

THE
LUTHERAN
WORLD
FEDERATION



Myanmar Program
Annual Report

2013

About LWF Myanmar

Accountability and Accreditation: The Department for World Service is LWF's internationally recognized humanitarian and development arm. The Department for World Service's Accountability Framework ensures transparency in program administration, governance and implementation. The Department for World Service is a signatory of the Code of Conduct of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and Non Government Organizations in Disaster Relief. The Department for World Service's humanitarian response follows the Principles of Partnership endorsed by the Global Partnership Program. The Department for World Service is a member of the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) and has achieved certification to the 2010 HAP Standard in Accountability and Quality Management.



Networks and Alliances : LWF is a founding member of ACT Alliance. ACT Alliance is a coalition of more than 140 churches and affiliated organizations working together in over 130 countries to create positive and sustainable change in the lives of poor and marginalized people regardless of their religion, politics, gender, sexual orientation, race or nationality in keeping with the highest international codes and standards. ACT Alliance works in three targeted areas: humanitarian aid; development; and advocacy.

LWF Myanmar is a Member of the Asia Zone Emergency and Environment Cooperation Network (AZECON) of the 7 LWF Country Programs and Associate Programs in South and South East Asia. This is a learning and sharing network for field practitioners that has engages in customized training.

actalliance



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Foreword

This year, LWF launched a new six-year strategy (2013-2018) that allowed us to consolidate the work started in the Ayeyarwaddy Delta in response to the aftermath of Cyclone Nargis, in May 2008 and to expand to more needy areas.

Our Rights Based Empowerment approach to sustainable development – which stresses advocacy, sustainability, community leadership and respect for human rights – has had dramatic effects in the 50 villages in the delta. Community-based organizations have begun to function more confidently. Village residents are better equipped to lead their own development agendas, including drafting and implementing annual household and village-level plans. Village Development Committees are now linked to township and district governments, allowing them to more easily advocate for support of their needs and goals to relevant officials. Every village now has a Disaster Risk Management committee, Parent Teacher Association, Children’s Club, Youth Club and Women’s Group.

LWF plans to duplicate this model in Chin State, Myanmar’s poorest state, where it is estimated that 70% of its population is food insecure and Kayin State from where the majority of 140,000 Myanmar immigrants in Thailand are from and are likely to return. We started in 14 villages of Mindat Township, Chin State this year and plan to expand in 2014. We are negotiating an MoU with Kayin State to start work there. We are also exploring possibilities to work in Magwe Region, near our Chin office which is part of the food insecure dry-zone of the country.

LWF entered Rakhine State in June 2013, following an ACT Appeal on behalf of the 140,000 displaced by inter-communal violence of June and October 2012. Our work in the camps (which include both Muslim and Buddhist camps) assists 85,000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in the areas of fire safety, camp management, primary education and community based psychosocial support activities.

So far, our experience in Myanmar has provided more evidence that development has a good chance of becoming genuine, sustainable and shared when respect for human rights is placed firmly at the core. We sincerely thank all of our partners for their support and look forward to a continued close and productive partnership in the future. Together we can do more to “Uphold the rights of the poor and oppressed!”

“Our experience in Myanmar has provided more evidence that development has a good chance of becoming genuine, sustainable and shared when respect for human rights is placed firmly at the core.”



David H. Mueller

David H. Mueller
Country Representative

Who we are

The Lutheran World Federation is a global communion of Lutheran churches, with 145 member churches in 79 countries. It was founded in 1947 in Lund, Sweden, after the end of the Second World War. LWF set up its Department of World Service as its relief and development arm to serve all people irrespective of ethnicity, gender, religion, race or political conviction. LWF began working in Myanmar in 2008 as part of an Action by Churches Together (ACT) Appeal to respond to the devastation of Cyclone Nargis, which claimed tens of thousands of lives in the country's Ayeyarwaddy Delta.

Initially, LWF channeled its emergency response efforts through its member church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Myanmar, to 50 villages in four townships. This was followed by a one-year food security project in 18 villages of Bogalay Township and the launch of a three-year Integrated Rural Development Project (IRDP) for all 50 villages. The first phase of IRDP ended in December 2012 and a new three year IRDP started in January 2013.

The 26 month Child and Youth Development Project (CYDP) in 50 villages ended in December 2013. The project promoted child, youth and women's rights and impacted children's education, parents' and teachers' attitudes and benefitted many women and youth. 50 Child clubs under the guidance of Youth Groups remained active.

As planned in 2013, LWF Myanmar expanded an IRDP in Chin State, Myanmar's poorest state, and LWF began supporting internally displaced people in the IDP camps in Rakhine State.



What we do

Drawing on a firm commitment to uphold the rights of the poor and oppressed, we work together with local and international partners to alleviate suffering, combat injustice and poverty, and lay the foundation for a life in dignity for all. We focus on the people in poverty whose voices are ignored.

We commit an empowering, rights-based and integrated approach that enables communities to find their own solutions to the problems they are facing, and informs all involved of their rights and responsibilities. This approach also strives to link different focuses such as emergency intervention, disaster preparedness, reconstruction and sustainable development.

Emergency Response: LWF Myanmar responds to the affected communities with emergency assistance following natural and man-made disasters. We use a participatory process to address the basic needs of vulnerable communities and provide practical support. We also help affected people rebuild their livelihoods.

Livelihoods and Food Security: We assist the communities to learn new skills and advocate for improved social and economic services and livelihoods. LWF Myanmar's project focuses on improved capacity and competence of local people in the area of livelihoods, leading to sustainable development. We facilitate the integrated rural development through participatory right-based empowerment processes.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene: Access to clean water is a right. We help communities build and maintain clean safe water systems and educate people about good hygiene practices to reduce the risk of illness.

