

CASE STUDY

MYANMAR 2014-2016 / CONFLICT

KEYWORDS: Individual housing, Cash assistance, Advocacy, Community participation, Protection

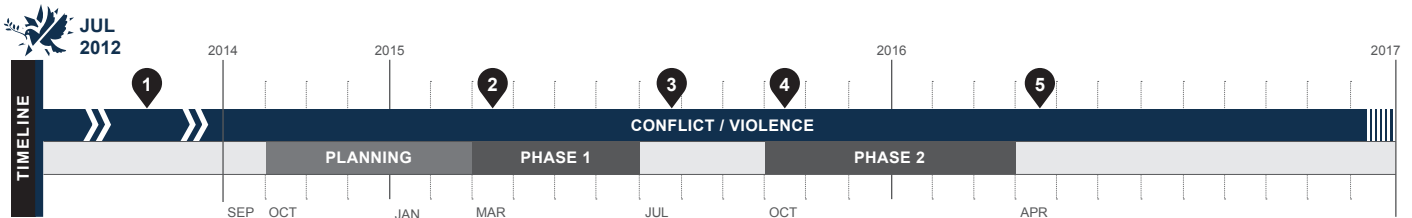
CRISIS	Inter-communal violence, Rakhine, 2012.
TOTAL PEOPLE AFFECTED	145,000 displaced due to 2012 violence (119,560 as of Nov 2016).
PROJECT LOCATIONS	Rakhine State, Myanmar (Townships of Mrauk-U, Kyauktaw and Minbya, Rathedaung and Pauktaw).
BENEFICIARIES	25,000 individuals (approx.).
PROJECT OUTPUTS	4,737 beneficiary-led houses.
SHELTER SIZE¹	Min. 16.7 m² (4.6m x 3.7m basic design).
SHELTER DENSITY	Min. 3.4 m²/person (average 5 members per family).
PROJECT COST PER SHELTER	USD 1,000 (Labour cost = USD 160; Materials, Logistics, Transport, etc. = USD 840).
OCCUPANCY RATE	100% (estimated).



¹ Note: families were free to increase the size or modify the house design according to their needs.

PROJECT SUMMARY

This was a beneficiary-led, cash-based, project that allowed families displaced due to inter-communal violence to vacate their temporary shelter and rebuild their houses. The project enabled the construction of 4,737 houses for a marginalized group in a highly volatile environment, where some stakeholders were keen to use a contractor-driven approach. In fact, the more discreet owner-driven methodology, used in this project, proved highly effective.



- 1 Jan 2013: Activation of Shelter Cluster.
- 2 Mar 2015: Rakhine Government begins owner-driven housing construction with own funding (Phase 1).
- 3 Jul 2015: Handover of Phase 1 completed.
- 4 Oct 2015: Rakhine Government, with funding support from Shelter Cluster partners, continued with further individual housing construction (Phase 2).
- 5 Apr 2016: Handover of Phase 2 completed.

STRENGTHS

- + Use of existing local markets.
- + Considerable donor interest and support.
- + Critical leadership of the government.
- + Active participation of community leaders and concerned families.
- + Continuity of cluster agency and coordinators over time.
- + Affordable and quick implementation.

WEAKNESSES

- Some IDPs could not return to their place of origin.
- Landowners were not properly compensated.
- Lack of adequate and timely WASH components in Phase 1.



During attacks, villages were burnt (Rathedaung Township, Rakhine State).



In response to the displacement due to the violence, makeshift emergency shelters were set up (Sin Thet Maw, Pauktaw Township).



© Myanmar Shelter Cluster
IDPs used old shelter materials to support the initial settlement back in their place of origin, before rebuilding their houses.

