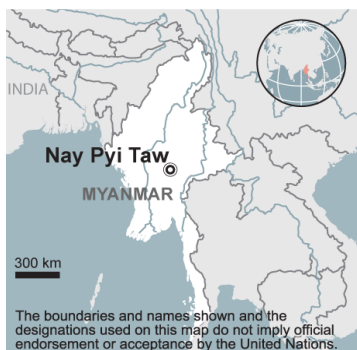


Enhancement of human security for vulnerable persons in northern Rakhine State



UN Trust Fund for Human Security



Fast Facts

Country: Myanmar

Duration: May 2010 to March 2013

Implementing UN Agencies: UNHCR; WFP; FAO; UNDP

Other Implementing Partners: Action Contre la Faim; Bridge Asia Japan; Malteser International; Myanmar Red Cross Society; National Ministries; Community and Family Services International

Budget: \$4,108,280

Key Words: Inclusive community development; access to basic social services; alternative livelihoods; capacity-building

BACKGROUND

The northern Rakhine State is one of the poorest regions of Myanmar and home to Muslims and Buddhists from several ethnic groups. The lack of integration and communication among the ethnic groups in the region has fuelled discrimination, exclusion and, in certain instances, large-scale out-migration of minority communities as a result of inter-community violence. Muslim and

Buddhist residents alike are experiencing food insecurity, poor access to basic public services, low educational attainment, overall poor health status, and weak employment prospects. Moreover, many Muslim residents lack formal citizenship documentation which further aggravates their vulnerability to discrimination and exclusion.

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

This project sought to address the complex and interconnected set of factors hindering poverty reduction and undermining human security for the residents in Maungdaw, Buthidaung and Rathedaung townships in northern Rakhine State. While Muslim residents face additional constraints due to lack of formal citizenship, the

project targeted the entire community inclusively, aiming to (i) improve access to public services, including health care, clean water and primary education; and (ii) empower communities to work towards minimum living standards and social cohesion through capacity-building activities and support to livelihoods.

BENEFICIARIES

The estimated population of the three townships targeted by this project was approximately

909,000. This population was expected to benefit from the project, either directly or indirectly.



NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

(i) To effectively reduce persistent food insecurity, the project provided services in the agriculture, livestock and natural resource management utilizing existing Farmers' and Women's Groups. In addition to distributing seed, fertilizers and other equipment that will improve productivity, the project introduced maize crop with lower water requirements so that irrigation water is saved and farmers are more resilient to weather changes.

(ii) The project formed "self-reliance" groups in which community members pooled their financial and human resources in a mutually supportive manner. Self-reliance groups also functioned as an additional social safety net, allowing members access to timely and affordable credit and providing the opportunity for women to contribute economically to the household. By doing so, vulnerability was significantly

decreased as community members were able to gain full utility from their labour, avoid exploitative markets, and assist each other in fulfilling emergency consumption, health or other household needs.

(iii) By focusing on enhancing women's participation and providing non-formal educational opportunities to women and adolescent girls who traditionally were isolated from education, women became more active in community development activities, improving their own livelihoods. Increased household income meant that many of the families were able to send their children to school regularly. Moreover, with more opportunities and recognition for their roles, women became key contributors to building social cohesion in the region.

LESSONS LEARNED

The project catalysed the implementation of a comprehensive and integrated approach to the survival, livelihood and dignity of those most vulnerable in the northern Rakhine State. It highlighted the added value of the human security approach by bringing together multiple efforts in an integrated fashion that provided benefits in terms of increase access to health services and facilities, improved food security, better educational opportunities and well-being throughout the entire region. Moreover, it played an important role in bringing together networks of

stakeholders and deepening coordination among the United Nations system, Government authorities, NGOs and local communities. In doing so, it encouraged the integration of the goals of long-term empowerment and protection, a perspective that can help guide future efforts to reduce protracted and extreme forms of poverty in the region. Community-led empowerment initiatives, such as the "self-reliance" groups, were able to build trust and cohesion among communities, supporting better social integration of returnees and marginalized groups.