Disaster Risk Reduction: We facilitate communities to organize their own disaster risk reduction management initiatives through trained teams, awareness-raising, prevention and mitigation interventions. The program facilitates community access to potable water and helps to rebuild schools. It also assists with the construction of bridges, multi-

purpose halls that can serve as evacuation centers, and other community infrastructure.

Human Rights: We believe that the sustainability of our intervention lies in the acceptance of the government line departments and the communities to own the intervention. LWF Myanmar promotes awareness for all members of a community of their rights and responsibilities. Our approach is to strengthen the bottom up demand side of Human Rights. We implement village identified projects and use them as a strategic entry points for rights based empowerment processes. We also work with likeminded organizations through national level networks to advocate for pro-poor and rights based policy change.

Rights Based Empowerment: Empowerment is a process that draws out and builds people's capacity and confidence, both as individuals and members of families, groups and communities, with the aim to achieve results for themselves. Rights-based empowerment means building up awareness on all levels, both among the rights holders and the duty bearers, to respect, protect and fulfill the rights defined by the country's constitution, laws, policies and international conventions, instruments and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which are ratified by the government.

What we plan

LWF Myanmar will continue its activity in the Delta and Chin with inclusive and participatory methods to equip people, community-based organizations (CBOs) and groups with the knowledge, skills and attitudes that broaden their confidence and facilitate their empowerment to take control of their lives. It will continue to work to break through and initiate similar rights based empowerment processes in Kayin State and in Magwe Region.

LWF Myanmar believes that each individual is endowed with inherent capacities which often require stimulus to emerge. LWF Myanmar will explain the importance of access to and control over resources, including access to services and resources from the government line departments at township and village levels, through village-level community-managed structures.

Simultaneously, LWF Myanmar will facilitate increased engagement with government line departments in its activities and those of the CBOs, groups and households. LWF Myanmar will appropriately share resources for programs and activities undertaken by government line departments designed to fulfill the rights of the rural poor. The primary facilitators of the empowerment process are the LWF Myanmar staff who live in the project villages.

LWF will continue its camp management and Education, Psychosocial support and Fire Safety work with IDPs and host communities in Rakhine.

Strategic Objectives

Community Empowerment: To strengthen local leadership and improve governance for equitable and sustainable development.

Sustainable Livelihoods: To empower communities to obtain improved and sustainable socio-economic livelihoods.

Emergency Response and Disaster Risk Management: To enable communities to manage and mitigate disaster risks, and prepare for and respond effectively to disasters and emergencies.

Organizational Development: To strengthen LWF Myanmar to be effective, efficient and relevant to the context.



Where we work

LWF Myanmar works in 50 villages in the Ayeyarwaddy Delta. The villages are spread across four townships (Bogalay, Dedaye, Pyapon and Twantay) of Ayeyarwaddy and Yangon Region. Most are reachable only by boat.

LWF also works in 14 remote villages of Mindat Township of Chin State. Moreover, LWF Myanmar provides humanitarian support to IDPs affected by communal violence in Rakhine State's Sittwe Township through an ACT Appeal and UNHCR contract.

In the beginning of 2013, LWF Myanmar established an office in Pha Ann in Kayin State and built local relationship with the government line departments and other stakeholders to start development work.

In 2014, LWF Myanmar plans to expand into new townships/villages in Chin State, Kayin State and Magway Region, in accordance with its strategy (2013-2018).

Vision

People of Myanmar living in a just society, in peace and dignity, united in diversity, and empowered to achieve their universal rights to meet basic needs and achieve quality of life.

Mission

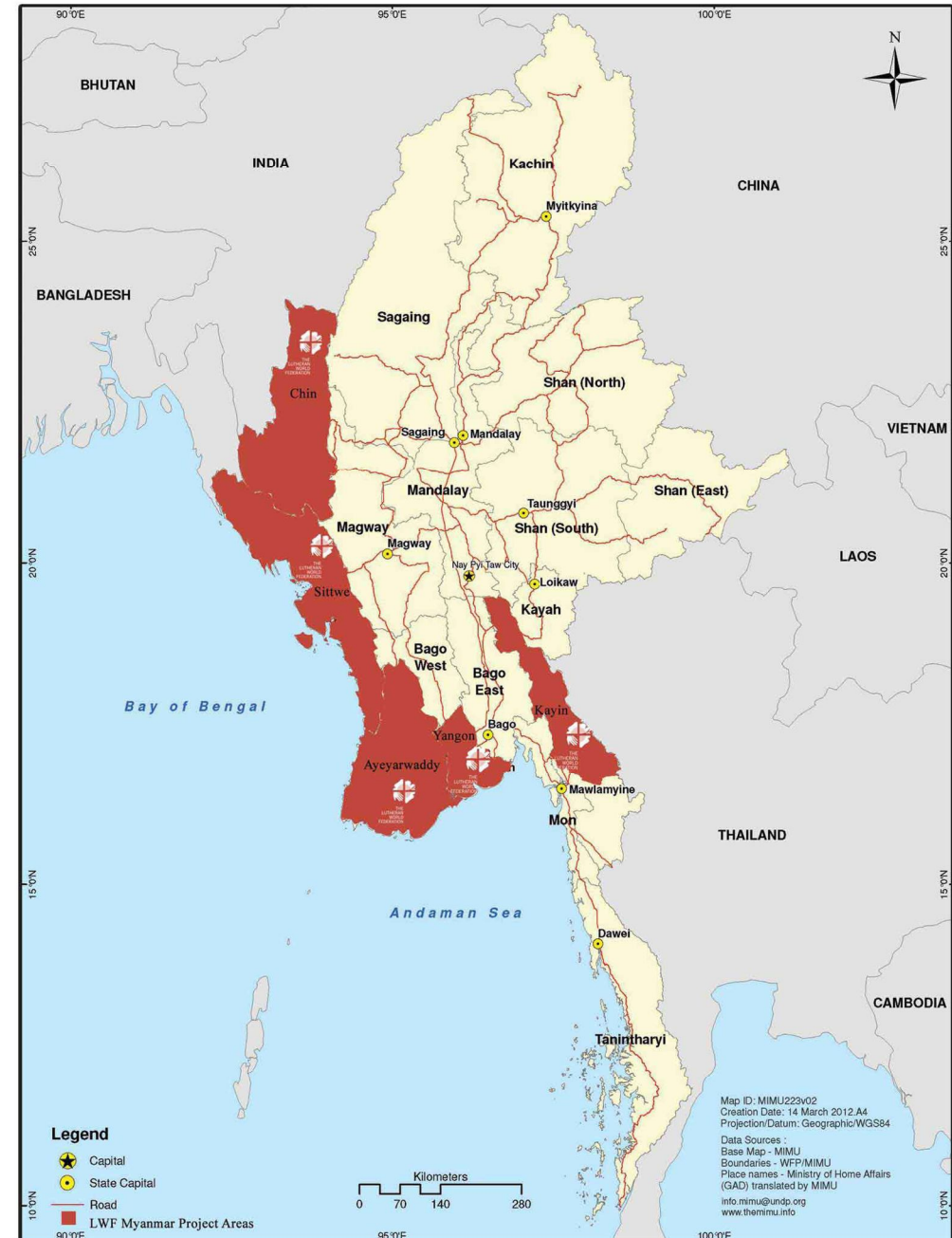
Inspired by God's love for humanity, the LWF Myanmar program responds to and challenges the causes and consequences of human suffering and poverty by facilitating people's empowerment to achieve their rights.