SITUATION BEFORE THE CONFLICT

Rakhine State is the least developed state in Myanmar, characterized by high population density and malnutrition rates, low-income levels, poverty and weak infrastructure. Conditions are worsened by two cyclone seasons, with associated flash flooding and landslides, during the rainy season. There is a long-standing history of discrimination of the Muslim population in Rakhine State, with the two main ethnic groups in conflict with each other: the Rakhine (Buddhist) and those who call themselves “Rohingya” (Muslims), who lack any citizenship and hence are stateless.

SITUATION AFTER THE START OF THE CONFLICT

Inter-community violence in parts of Rakhine State commenced in early June 2012, and flared once more in October 2012, resulting in the deaths of 167 people and injuries to 223 people. 10,100 buildings, including homes, churches and public buildings were damaged or destroyed and approximately 145,000 people were displaced (95% Muslim; 5% Rakhine). This generated two distinct IDP caseloads: those displaced from urban areas and those from rural areas².

In 2015, approximately 25,000 people in rural locations were able to vacate their temporary shelter, assisted through this project. 60% reconstructed in their place of origin and 40% in new locations. This resulted in the number of camps (or camp-like settings) decreasing from 67 to 36. However, at the time of writing, almost 120,000 IDPs still resided in camps.

NATIONAL SHELTER STRATEGY

The goal of the Shelter/NFI/CCCM Cluster in Myanmar was to provide people affected by violence and conflict with safe, dignified and appropriate living conditions, as well as access to essential services, while seeking durable solutions³. In early 2015, after 18 months without being able to move beyond temporary solutions, the Cluster (strongly supported by the international community) advocated heavily with the Government of Myanmar, especially the Rakhine State Government (RSG). The aim was to convince the RSG to enact three possible options that supported individual housing solutions, as opposed to camps:

1) Repair and maintenance of existing temporary shelters (eight room long houses) in the IDP camps;



© Myanmar Shelter Cluster
Construction materials were supplied by the government to rebuild the houses of IDPs affected by the violence (Thi Kyar IDP Camp, Mrauk-U Township).

2) Upgrading of existing temporary shelters in the IDP camps;

3) Individual housing solutions for IDP families to return to or near their place of origin or voluntary relocation to new site. This solution was selected and houses implemented in five townships.

LOCATIONS AND BENEFICIARIES

The Shelter/CCCM Cluster and Protection Sector strongly advocated for the RSG to allow crisis-affected people to return to their place of origin or relocate to new sites. This project specifically targeted those who could return or voluntarily relocate. Through numerous field visits and meetings, consultation and research were conducted with communities and authorities, to ensure a deep and wide understanding of the situation. The government selected suitable locations for the project with help from the Cluster lead agency, based primarily on safety and security and well-being of the beneficiaries.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

The concept and planning process started in the last quarter of 2014 and, once the project reached a momentum, advocacy and technical support to the government were scaled up. **This beneficiary-led housing project was implemented by the RSG** through the General Administration Department (GAD) of each concerned District or Township, village, community leaders (construction committee) and the IDP families themselves. The GAD authorities gave beneficiaries an initial cash lump sum through the community leaders. This ranged from 30% to 50% of a total of USD 1,000, depending on the township, and was intended to purchase construction materials. Skilled workers from the construction committee then helped families construct their houses. When houses were 60% to 80% complete, the GAD authorities gave the remaining amount for the final completion of construction.

This beneficiary-led approach differed significantly from other contractor-built houses that were implemented by the RSG and humanitarian agencies in Rakhine State. The scheme was for the stateless and extremely marginalized Muslims in Rakhine State. Any effort to support them was hugely challenging, not least being permitted to rebuild their houses, so this novel low-key approach proved highly appropriate. One of the striking outputs was the speed that houses were constructed at. Over 3,000 houses were built in a six-month period, i.e. an average of 16 houses per day, seven days a week. Had contractors been used, particularly in many of these remote rural locations, outputs in terms of cost, speed and quality would not have been comparable.

² For more information on the Shelter Cluster's mass temporary shelter response in 2013 see case study A.16 in *Shelter Projects 2013-2014*.

