



# LIFT ANNUAL REPORT

# 2020



## Livelihoods and Food Security Fund



managed by UNOPS



**LIFT**  
**ANNUAL**  
**REPORT** 2020

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## DISCLAIMER

This document is based on information from projects funded by LIFT in 2020 and supported with financial assistance from Australia, Canada, the European Union, Ireland, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. The views expressed herein should not be taken to reflect the official opinion of the LIFT donors.

Exchange rate: This report converts MMK into USD at 1,390:1, which was the average exchange rate for 2020.

This report builds on LIFT's previous annual reports, which can be found at [www.lift-fund.org/publications](http://www.lift-fund.org/publications)

## THE LIVELIHOODS AND FOOD SECURITY FUND

### UNOPS Fund Management Office

12(O) Pyi Thu Lane, 7 Mile, Mayangone Township, Yangon, Myanmar  
Phone: +95 1 65 7280~87, Fax: +95 1 65 72 79  
Email: [lift@unops.org](mailto:lift@unops.org)  
[lift-fund.org](http://lift-fund.org) | [facebook.com/liftfund](https://facebook.com/liftfund)

## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

<b>ADB</b>	Asian Development Bank	<b>LBVD</b>	Livestock Breeding and Veterinary Department
<b>CBO</b>	Community-based Organisation	<b>LEARN</b>	Leveraging Essential Nutrition Actions To Reduce Malnutrition project
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organisation	<b>MAM</b>	Moderate acute malnutrition
<b>DAR</b>	Department of Agricultural Research	<b>M&amp;E</b>	Monitoring and evaluation
<b>DC</b>	Donor Consortium	<b>MADB</b>	Myanmar Agriculture Development Bank
<b>DoA</b>	Department of Agriculture	<b>MEAL</b>	Monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning
<b>DoF</b>	Department of Fisheries	<b>MoALI</b>	Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation
<b>DRD</b>	Department for Rural Development	<b>MoE</b>	Ministry of Education
<b>DSW</b>	Department of Social Welfare	<b>MoHS</b>	Ministry of Health and Sports
<b>FMO</b>	Fund Management Office	<b>MoNREC</b>	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation
<b>FB</b>	Fund Board	<b>MIYCF</b>	Maternal and infant and young child feeding
<b>FDI</b>	Foreign Direct Investment	<b>MUAC</b>	Mid-upper arm circumference
<b>FRD</b>	Financial Regulatory Department	<b>NNC</b>	National Nutrition Centre
<b>HH</b>	Households	<b>SAM</b>	Severe acute malnutrition
<b>IDP</b>	Internally Displaced Person	<b>SBCC</b>	Social and behaviour change communication
<b>IEC</b>	Information, education and communication	<b>WASH</b>	Water, sanitation & hygiene
<b>IMAM</b>	Integrated management of acute malnutrition		
<b>IP</b>	Implementing Partner		