Overall Goal

To help alleviate poverty in Myanmar through rights-based development.

Core Values

- Dignity and justice
- Compassion and commitment
- Respect for Diversity
- Inclusion and participation
- Transparency and Accountability

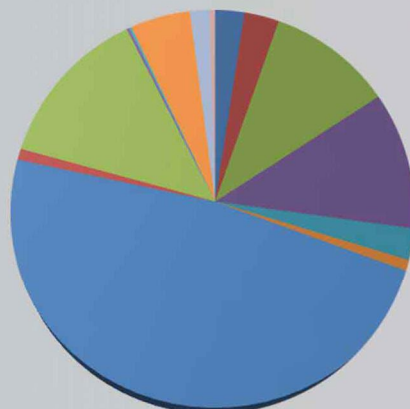


Financial statement 2013

We are grateful for the ongoing moral, technical and financial support of our donors who sustain our work to assist people in Myanmar.

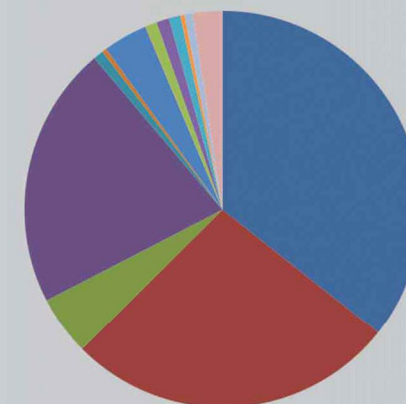
- Australian Lutheran World Service
- DanChurch Aid
- Finn Church Aid
- Bread for the World
- GNC-HA-Deutscher Hauptausschuss
- Hong Kong Christian Council
- Church of Sweden
- Lutheran World Relief
- Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
- Disciples : Week of Compassion
- Wider Church Ministries
- United Nations High Commission for Refugee
- Community Contribution
- Others

Income By Donors



Australian Lutheran World Service	50,068	2.4%
DanChurchAid	60,000	2.9%
Finn Church Aid	220,116	10.7%
Bread for the World	244,100	11.8%
GNC-HA - Deutscher Hauptausschuss	10,000	0.5%
Hong Kong Christian Council	18,830	0.9%
Church of Sweden	1,006,271	48.8%
Lutheran World Relief	19,183	0.9%
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America	281,025	13.6%
Disciples: Week of Compassion	4,517	0.2%
Wider Church Ministries	3,863	0.2%
United Nations High Commission for Refugee	102,827	5.0%
Community Contribution	33,814	1.6%
Others	9,234	0.4%

Income By Projects



Integrated Rural Development Project Myanmar	706,623	34.2%
ACT Apperal - Rakhine IDP Support Project	567,231	27.5%
UNHCR - CCCM Support to IDP Camps in Rakhine State	102,827	5.0%
CoS - Child & Youth Development Project	451,372	21.9%
FCA - Staff Capacity Building	17,500	0.8%
Myanmar Child Rights Project	7,824	0.4%
ELCA - Establishing Food Resilient Communities Project	75,860	3.7%
CWS-Asia/Pacific VFL surveys	887	0.0%
FCA - Kayin Start Up	20,000	1.0%
CoS - Participatory Video Project	22,054	1.1%
Diaconal Project Support w/Churches	19,560	0.9%
FCA - Working with Government Structure Study	7,475	0.4%
BftW - Qualification of programs and strengthening of partner institutions	14,100	0.7%
AZEECON	50,535	2.4%

All figures are unaudited for the financial year 2013.

AYEYARWADDY DELTA



The Development Steps in the Delta

LWF Myanmar implements two projects in tandem in the Ayeyarwaddy Delta: Integrated Rural Development and Child and Youth Development. They reach over 26,000 people.

Village Development Committees (VDC) are at the heart of the Integrated Rural Development Project. Their members, selected by their communities, oversee the drafting and implementation of annual village development plans.

