

Promoting Social Cohesion and Peaceful Coexistence in Rakhine State



Social cohesion project in Rakhine State

CONTEXT

NEEDS OVERVIEW

Rakhine State is, like much of Myanmar, a ethnically diverse place. The majority ethnic community is Buddhist Rakhine (63.32%), followed by Rohingya Muslims (34.18%). The state has, since World War II, been characterized by ethnic conflict predominantly resulting from the religious and social differentiation between the groups. Today most ethnicities coexist within the village level but still have very little interaction.

All communities in Rakhine State suffer from poverty, limited social services, meager living conditions, and a scarcity of livelihood opportunities. According to a Government survey on poverty in Myanmar, the State's poverty rate is 43.5%, compared to 24.8% nationally. This makes Rakhine State one of the poorest areas of the country. The reasons for this are many including frequent natural disasters and the impact of climate change. Yet, many obstacles to economic growth and development are due to ethnic conflict, the lack of inter-ethnic collaboration and deterioration of the security situation.

Humanitarian Needs Overview 2020 and Ground Truth Solutions – Social Cohesion Bulletin



715,000 people in need of humanitarian assistance



128,141 internal displaced people due to ongoing conflict



689,687 people are in risk of serious protection violations, including conflict-related sexual violence.



Both Rohingya and Rakhine respondents (55% and 58 %) do not think their communities have a harmonious relationship and name competition for employment and livelihoods as the main source of tension.

OUR SUPPORT



ACTED STRATEGY RESPONSE

ACTED's approach in conflict-affected areas is to increase inter-community decision making and dialogue among neighbouring communities of varying ethnic/religious backgrounds, via the construction of infrastructures through a Cash-for-Work scheme, which fulfil mutually beneficial motives for economic gains and facilitate increased inter-community interdependence. This is implemented through the following steps:



Community-identified joint infrastructure gaps

Participating communities are actively involved in the project's design and implementation through a series of Participatory Consultations conducted in each community which include the following activities:

- 1 *Village Resource Mapping* to visually represent the village in focusing on different resource types and how these are used, identifying resources that are scarce or abundant.
- 2 *Demographic Survey and Vulnerability Ranking* to ascertain the demographics and vulnerability of households within the targeted communities, in order to facilitate beneficiary selection.
- 3 *Matrix Scoring and Ranking* to analyze preferences of households towards different activities and preferences for potential infrastructure works.

Peace and Development Committees

Peace and Development Committees, which comprise of an equal split of representatives of the differing target communities (at least 25 % women), are established at the project sites. ACTED provides sustained and tailored capacity development to these committees through an adapted Grassroots Organizational Capacity Assessment (GOCA) tool which seeks to strengthen their capacities to appropriately and effectively monitor the infrastructure works, assess the needs of their communities and promote positive protection outcomes.

Technical Training of selected beneficiaries

Once infrastructure works are selected, beneficiaries from the different communities receive relevant technical training, thereby equipping them with the skills required to participate in the ongoing development of community infrastructure, which in turn increase their ability to be self-reliant. In addition, a series of meetings and sensitization activities serve to support increased social interaction and inter-community dialogue.





Cash-for-Work scheme to increase economic gains

Trained beneficiaries participate in the construction/rehabilitation of the identified infrastructure gaps through a cash for work scheme to increase the income of beneficiaries while facilitating a work related interaction between the different communities. A stable income for the selected beneficiaries will furthermore encourage trade and revive local markets and the local economy at large.

Conflict training

A tailored conflict identification and mitigation training is delivered to all beneficiaries of the project. The trainings seeks to empower local communities to accurately identify emerging threats for inter-communal violence and equip them with the skills needed to take effective steps to mitigate these threats in productive and positive ways.

Key Achievements

-  15,465 beneficiaries interacted with people from a different community
-  77 Civil Society Organizations empowered to promote stability and sustainable peace
-  54 intercommunity meetings held to promote peaceful coexistence
-  442 Infrastructure gaps addressed



Infrastructure construction in Rakhine State

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