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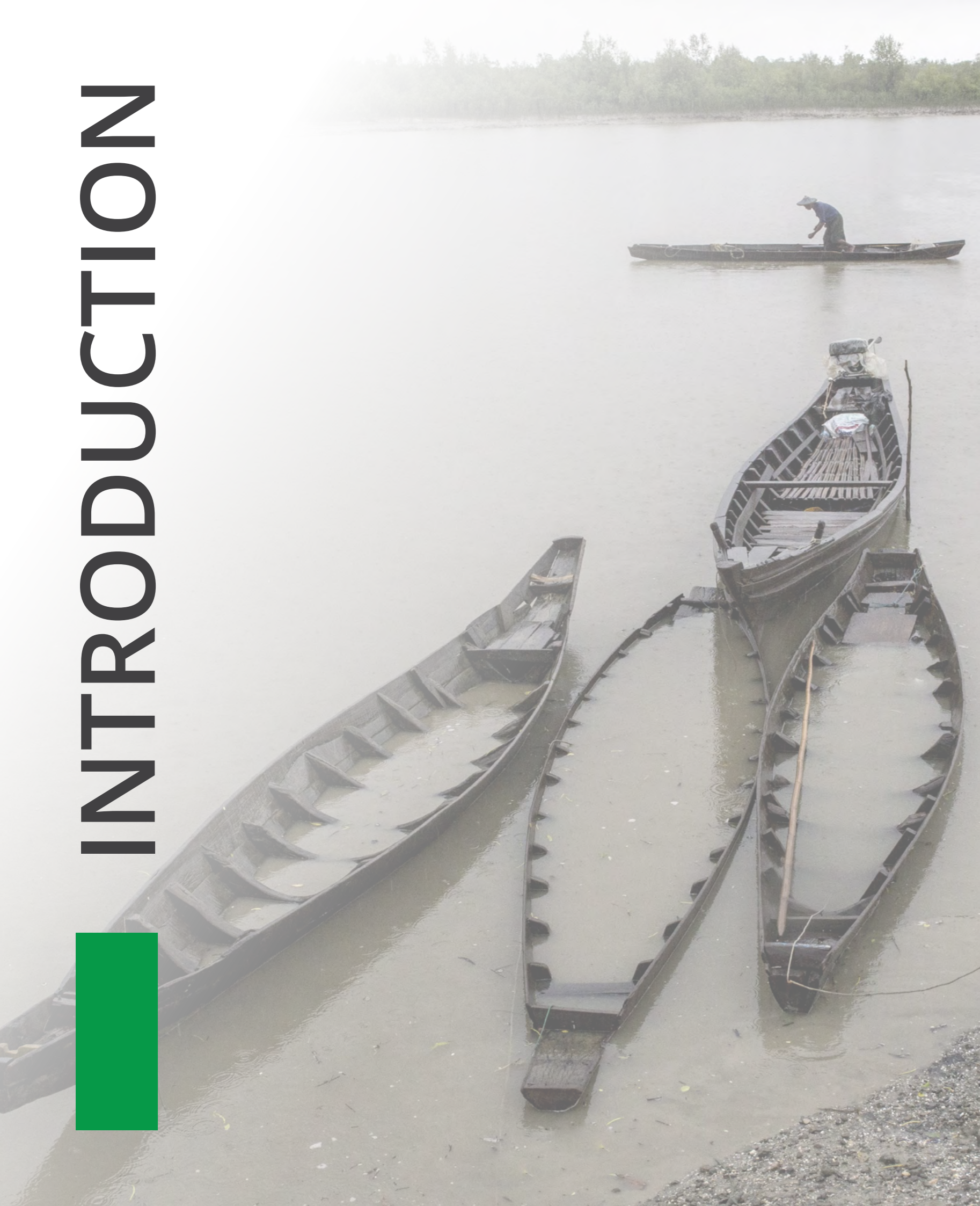


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# INTRODUCTION



# 01

## WORKING FOR INCLUSIVE AND TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE

The multi-donor Livelihoods and Food Security Fund (LIFT) has been present in Myanmar for 11 years, supporting Myanmar's people to reach their full economic potential and increase their resilience through improved nutrition, income diversification and skills development.

LIFT's 2019-2023 strategic period intensifies LIFT's focus on inclusion of the most vulnerable through four strategic shifts:

- » Increase focus on inclusion and social cohesion
- » Intensify efforts on gender equality and women's empowerment
- » Increase geographical focus on ethnic/border states and conflict-affected areas
- » Bring internally displaced people and returnees into LIFT's development programmes

LIFT's differentiated livelihoods strategy to help families across Myanmar to 'step up', 'step out' or 'hang in' remains a centrepiece of LIFT's work in 2019-2023. LIFT's strategy and programming is presented thematically - Nutrition, Financial Inclusion, Agriculture, Markets and Food Systems and Decent Work and Labour Mobility - with each thematic area contributing to changes at the policy, system and household/individual level. LIFT's cross-cutting work on policy, civil society strengthening, gender and social protection continue.