LWF works to facilitate an inclusive approach to planning and implementation. VDCs now gather suggestions from Women's groups, Youth Groups, Child Groups, other Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and individuals for inclusion in the annual plan.

This process allows the VDC to "better gauge what the community wants", according to members of the VDC in Shwe Taung Su village in Pyapon Township. All groups now have representatives on the VDC committee, which also conducts an annual Village Self Assessment (VSA) that measures the level of participation by women, youths and children.

Shwe Taung Su had a VDC before LWF arrived, but residents say it is far more effective now that it has been expanded to include representatives from other groups, and that all members have had training on leadership, community mobilization and other skills. "Every member of the committee now knows who is responsible for what," explains VDC chair U Khin Tun. "The VDC is getting stronger because its members and the community are gaining knowledge and becoming more effective at planning," he said.

VDC members also hold quarterly meetings with members of seven other VDCs in their village tract and at township level twice a year with 15 other VDCs. Strengthening links between VDCs and local governments is a critical step towards ensuring sustainability. Similarly, Youth Groups are forming links at the township level with quarterly township meetings commencing this year. These links are a critical step in the empowerment process. They provide village residents, including children and youths, with an opportunity to ensure their voices are heard by local governments thus promotes inclusion and accountability.

Video Advocacy Arrives in the Delta



Residents of Ah Si Kalay village in Pyapon Township are using film to urge officials to alleviate the effects of migration on rural economies.

Residents of Ah Si Kalay village are using a video to tell government officials about a new trend they believe is threatening the development of their village – migration of young people to cities for jobs. The village has lost about 10% of its population since Cyclone Nargis hit the region in 2008. U San Kyaing, a member of the village’s Farmers Group, described the migrants as “the first generation to leave the village” and said most were young. “We can’t bring them back, but we want to slow the flow of productive workers to factories,” he explained.

Residents hope their documentary – “The Life We Encounter” – can be used to spark debate and policy changes that will help alleviate the effects of migration from villages to cities and ensure that migration becomes a choice rather than an economic necessity. The video was one of the first made as part of a new program to use participatory video for community development in the region. Village residents were taught basic filmmaking techniques as well as a participatory approach to planning and filming, supported by LWF Myanmar, funded by Church of Sweden. For many, it was the first time they had ever held a video camera.

After the workshop they returned to their village and made the film in one month. They involved the community in the entire process: from concept to the premiere in mid-October. After seeing the film, the members of the Village Development Committee and trained volunteers sent copies to township, district, regional and national governmental officials.

Labor shortages

Farmers say accelerating migration is creating labor shortages at harvest time and driving up costs in a sector that has a very thin profit margin. Parents also worry that their children are vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation in urban areas. Like most villages in the Delta, there is a high demand for farm laborers in Ah Si Kalay during its twice yearly harvests, but there are few other opportunities for employment the rest of the year.

U Myint Wai, a member of the Village Development Committee, said “an increasing number of girls and young women are moving to Yangon to work in the city’s rapidly expanding garment sector,” including one of his daughters. They are, however, having a difficult time getting promotions because they only have a village education. “Even though my daughter is very hard working she cannot move ahead because she did not finish high school,” he explained.

This process of filmmaking motivated village residents to examine migration more precisely. “It was the first time we collected data on migration,” Daw Khin Yu Naing, a member of the Farmers Group recalled. They found that 53 people have left the village for work in towns and cities since 2009 and said five more left in the month after the video was made.

Celebrating children's rights, VILLAGE STYLE

This year, LWF helped facilitate celebrations of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in all 50 villages of Ayeyarwaddy Delta, as well as at the township level. The celebrations included performances, art, reading, the distribution of notebooks and other material that lists the rights bestowed in the 1989 convention and provided space to color, draw and write. Families from 18 villages gathered in Kyaung Su village, Bogalay township for a celebration that lasted way past bedtime, residents said.

"The celebration started at 9am and lasted till it started raining at 3 am," The' Ei Phyu, accountant of the Youth Group, recalled on November 20, the day after the event. More than 2,000 people joined the festivities at Pyi Lone Chan Thar Pagoda, making it the biggest celebration the village of 110 people had ever held. Besides being fun, the event allowed members of child and youth groups from 18 villages to reinforce their township-wide network and learn about their peers' accomplishments and challenges, Youth Group member ,Tin Tin Ei ,said.

"Raising funds for activities can be a big challenge so we talked to other youth groups to find out how they are coping," Thei Ei Phyu said. Celebrations of the convention continued during the week. It was a topic of discussion and play at the Child Club meeting in Dedaye township's Ohn Pin village on November 23, which meets twice a month at Tha Kya Mu Ni Pagoda. Close to 100 children attended the club, which is facilitated by the village's Youth Group as well as its preschool teacher.



Child club members listed their favorite activities as singing, reciting poetry, storytelling, games and learning children's rights. Win Tha Dar enjoyed being the Master of Ceremony at the twice monthly event. The nine-year-old confidently said the most important children's right is the right to participation. Her friend Khin Thuzar, 12, agreed. Eleven-year-old Thin Thin said the right to protection is the most important of them all, while Ei Morn Win, also 11, picked the right to survival. Despite their different answers the children found no reason to disagree.

Myanmar acceded to the CRC in 1991 and enacted the child law in July 1993. Currently the Government is in the process of reviewing the Child Law. New legislation will raise the age of "minor" to under-18 from under-16. It will also establish a minimum age for employment, ban child marriage and raise the age at which a defendant can face criminal charges. The new legislation is expected to be sent to Parliament in 2014. If passed, it will bring Myanmar's legislation into harmony with global standards. This is a critical step towards better child protection in the country.

