across eight townships heavily affected by the flood in Kayin and Mon States. ActionAid Myanmar



Cash for work activity – road reconstruction in Kwin Ka Lay village



continued working in the area until December 2020 to address the medium-term impact of the floods. Among this work is climate change research that explores local resilience strategies of these communities to cope with disasters.

AAM believes that despite these natural disasters occurring every year, minimum efforts are made to prevent and improve the response of the most vulnerable communities to future hazards. More attention is needed on effective river control measures, looking at the relationship between the management of dams and the floods, and other mitigation/preparedness activities. AAM believes disaster risk reduction (DRR) efforts can only be strengthened if visible and invisible power structures are addressed and if communities come together to establish a DRR response. To attain this long-term power change, AAM continues to work towards establishing community-based criteria that allow communities to identify the most vulnerable community members requiring short-term flood

relief support. AAM is also working with the local authorities on river control, flood mitigation and to establish an early warning system (EWS) for the upcoming rainy season (June 2020). The EWS will be established with the support of the government administration and Meteorology Department.

## CASH TRANSFERS PILOT FOR KACHIN IDPS

After 17 years of ceasefire between Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO) and the Tatmadaw, the civil war resumed on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2011 and led to the internal displacement of over 100,000 people in Kachin and northern Shan States. Most of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) belong to the Kachin ethnic group. The IDPs are living in both government and KIO controlled areas. Through the international community, including churches, UN agencies, international and national non-governmental organisations and civil society organisations, IDPs receive support in the form of food and other basic needs, shelter, education, and health services. However, fluctuations in aid keeps most IDPs in a very vulnerable situation, especially women-led households.

In September 2019, AAM started Phase 1 of a pilot project for the provision of cash transfers to vulnerable households living in the 'Tatkone COC' and 'KBC, Myitkyina' IDP camps. During this first phase of the pilot, a total of 140 women-led households were given between 10,000 to 15,000 MMK unconditional cash transfers, with the amount depending on an assessment of vulnerability, over a 4-month period. In addition, women-groups were given 150,000 MMK to support the establishment of small-scale businesses.



Cash for work activity – road reconstruction in Kwin Ka Lay village



Assessment of households in the camps

# Child Sponsorship

Children are among the most vulnerable in society, even more so when communities are fractured by economic and social hardship. In 2012, AAM launched the Child Sponsorship Programme. The Sponsorship programme was put in place in Myanmar's first Local Rights Programme in Pyapon, where 1,000 children were matched with sponsors from Italy. Since then, the child sponsorship has been extended to Meikkhthila, Pathein, Myaing, Sadingyi and finally in Pakakku.

In 2019, 49,625 children and relatives (53% of whom were women and girls) participated in activities organised by AAM.



Child message collection in Pakokku



**33,315**

people participated in the message collection for child sponsorship.



**813**

Adolescent/Child Club action plans supported.



**3,048**

training (of which 66% are women and girls) provided to parents, teachers, adolescent and children.



Despite the important achievements of the Child Sponsorship programme, the ActionAid Federation has placed AAM in its Country Review Programme, where the Child Sponsorship programme will stop in 2022 because of the declining economic situation of child sponsors.

# Organisational Priorities

## Organisational Priority One: Staff Capacity

With our headquarters in Yangon, the AAM team is 136 strong, including 28 interns and 6 volunteers. Of 102 full time staff, 64 are women (63%). We are organised according to the programme priorities outlined in this Annual Report, supported by organisational support teams (human resources, finance, and administration) without whom we would be unable to operate. Our total budget in 2019 was GBP 2,918,00, and we worked with or supported 110 partners organisations, including CSOs, CBOs, INGOs, EAOs and government bodies.

2019 Action Aid Myanmar – Our Team			
Staff breakdown – by employment type			
	Women	Men	Total
Full time	64	38	102
Intern	14	14	28
Volunteer	3	3	6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>136</b>



**136**

Staffs

**81**

Women

**55**

Men



**110**

partners worked with and supported



**GBP 2,918,000**

2019, Total country budget

## ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

The culture of the organisation is largely shaped by home-grown youth: 73% are below 35 years of age, and 95% of core staff are Myanmar nationals. A significant majority of staff are women (63% in 2019) because of ActionAid's deliberate strategy.

In its second year, the new AAM Senior Management Team has renewed its focus on investing in people, systems and a culture of innovation, accountability and transparency. AAM culture is open and encourages critical thinking, providing a safe space for staff to experiment and innovate, generating knowledge and alternatives that are informed by experience.

To reduce the high turn-over of the national staff, AAM is taking an approach towards recruitment and retention based on diversity and feminist leadership. Salary market assessments was conducted, to start process of salary adjustment in 2020.