LIFT's four thematic programmes guided much of LIFT's work throughout 2020:

The priority of **LIFT's Nutrition Programme** is to reduce stunting in children aged under five years. In Myanmar, one in three children below five years is stunted and the first 1,000 Days is a window of opportunity to ensure the good nutrition necessary for optimal growth, development and health throughout life. When addressed at scale, good nutrition can transform economies. Since 2014, LIFT has established itself as a

leader, coordinator and catalyst on improving nutrition in Myanmar, piloting maternal and child cash transfers (MCCT) in several areas of the country leading to the Government's ownership of a universal MCCT programme that includes conflict-affected areas and ethnic border regions, playing a key role in supporting the Government's development of the Multi-Sectoral National Plan of Action for Nutrition (MS-NPAN), and intensifying our focus on nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive approaches proven to have a positive impact on nutrition outcomes of children, adolescents and women.

**LIFT's Financial Inclusion Programme** works to ensure that the most vulnerable people in villages and wards across the country, irrespective of their economic and social status, can benefit from a developing rural financial market. Large sections of the population remain unserved or underserved, yet socially responsible and inclusive financial services can provide a wide range of benefits to individuals and the economy. LIFT's Financial Inclusion Programme's microfinance partners have had strong reach across Myanmar since 2014 and changes in the financial sector and the rapid rise of mobile phone ownership opened considerable opportunities to introduce savings and digital financial services. The Financial Inclusion Programme 2019-2023 continues to support microfinance institutions, including expansion of the capital markets, expanding pro-poor financial services, mobilising savings, supporting agribusinesses and enabling the policy environment for inclusive, socially responsible financial services.

**LIFT's Agriculture, Markets and Food Systems Programme** explicitly seeks to address women's empowerment and gender equality as women often face difficulties accessing finance, market information, extension services and entering higher growth markets. The agricultural sector contributes approximately 30 per cent to gross domestic product, second only to the services sector in its contribution to economic growth. While there is considerable potential for production and productivity gains in Myanmar's agriculture, fisheries and forestry, the sector faces numerous challenges. LIFT's programme adopts an inclusive value chain approach, engages with government, ethnic armed organisations, civil society and the private sector on land and natural resource management and contributes to improving nutritional outcomes through its focus on nutrition-sensitive agriculture.

**LIFT's Decent Work and Labour Mobility Programme** is focused on establishing conditions for decent work within Myanmar's labour market, maintaining a focus on internal and international migrants as some of the most vulnerable populations of workers. Myanmar's transition towards a more open and market-oriented economy is accelerating the mobility of workers between employment sectors and geographic locations. However, rapid changes to the nature of employment in Myanmar have also brought significant challenges in ensuring fair working conditions and preventing labour exploitation. Underpinning the programme's framework is the protection of fundamental labour rights as the cornerstone for building a foundation for decent work in Myanmar. The programme works to strengthen policy and legislation, technical resources, enhance knowledge and stakeholder capacity and provide women and men migrants, and other vulnerable workers, with greater access to information, training and services.

In this 2019-2023 phase, LIFT intensifies its focus on the most vulnerable in the ethnic/border states and conflict-affected areas. LIFT aims to support more sustainable and robust approaches to poverty and hunger reduction for communities in protracted crises and marginal areas; bring internally displaced persons and returnees into its development programmes by supporting the humanitarian development transition; contribute to improved nutritional outcomes; help displaced people secure jobs and income, and prevent exploitation, providing protection services to victims of trafficking and building cohesion with host communities.

COVID-19 hit Myanmar in March 2020 and demanded flexibility and action. LIFT and our partners quickly responded and pivoted existing resources to deliver immediate preparedness and prevention activities in support of the most vulnerable. Projects adapted to COVID-19 restrictions and continued to deliver their planned activities under LIFT's thematic programmes and cross-cutting areas of work.