Farmers Group accumulate a total of \$7,000 revolving fund

Over the last two years the Farmers Group from Ohn Pin Su village in Bogalay Township has accumulated a revolving fund of \$7,000, which it lends to its 20 members (most of whom are women) ahead of planting season at a monthly interest rate of 3%. This is less than half the rate some lenders in nearby Dedaye town charge farmers. “Money lenders charge 5-8% interest a month,” explains U Thein Myint, the group’s chairman. “Besides saving interest costs, the money from the fund stays with the farmers,” he said.

Group accountant Daw Khin Thida Myint calculates that the fund will rise to \$8,600 next year and said the group plans to allocate \$6,000 of this to help build a school. “Loans from the fund are less stressful because the interest rate is lower,” she explained. Loans range in size from \$140 to \$250, depending on the size of the borrower’s land, members explained. “Farmers with more than 10 acres of land are eligible for the largest loans,” member Khin Maung Myint said.

They use loans from the fund to buy fertilizer and seeds and pay for workers. Still, the loans are insufficient to cover all their costs. Farmers estimate that one crop costs about \$200 an acre to plant and that they can sell a crop for about \$350 an acre if bad weather or insects don’t damage it.

The chronic lack of credit from banks in rural Myanmar continues to keep farmers trapped in high-interest debt, forcing them to focus on short-term earnings and hindering them from investing in their farms. Interest payments from outside money lenders can consume more than 50% of the farmers earnings. Farmers therefore welcome Savings Groups as an important step towards breaking the debt cycle.



LWF's new project launched in Chin State



LWF's new project launched in Chin State

Building local strength towards Development

The beautiful village of Pi Hu is located in the mountain area of Chin State. The village is situated 36 miles from Mindat township of Chin State – which borders with Bangladesh and India, and is the poorest and most isolated area of Myanmar.

The Lutheran World Federation's (LWF) Myanmar Program opened the office in Mindat in the spring of 2013, and has since been steadily hiring and training new personnel for the field office. For its first year of operation, the three-year project chose 14 villages in the Mindat township, one of them being Pi Hu.

LWF's activities focus on empowering people to help them become active and responsible rights holding citizens. As part of the project, the villagers establish a village development committee (VDC), in which they can discuss their own living conditions and surrounding challenges. They also explore ways in which they can develop their village with the support of their own resources, the help of the local authorities as primary duty bearers and Lutheran World Federation as a moral duty bearer.

"Together with the villagers, we have discussed how they view their lives and living standards; what kind of household they consider to be rich, poor or something in between," says LWF Community Empowerment Facilitator (CEF) Than Lwin Soe, 26. The young man works together with his female colleague Tin Tin Nu, 23, in three villages.

"Many of the locals consider a rich person to be someone with a steady income, such as a government official. In contrast, being poor means that you live in a bamboo hut, farming a patch of land that does not provide a large enough harvest and income, when combined with your other income sources, to feed your family for the entire year."

The aim of these discussions is to make the villagers see and understand their own situation, while also providing the CEFs with more detailed information about their needs and problems.

"The majority of the villagers considered themselves to be poor. The aim of the VDC is to work on behalf of the entire village – which consists of some 30 households – for the good of all the villagers. The committee has now been successfully established and consists of four men and three women. The planning work is set to begin soon."

Women's power in the village committee

One of the members of the Village Development Committee, Daw Khin Nwe Mu, 53, admits that income from farming is not enough to live on for many of the families. Most of the harvest, such as rice, goes towards personal consumption, so there is rarely enough left to sell in order to cover other expenses. Chin State is the most affected region in Myanmar when it comes to food security, with as much as three quarter of the population suffering from food shortages. The food shortage worsened rapidly after 2007, when a widespread rodent population decimated the region's crops. The situation has not yet returned to normal.

In her youth, at her maternal home Daw Khin Nwe Mu continued her schooling up to the upper years of secondary school. The school happened to be located near her home. "Education is very helpful in many ways. It provides people with valuable information about the world. Education also provides new means of earning an income," ponders Daw Khin Nwe Mu.

In Pi Hu, however, the nearest school is located over 1.5 miles away from the village. For many young schoolchildren – who start their schooling at the age of five – the trek through the steep, rocky terrain is simply too difficult.

Number of girls on the rise in the village school

When Daw Om Yawmg, 59, rings her bell from an open window, the children of the Kyar Don village school stop their ball games and run back inside from their break.

The village of Kyar Don is located in Mindat Township, Chin State, a couple of hours' walk from the town of Mindat. The village houses are built in a valley and on the slopes of the surrounding hills. A clear river runs through the valley. Visitors are greeted by lush vegetation full of beautiful flowers and colourful butterflies.

The Kyar Don village school is built high up on a hill. The school consists of a single large classroom, where students sit on benches at small tables. The first and second grade students are grouped together.

LWF has started its Rights Based Empowerment Project in Kyar Don Village and other 13 villages of Chin State. LWF Myanmar recognizes that the right to food security, access to Education and basic health care are the key challenges in the most remote State of Myanmar.

"The school has nearly a hundred students, from first to fifth grade, and another 40 are nursery school students. Some of the school children live nearby, but some have to walk to school from 2 to 3 miles away," says the teacher, Daw Om Yawmg. In the rough terrain, the trip to school and back can take several hours each day.

Daw Om Yawmg has over 35 years of teaching experience. She graduated as a teacher after a year of studies in Mandalay. A lot has changed since then.

"Back in the old days, parents mainly sent their boys to school. Nowadays there are a lot more girls, even though the majority of students are still boys," says Daw Om Yawmg.

The school needs more teachers

According to Daw Om Yawmg, the most important school subject is the Myanmar language, reading and writing. The residents of Kyar Don village are part of the Muum' tribe, which is one of over 50 tribes residing in Chin State. The village school teaches new students both the local and the country's official language. In addition to the Myanmar language, students are taught English and mathematics and in fourth and fifth grade, students also study history and geography.