³ More information can be found on the website, www.shelternficccmmyanmar.org.



The relocation/return programme supported people to rebuild durable houses, through a beneficiary-led approach (township of Mrauk-U).



Contractor-driven approaches were tried and later rejected by IDPs and the Shelter Cluster (Nidin IDP Camp, Kyauk tau Township).

MAIN CHALLENGES

In addition to implementation challenges, the working environment posed a significant risk. There were security issues, such as attacks on UN and INGO premises and residences in March 2014, which resulted in a mass evacuation from Rakhine State for a number of weeks, plus a highly tense situation between communities. This required a very conflict-sensitive approach. One of the key reactions by the Shelter Cluster was to revert to the original suggestion that beneficiaries would receive a material package rather than cash, to reduce protection concerns. It was feared that the cash assistance to Muslims could be used to pay traffickers to leave Rakhine State through illegal and highly dangerous means⁶. Despite this, the RSG continued favouring cash as a modality, since it allowed Rakhine traders to benefit from Muslims using the cash, which allowed a mutually beneficial economic exchange. This paved the way for a wider acceptance of cash assistance, which risk-adverse actors, including the clusters, were initially less willing to try.

MATERIALS

The cash grants were used to purchase the shelter materials, which included timber posts, concrete blocks, wooden planks, bamboos, iron sheets, nails and labour charges (skilled and unskilled). Most of the materials were sourced by the construction committee from local suppliers who were accredited by the Township GAD. This was vital for the displaced to access the required materials, given their limited freedom of movement, as opposed to a contractor-based approach, where contractors would supply all the materials and labour requirements, and would then be paid through progress billing.

WIDER IMPACTS OF THE PROJECT

For the first time since the 2012 violence, some real progress towards durable shelter solutions was made, while until that point the situation for these displaced families had been totally static. Where the global average for internal displacement stands at around 17 years, thanks to this project **20% of the total IDP population in Myanmar ended their displacement within three years**, either by returning home or finding a new, safer, location to live. The number of camps and camp-like settings also reduced significantly.

More widely, this showed that despite the enormously challenging context, **progress was possible to find solutions for a highly marginalized population.**

COORDINATION

The fact that the same agency led the Shelter/CCCM Cluster and the Protection Sector helped to deliver a consistency of messaging and clarity of the aims and objectives to the RSG. Throughout the process, the lead agency sought to consult and update regularly all relevant actors – including potential beneficiaries and all relevant quarters of the international community (at national or subnational level).

DRR AND PROTECTION

In the same year, Myanmar also suffered unseasonal levels of rain, cyclones and landslides. Documents used in the flood response were also beneficial to this programme⁴. Throughout the project, the Cluster promoted the eight key messages to build back safer, which were translated into Myanmar language and distributed in hard copy⁵.

Protection actors often visited project locations and discussed with the communities and local authorities, to gain a very intimate knowledge of each situation. The initial idea of using an owner-driven construction approach actually came from these discussions with the displaced communities, where they could voice how they wished to address their housing needs.

⁴ See case study A.1 and the webpage of the 2015 floods response: <http://bit.ly/2kWavnU>.

⁵ See the Shelter Standards and Guidelines library of the Cluster: <http://bit.ly/2kZ3zWa>.

⁶ See, for instance, the Rakhine boat crisis of 2015, <http://on.cfr.org/1HfDFni>.

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES AND LESSONS LEARNED

STRENGTHS

+ **The project relied on existing local markets for all materials** needed, which supported local economies and **allowed the programme to remain low-key**, which was beneficial due to the sensitivity of the context. This was made possible by the local government, who ensured that displaced Muslims had access to purchase materials.

+ **The Cluster maintained considerable donor interest and support for this initiative**, and was coherent in preventing inappropriate construction in risk areas, after the initial case-load was assisted. While there were some delays, due in part to the rainy season and the transition to being funded by the international community, lack of funds did not inhibit implementation.