Civil society navigated well through the difficult context of COVID-19 in 2020 and civil society delivered on the vast majority of LIFT's results. LIFT was informed by their updates and insights and LIFT committed to supporting the emerging needs prioritised by communities that were in line with LIFT's goals. LIFT developed five localisation goals, aimed at increasing our direct and explicit efforts to promote and support localisation, and this will remain a priority throughout 2019-2023.

LIFT support, amounting to USD 579 million, has reached around 12.8 million rural people, roughly 38 per cent of the country's rural population. LIFT's geographic coverage is wide, reaching 255 townships in 2020. LIFT's partners, implementing programmes across the country, are local and international non-government organisations, UN agencies, civil society actors, academic and research bodies, and the private sector. LIFT provides technical support and guidance to the Government of Myanmar.

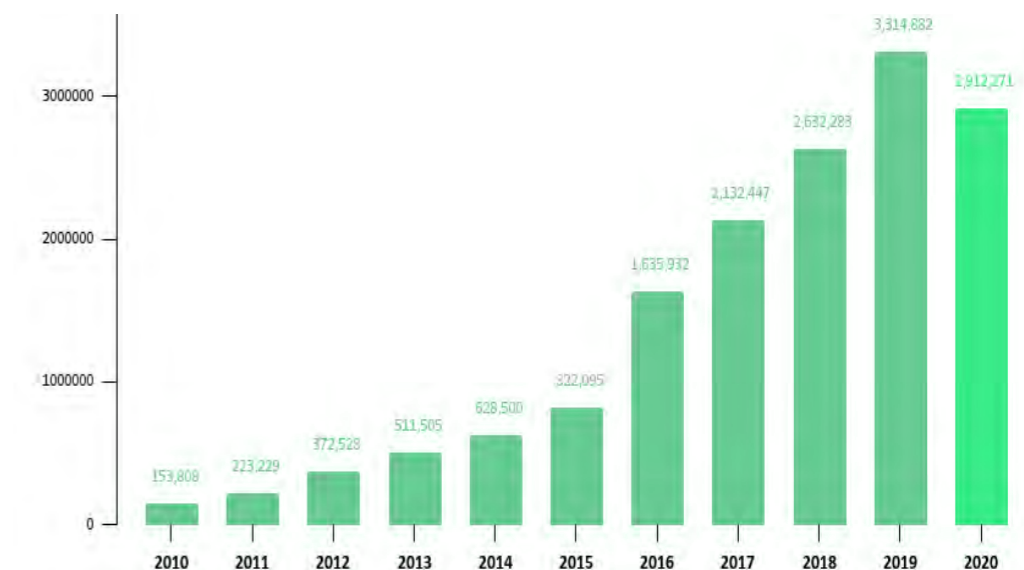


Figure 1.1: Families reached by LIFT support from 2010 to 2020

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## 02

**1. LIFT adapted to the challenges of 2020 and forged ahead to deliver good results.** Despite all the challenges of a year defined by the global COVID-19 pandemic, LIFT's overall performance was good. LIFT met or exceeded targets on 24 of the 37 indicators (65 per cent) reported in 2020 and all eight policy output indicator targets were exceeded. All four of LIFT's thematic areas recorded good performances, although the COVID-19 containment measures affected all, and in particular constrained business activity and the microfinance sector's results. LIFT continued to support women, notably through improved maternal nutrition, reducing abuse and trafficking of women and children, and increasing financial literacy and access to credit for women; 90 per cent of LIFT-supported financial services' clients are women.

**2. 2020 was the eleventh year for the Livelihood and Food Security Fund.** In 2020, LIFT had worked in 255 townships, 77 per cent of Myanmar's townships. At the end of the year, 12.8 million rural people – or roughly 38 per cent of Myanmar's rural population had been reached by LIFT.

**3. 2020 saw a large number of projects ending and new ones beginning.** LIFT managed 87 grants in 2020; 28 ended during the year, and 21 started, as LIFT continued its transition to the 2019-2023 strategy. At the end of 2020, LIFT had 59 ongoing projects. LIFT worked with 57 partners in 2020. LIFT increased from USD 539 million at the end of 2019 to USD 579 million.