Besides Daw Om Yawmg, there is only one other full-time teacher at the school. “We also have a volunteer assistant teacher for whom the villagers pay for food in kind. Considering the number of students, we need more teachers at the school,” admits Daw Om Yawmg.

“The children arrive at the school at 8:30am for breakfast, which they have to bring from home. School ends at 3pm. Food is a problem since not all children bring lunches with them. After breakfast, these children don’t get another meal until they return home from school. And even if the children bring a meal, there’s not always enough food. Often the food is also not nutritious enough,” says Daw Om Yawmg.

As per the Government policy; primary education (kindergarten to grade 4) is free in Myanmar. Children get free tuition, text books, stationery and sports facilities. However, such entitlements are not evenly spread and schools like in Kyar Don are deprived of most of the entitlements. For many families in Kyar Don, if they have to buy the text books and stationeries, it is a large expense, sometimes large enough to prevent schooling altogether.

LWF Myanmar is committed to be engaged in Chin State for a longterm intervention to assist alleviate poverty through rights based empowerment approach. In the areas of education LWF Myanmar will help youths and children organize themselves into youth groups and child clubs so that they confidently discuss issues affecting their lives, prepare plans and implement. In the process, the Community Empowerment Facilitators (CEF) will expose them to national and international legal instruments including Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and assist to implement their plan.



From Women’s power in the village committee

“Many children wait until they are older before starting school, and some, especially boys, never go to school at all, staying at home to help their parents on the plantations instead,” says a mother of two who also looks after four grandchildren.

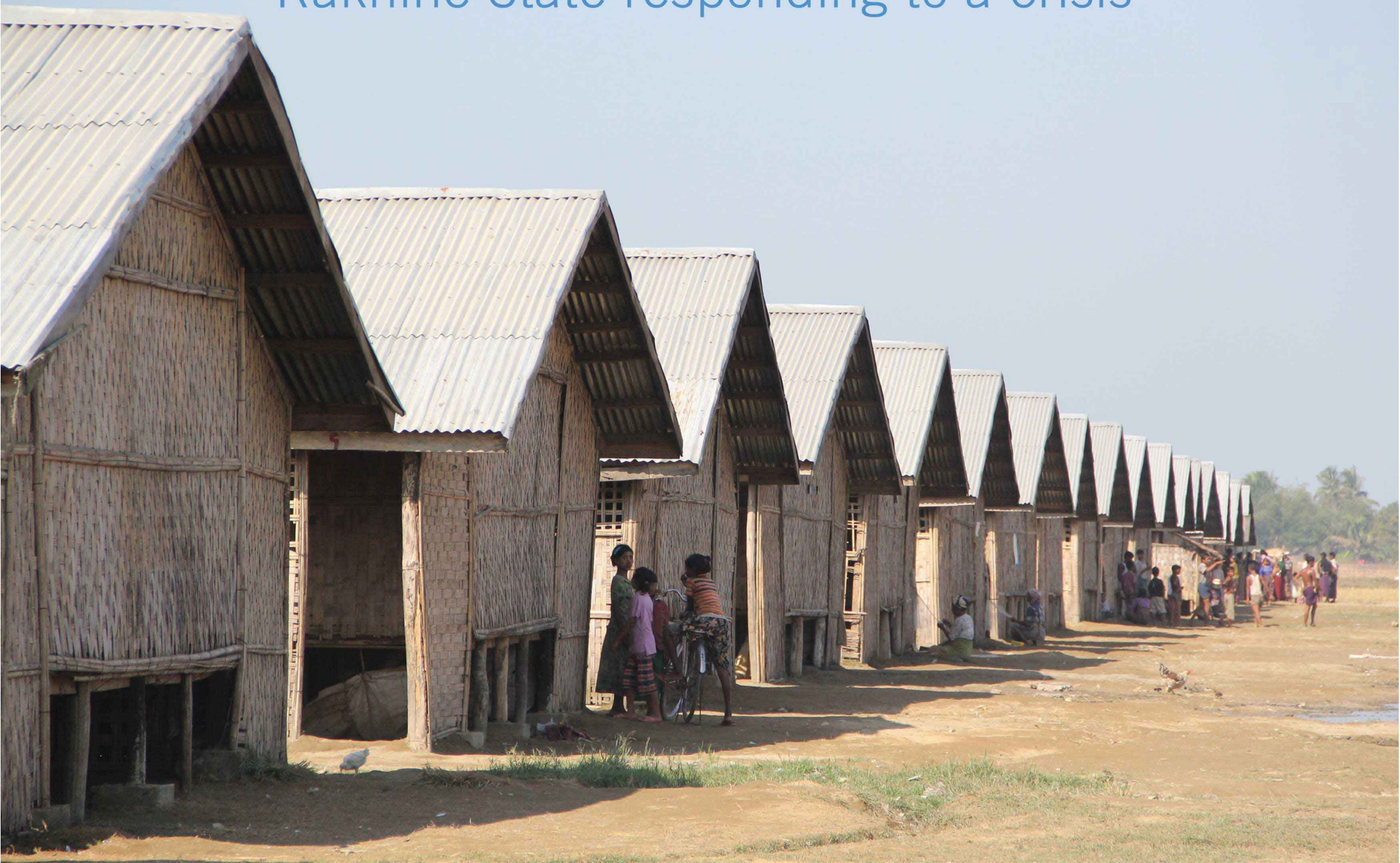
The VDC also includes Ma Har Awi, 26, who represents the younger generation of women. “I joined the committee because I like humanitarian and development work. The villagers also encouraged me to join,” says Har Awi, who currently has more time to invest in the committee’s work since she does not have a permanent job.