+ **Critical participation and cooperation of the government** at state, district, township and village level with the Shelter Cluster, beneficiaries and crucially potential spoilers of the initiative, which included other ethnic groups who might have resented the assistance to Muslims. The involvement and leadership of the government was crucial, mainly due to their authority, leadership and knowledge of the local situation.

+ **Active participation of the community leaders and concerned families** in taking responsibility for constructing their own houses, resulting in often swift and high-quality construction, often with far better results than contractor-built houses.

+ **Continuity of same lead agency and cluster coordinators for over three years** meant highly effective and focused relationships between national and subnational levels.

+ **Affordable and quick implementation.** The typical individual owner-driven house could be completed in three to four weeks, costing between a half and a third than contractor-built houses in the same time frame.

WEAKNESSES

- **Some IDPs could not return to their place of origin** and had to be settled in new locations, due to security and safety concerns.

- **Landowners for relocation sites were not properly compensated** by the government, which in turn may lead to resentment. The RSG has enormous authority and power to enact policies, regardless of the limited funding.

- **Lack of adequate and timely water and sanitation components.** The RSG-funded programme did not include WASH facilities, in a state where hygiene and sanitation levels were extremely low. Toilets were subsequently provided, and were included in the internationally funded element of the programme.

PROPOSED FAMILY SHELTER MATERIALS PACKAGE FOR IDPS⁷

Materials	Unit	Quantity
Timber posts: 4"x4", 14ft and 10ft length	pcs	3+6
Girder: 5"x2", 17ft length	pcs	4
Floor deck beam: 4"x2", 16ft length	pcs	4
Floor joist: 3"x2", 17ft length	pcs	16
Floor plank: 6"x1", 30ft length	pcs	30
Tie Beam and Post Plate: 4"x2", 16ft and 17ft length	pcs	2+2
Rafter: 4"x2", 22ft length	set	5
Purlin: 3"x2", 23ft length	pcs	10
Roof Stud: 3"x2", 8.5ft length	pcs	16
Eave Board : 6"x1"	rft	90
Roof truss, 3"x2"	set	5
Ridge piece: 5"x2", 17ft length	pcs	1
Wooden Stairs: Stringer (6"x2", 4ft), Tread (5"x2", 3ft)	pcs	2+6
Roofing: 30G C.G.I Sheets, 7'x2'-2"	pcs	51
Ridge Covering: 30G GI plain Sheets, 3'x23'	rft	23
Walling: Single Coarse Bamboo Mat	sqft	536
Walling: Beading, 3"x0.5"	rft	280
Door frames and window frames	pcs	2+6
Mild Steel twisted plates for crossing points of rafters and purlins, of rafters and post plates	pcs	40
Roof nails	kg	6.5
Assorted size common wire nails	kg	19.6
Bolt-nut (5/8", 5" length) and Tower bolt	pcs	18+20
Handles, Hinges and Hooks	pcs	18+32+20
Ready-made Concrete Footing (1.5'x1.5'x2') with Mild Steel Plate (2'x0.25"x2")	pcs	9
Brick pad for stairs landing in front and back	brick	80
Sand	cft	0.2
Stone	cft	0.35
Cement	bag	3

⁷ Although this was a cash-based project, the Cluster recommended these materials for a 16'x15' individual house.

LEARNINGS

- **The risks associated with the intervention were understood** and progress was made in this regard. In fact, a backlash against the Muslim communities receiving assistance was feared. 1) It could spark further destruction of newly built houses; and 2) the funds could be used for Muslims to pay traffickers and leave the state by boat, instead of building houses.
- **Need for active and continuous advocacy for peaceful co-existence** between the different and potentially conflictual communities.
- **Tools and approaches used in other responses can be adopted** to the benefit of other programmes (see the Build Back Safer messaging taken from the flood response in 2015).
- **Proactive coordination with all the various concerned government departments was critical** to ensure that the project was properly organized and functioned as planned.