### Building capacity of staff

AAM continues to improve core processes. In the past 6 months, ActionAid has worked on several organisational changes, including strengthening our finance, procurement, human resources, and audit policies and processes. These improvements are a part of organisation-wide development process with the aim of increasing transparency and accountability when delivering high quality programmes on the ground.

## ORGANISATIONAL PRIORITY TWO: FINANCE

The total income during the year 2019 was over GBP 2.9 million while planned income for 2019 was over GBP 2.8 million. The total income constituted with individual giving income 21%, Institutional income 48%, Philanthropy and Partnership Income 28% and other income 4%. The main partnership incomes came from Kadoorie Charitable Foundation (KCF), Planet Wheeler, Prudence Foundation, Tan Chin Tuan Foundation, and other foundations while the main institutional incomes came from European Commission, Danish International Development Agency, LIFT, ECHO, DFID (UKAid), UN agencies and others.

To ensure adequate and effective financial resourcing, AAM will continue to diversify its funding sources aligned with our vision and values. AAM sees donors as supporters and partners in solidarity for a cause, beyond just financial

resources. We will promote programme-led funding, where partner communities and organisations will be the co-creators of the development agenda.

2019 Income	Actual YTD (GBP)
Individual Giving - Regular	625,156
Philanthropy & Partnerships	814,848
Institutional	1,348,267
Other Income	131,000
<b>Total External Income</b>	<b>2,919,271</b>

2019 Statutory Expenditure	Actual YTD (GBP)
Programme	2,249,220
Fundraising	199,164
Governance	29,410
Support	391,370
<b>Total Statutory Expenditure</b>	<b>2,869,164</b>

2019 - Expenditure by Nature	Actual YTD (GBP)
NC - Grants and inputs	1,492,435
NC - Staff Expenditure	946,499
NC - Consultancy	110,537
NC - Travel Expenditure	70,172
NC - Property Expenditure	119,810
NC - Other Expenditure	129,711
<b>Total Expenditure by Nature</b>	<b>2,869,164</b>

## ORGANISATIONAL PRIORITY THREE: SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES

### Organisational focus towards evidence-planning and learning

In 2019, AAM is ensuring programme quality and research that prioritise the voices, perspectives and analysis of people living in poverty and exclusion, while also being systematic and robust. ActionAid has revised its Theory of Change to include AAI's meta-theory of change. We have developed a Database Management System, where we can aggregate all our organisation data, including donor indicators and key performance indicators that we need to report at the ActionAid Federation level. We are also reviewing our programmatic work by incorporating a strong emphasis on research, in addition to the annual learning reviews and Participatory Review and Reflection Process (PRRP). These varied manners of reflection provide data, information, and analysis to generate knowledge and organizational learning.

## ESTABLISHMENT OF RESEARCH HUB: EVIDENCE-BASED MANAGEMENT

AAM is working towards establishing a research hub that supports the Senior Management team with evidence for decision making. Together with Programme Quality and Learning, the research unit will help to meet high-standards of accountability to both the rights-holders and the donors we work with. By linking up the AAM research unit with the demand for evidence from rights-holders, civil society partners and government authorities, AAM incorporates learning in an interactive way into the cycle of evidence, policy and practice.

## ESTABLISHMENT OF INNOVATION HUB: MAKING AAM MORE EFFICIENT, EFFECTIVE AND AGILE

Innovation has a major role to play in driving the ambitious agenda outlined in AAM Country Strategy Plan 2018-2027. In 2019, we continued promoting a culture of experimentation and innovation, which identifies, tests and scales up new ideas, including new social enterprise business models and a Digital Talk Show. The Digital Talk Show has strengthened the Global Platform and AAM's engagement with local partners, people's organisations and movements. Capitalising on the youthful demographic dividend in Myanmar and its high internet use, technology-led innovation has brought a new element to our governance and youth thematic area, including on its campaigns and solidarity actions. The Digital Talk Show has helped advance our knowledge of digital platforms and grow our social media presence. We have also invested in upgrading our processes by using new software, such as the Contract Management System, a human resource software called HRMIS and Windows 365.

## What's Next?

In our new Country Strategy, we have set out how we intend to develop ActionAid Myanmar's existing strengths into a coherent set of programmes that will make a substantial difference to the most vulnerable in Myanmar. In the next phase, we will expand our coverage in ethnic areas and design programmes that are conflict sensitive and focused on everyday peace building.

AAM will continue to build on the existing work around preventing and responding to violence against women in Myanmar's south-east. We will continue to champion people-centred planning processes, especially in minority ethnic areas, and support CSOs to function as autonomous and independent civic actors with a vision to deepen democratic practice across Myanmar. As part of our strategic engagement (SIF2), AAM will expand its work on two key areas: climate justice and on women's economic justice and decent work. We will strive to be innovative in our problem solving and develop adaptive and iterative programmes that are suitable to Myanmar's emerging context. Our programmes will be evidence-based, informed by contextual research.

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