**4. LIFT responded quickly from the onset of COVID-19, pivoting existing resources in support of the most vulnerable.** LIFT committed USD 28.9 million for an immediate frontline response, a medium-term response in areas of high need, and a longer-term response to the socio-economic impacts of the virus. A significant volume of additional, unanticipated funding decisions was made in 2020 and led to difficult decisions to not fund programmes that were anticipated for contracting under the 2019-2023 strategy. A call for proposals for the Rakhine Programme was released in 2020.



**5. LIFT's Nutrition Programme responded to COVID-19 at the policy, systems and household levels to adapt and scale-up nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive activities that addressed underlying causes of malnutrition, which were significantly impacted by COVID-19.** LIFT has supported the Government's Multisectoral National Plan of Action on Nutrition (MS-NPAN) since it was endorsed in 2018. In January 2020, LIFT supported a high-level advocacy meeting with 24 members of parliament from various committees and the session succeeded in garnering support for mobilisation of resources and budget allocations and integrating MS-NPAN into states' and regions' sub-national development plans and budgets. The need for a multisectoral response became even more evident in the COVID-19 pandemic.

**6. LIFT's Financial Inclusion Programme remains LIFT's largest single intervention reaching 2,912,272 households (90 per cent women).** A more robust, inclusive rural financial market helps people take advantage of economic opportunities and reduces poor people's vulnerabilities to external shocks. LIFT supported 23 microfinance providers in 2020 which provided USD 1,416 million in loans to their clients. The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on financial institutions and clients' incomes and this affected MFIs' sustainability in 2020. Government directives at the beginning of the pandemic on lowering interest rates for unsecured lending raised concerns that foreign investment flows to MFIs would be reduced. LIFT, partners and the Myanmar Microfinance Association raised these concerns with the Government and subsequent directives readjusted interest rates for foreign lending to the sector. LIFT mobilised USD 5.5 million which leveraged USD 67.13 million in international capital investment in the sector through LIFT's Capital Markets Programme.

**7. LIFT and partners' adaptive management strategies enabled Myanmar's largest programmatic response** for internal and international migrants affected by COVID-19; 1.4 million direct beneficiaries (60 per cent women) were provided with support by September 2020. LIFT's Decent Work and Labour Mobility Programme partners reallocated budgets to provide frontline responses across 12 states and regions of Myanmar. Ten projects developed new proposals for USD 3 million in LIFT funding to scale up support for migrants affected by the pandemic. Radio and social media platforms of the programme's partners used to disseminate migration information were leveraged to disseminate information on COVID-19 prevention to a much larger audience, directly engaging millions of people across Myanmar and in destination countries. The pandemic vividly exposed shortcomings in Myanmar's legal frameworks for international migration. With LIFT's support, the International Labour Organization had provided extensive technical support to the drafting of the *Law Relating to Overseas Employment* to align it with international labour standards, and it was close to being adopted. However, consultations in 2020 were postponed, and as a result of the military coup in 2021 the law has been

shelved, along with the *Domestic Workers Bill*, which was also close to being adopted in 2020 after many years of work; it would have been a significant milestone in gender equality in Myanmar.

**8. LIFT and the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation (MoALI) collaborated to develop a cash-for-work pilot project** to support employment opportunities in the rice seed sector in the Ayeyarwady Region, with USD 950,000 allocated for the project. Cash-for-work was a priority of the Government's COVID-19 Economic Relief Plan (CERP) to mitigate the socio-economic impact of the pandemic. Under the Kachin and Northern Shan State Programme and the South-East Programme, four new AMFS projects were approved and contracted. These focused mainly on land and natural resources management in conflict-affected areas. Funding overall, however, was reduced to LIFT's Agriculture, Markets and Food Systems (AMFS) Programme in 2020 due to the reallocation of funds to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic in Myanmar.