“I also think it is good that the committee includes both men and women, so there is no discrimination taking place.”

Har Awi hopes that the village of Pi Hu will get electricity in the future. She would also like to improve children’s education opportunities. The young wife’s family has stayed healthy – except for her mother-in-law’s malaria – but Har Awi still hopes that health care services will become more accessible in the future.

It has been just few months that LWF has established contacts with the villagers. The CEFs will live with the people in the villages and help them implement the village development plans. The CEFs will also facilitate households to prepare their own development plans and assist for implementation as appropriate. Through the process of well-being ranking, the most 10-20 vulnerable households named as “Partner Households” (PHs) will be selected and facilitated to improve their socio-economic status. The project, working with the rights holders and the duty bearers applying rights based empowerment approach intends to bring difference in the lives of the people.

Rakhine State responding to a crisis



Rakhine State responding to a crisis

Two outbreaks of inter-communal violence – in June and October 2012 – displaced as many as 140,000 residents of Myanmar’s second poorest state, Rakhine. It is estimated that an additional 27,800 people have fled the state by boat from the Bay of Bengal. The IDPs now live in 70 camps and camp like settings in 10 townships of Rakhine State. At least 93,707 (as of 30th November 2013) live in Sittwe Township’s 21 camps and in own or privately hosted accommodation.

All camps are overcrowded, with up to eight families residing in a single “longhouse”. The houses are made of bamboo, and corrugated iron sheet roofing. There is no privacy. Access to basic services is constrained. Residents are cut off from jobs, markets, health services and education. Although the camps of minority ethnic group of Buddhists are less constrained (residents can leave them freely) nearby schools have become overcrowded and residents have to pay for transportation into the town, which is making it increasingly difficult for them to save money to pay the costs of resettlement. Residents there are still living in fear of the violence and fires that drove them from their homes one and a half years ago.

As of the end of November, only 400 permanent houses for resettlement had been built. LWF’s initial assessment of the camps, conducted between February and May, found that living conditions were far below international standards. Basic services were insufficient while access to education, psycho-social support, fire prevention/safety and camp coordination and camp management activities were almost non-existent.

In some camps children missed a year of school. LWF’s response to the humanitarian crisis has been swift. It rapidly installed fire safety infrastructure and trained fire safety volunteers. Every IDP camp and the one resettlement camp now has protection from fire.

LWF also built temporary learning centers, trained teachers and distributed education kits to students. A total of 2,700 non-food item kits were also distributed, 1,700 more than the number called for in the ACT Appeal that funded LWF’s work.

Since 15th September 2013, as an implementing partner of UNHCR, LWF Myanmar has facilitated the development of Camp Management Committees (CMCs), ensuring that women and people with disabilities are represented. The CMCs members have received introductory trainings on areas such as leadership and good governance, accountability, humanitarian code of conduct and complaints and response mechanism (CRM). LWF also facilitated the development of terms of reference (ToRs) for the CMCs. At the end of August two international consultants seconded by Church of Sweden to assess the needs for psychosocial support, trained staff (including staff of other NGOs). LWF will expand this support in the coming years.

“Hopeless” is the word many camp residents use to describe their lives. Better services, more activities and a greater say in how camps are managed can provide residents with an alternative to hopelessness. LWF is providing humanitarian assistance to 4 camps in Sittwe, while advocating that a durable alternate strategy be implemented as soon as possible.



Quick learners

LWF Myanmar was swift to establish temporary learning centers (TLCs) and distribute education kits to primary students, helping thousands of displaced children return to the classroom. After more than one year out of school, almost 2,800 displaced students returned to the classroom in the first week of October, following swift action by LWF Myanmar to establish 10 temporary learning centers and train teachers in six Muslim IDP camps in Sittwe. In total, 2,749 primary school students (1,193 of whom were girls) joined classes at the centers as part of LWF's Education in Emergencies initiative. The initiative included the distribution of school kits to all primary students in the camps including the three Buddhist camps where students attend nearby state schools: more than 3,050 kits were distributed. These included a backpack, lunch box, umbrella, notebook, stationery and other supplies while the Government provided the text books, coordinated by UNICEF.

It was the first time many of the students were given possessions of their own since their homes were destroyed during inter-communal violence in 2012, students and their parents said. Daw Nyo Nyo, a member of the camp management committee at Ohn Taw Gyi 5, said the new learning centers were transforming her camp.

“Before the children used to hang around with nothing to do, now they go to school,” she explained.

LWF moved quickly to establish the centers as education was the top priority of parents. Construction of the centers, which have sturdy timber floors and zinc roofs, was completed in September. Thirty-six camp-based teachers (IDPs) were trained by government educators that month and 33 of them are



now teaching. Parent teacher associations were also formed for each center. Each center offers four 2-hour classes five days a week, with two teachers and up to 90 students in each one.

Attendance rates in December remained above 80%, according to daily monitoring of every TLS by LWF's education team who monitor the classes daily. In 2014 they plan to expand the curriculum in state-school to cover all subjects and open middle schools. Teachers will also receive refresher training and state education officials will conduct exams.

Relearning and remembering

Hla Hla May, 8, has only a hazy memory of her school before the violence. “I used to go to school when I was young, but I don't think I finished kindergarten,” she recalls at the temporary learning center in Ohn Taw Gyi 5. She says she is happy that she has been able to learn how to read so quickly, but her teacher says it is likely that she had just forgotten that she knew how to read because she had no suitable reading material for more than a year.

Khin Soe, 9, says he is happy with his teachers and his classes because he learned how to read in two months. Hla Hla May, 8, said math was her favorite of the two subjects but said that she too had learned how to read in two months. “Some children improve very fast and some are slower, but what is noticeable is the level of enthusiasm,” explains teacher Pyae Phyo Hlaing. “Students are arriving with advice for us on what lessons to teach and what materials to read. They really enjoy reciting stories and poems.”

Hurdles remain

Despite the enthusiasm children have for learning, displaced children in all camps face immense hurdles to get their studies back on track. The lack of electricity, for example, makes it difficult to study in their homes because there is no light.

State schools near the Buddhist camps are also overcrowded now, while dropout rates among displaced children are far above the state average, teachers and members of camp management teams say. Families who lost everything in the violence also say they find it difficult to pay school fees and related costs. Moreover, students in the Muslim camps do not share a common language.

Still, Aye Ei Shaw, whose two youngest children attend a learning center in Ohn Taw Gyi 5, said she is happy they are learning to speak, read and write the Myanmar language. “Before they could not speak Myanmar, now they can,” the widow explained. “Before I used to work in the fields to save money for my children’s education, but now I have no source of extra income,” she said. “It is also more difficult for them to study now because we have no light at home.”

Her 11-year old son, Khin Maung Oo, agreed that this was his biggest hurdle, saying he could only study when at the school. “I would like to have a lamp at home so that I could read and study there,” he said.



Focus on fire prevention



Focus on fire prevention

Prevention is the priority of the fire safety volunteers organized by LWF in 21 camps for internally displaced people in Rakhine State's Sittwe Township, whose residents lost their homes to fire during outbreaks of communal violence in 2012. The longhouses are made of wood, bamboo and thatch. A fire could destroy a dwelling – which holds 8 families – within 15 minutes, according to an officer at the district fire brigade who trained the volunteers.

Officer Aung Min Thaik also estimated that it would take his team in Sittwe town at least 25 minutes to reach most of the IDP camps. Without trained fire-safety volunteers in the camps, a fire would destroy a house before district fire officers could reach it. LWF's assessment of the camps in July, identified the absence of fire safety as a major concern even in the camps closer to the town. Every camp lacked fire prevention and safety equipment as well as residents trained to prevent or respond to fires. LWF moved quickly to fill this critical gap.

Sittwe-based staff began raising awareness of fire safety in August, during the peak of the monsoon season. By October all 20 camps had fire safety points – which include drums of water and fire-fighting equipment – as well as trained volunteers like 29-year-old Ba Thun. The training curriculum was developed by the Sittwe Township Fire Brigade and LWF, with the former conducting two sets of five-day training sessions in October.

“We patrol our camp every evening to look for potential fire risks and explain prevention to residents,” explained Ba Thun, who is also a volunteer teacher at a temporary learning center in Ohn Taw Gyi 5 camp. “Before we started our patrols people did not know what to do if there was a fire. There were risks in every house,” he said.

“The main risk was cooking stoves located inside the houses,” he and other fire safety volunteers said. “Another risk was candles. Because there is no electricity in the camps residents rely on candles for light. Some, especially children, also fall asleep with lit candles in their rooms. Placing lit mosquito coils in places where they could spark a fire is also a risk,” fire brigade officer Aung Min Thaik said.

Camp Management Committee Chief U Hla Win said awareness of prevention had risen since the volunteers began educating residents about risks. “We knew that if we didn't raise awareness there would be fires,” he said. The fire safety campaign has resulted in key changes in behavior, safety volunteers said. All stoves are now placed at the perimeter of the houses. Although still under the roof they are on the ground rather than on the thatched flooring in the rooms. Residents are also more careful to extinguish candles before falling asleep, and they are cautious about where they place mosquito coils, fire safety volunteers said.

Fear of fire remains intense among camp residents. Their homes were destroyed by fire during inter-communal violence in June and October 2012. Daily patrols by fire safety volunteers are helping to replace this fear with fire-prevention know-how. The volunteers work in camps for both groups and are linked to the district fire brigade.



Fire Bridge Officer Aung Min Htaik © LWF Myanmar

A Teacher's STORY

Maung Hla Myint, 19, had planned to finish high school and then attended university before the inter-communal violence that erupted in Sittwe in June 2012 spread to Kyauk Phyu five months later.

He and his family fled to the IDP camps near Sittwe after losing all their possessions in the fires.

"I planned to go to Yangon to study medicine," he explained at a temporary learning center he teaches in the Ohn Taw Gyi 5. "I wanted to follow in my aunt's footsteps and become a doctor," he said, referring to a sister of his father who is a physician at a state hospital in Myanmar's largest city, Yangon.

Maung Hla Mying said he had even considered studying medicine in a foreign country before his family lost their three homes to arson.

Since arriving in Sittwe he has had to forget this ambition and focus on survival. The young man considered joining the exodus of IDPs leaving by boat, but was dissuaded by his parents.



They warned him that the migrants faced a high risk of detention, trafficking and even death.

Then, the opportunity to teach, which includes a \$50 monthly incentive, convinced Maung Hla Myint that fleeing by boat was not his only option.

"I am surprised by the change in my life," he said, explaining that he is now eager to pursue his education in order to be a state-qualified teacher.

Highlight on LWF Myanmar Humanitarian Response in Rakhine

- Established fire prevention and safety infrastructure in 20 camps (total number of residents)
- Developed fire safety curriculum with Sittwe Township Fire Brigade and supported training of 155 volunteers
- Distributed 2,700 non-food item kits
- Distributed more than 3,050 education kits to 6-10 years aged children in camps
- Built 10 temporary learning spaces (TLS), inclusive of WASH activities.
- Recruited 36 camp-based teachers and supported training by government educators
- Assumed management of four camps with a population of more than 18,000 internally displaced persons .
- Conducted psychosocial needs assessment, trained staff and developed program for implementation



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