**9. Internally displaced people and host communities in areas affected by conflict were particularly vulnerable to impacts** of the COVID-19 pandemic and LIFT's partners pivoted to provide a frontline response in Kachin State, northern Shan State, the South-East and Rakhine. In Kachin, northern Shan and the South-East, partners worked with government health and social welfare departments and ethnic health organisations in non-government-controlled areas to improve infection control in camps, quarantine centres and communities by providing information, WASH interventions and personal protective equipment for health staff. In Rakhine, LIFT's response focused on preventing the spread of the virus among vulnerable internally displaced people, host communities, and rural and urban populations through maintaining provision of, and access to, essential nutrition support, WASH activities and mitigating the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 through cash transfers and support to small and micro-businesses. In Rakhine, LIFT's COVID-19 support reached 293,373 direct beneficiaries (52 per cent women) and an estimated additional 178,025 indirect beneficiaries in 519 locations.

**10. Across LIFT in 2020, 100 policy events were convened, and 80 policy publications produced.** There were 12 reported policy changes and two changes in government budget allocations. LIFT's partners convened 55 per cent of the events and produced 90 per cent of the publications. Policy engagement in Nay Pyi Taw had a strong start in 2020. A parliamentary field visit to Kayah State was arranged in March to support better policy engagement between union and state-levels of government. In February, committees from the Lower House of Parliament received the Multisectoral National Plan of Action on Nutrition (MS-NPAN) core team who updated members of parliament on MS-NPAN planning and implementation. As a result of the event, a member of parliament raised a question related to MS-NPAN during a parliamentary session in July 2020.


**11. Local civic actors were key to LIFT's COVID-19 response and their reach was extraordinary.** LIFT's local civil society partners reached 64 per cent of the 2.9 million total beneficiaries from LIFT's COVID-19 emergency response. LIFT's five strategic partners reached over half of these people. Civil society responses to the pandemic in Myanmar corroborates the importance of locally-led responses, with existing networks and relationships facilitating an efficient and effective response.

**12. LIFT's existing social protection programmes were scaled up to deliver COVID-19 cash payments to vulnerable households.** LIFT collaborated with the Department of Social Welfare from March to deliver cash 'top up' payments to maternal and child cash transfer (MCCT) and social pension beneficiaries using existing distribution mechanisms. MMK 30,000 (USD 22) was delivered to 238,410 pregnant and breastfeeding mothers and nearly 200,000 people aged 85 years and older. When all household members are included approximately 1.8 million people benefited from these cash transfers in 2020. The existing MCCT and social pension distribution platforms supported by LIFT proved effective and efficient for the emergency response, with cash delivered quickly to the most vulnerable. Cash transfers reached 64,785 internally displaced people, more than 8,000 garment workers who had lost their employment due to the pandemic and a cash-for-work scheme in the Ayeyarwady Region benefited 1,435 people. Partners targeting people with disabilities helped build community self-help groups and community resilience to the impacts of the pandemic in northern Shan, Chin and Kayah States and Mandalay, Magway and Sagaing Regions.

**13. The impact of COVID-19 on gender equality and social inclusion was immense.** LIFT used social media platforms to spread awareness of how COVID-19 affected women and men differently and how the emergency responses were considering gender equality. LIFT produced simple gender guidance notes in local languages for partners to use, ensuring practical gender needs were addressed during the emergency response. In addition, LIFT partners organised tailored awareness raising campaigns, talk shows, multimedia messages and guidelines on gender-based violence for audiences.



*LIFT responded quickly from the onset of COVID-19, pivoting existing resources in support of the most vulnerable.*



# RESULTS

## 03

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

In 2020, LIFT began implementing the refreshed Monitoring and Evaluation for Accountability and Learning (MEAL) framework that was adopted towards the end of 2019. Most project activities were fully aligned with the refreshed 2019-2023 logframe. Twenty-two projects that had begun towards the end of the previous phase (2015-2018) were concluded in 2020.

The context in 2020 was dominated by the disruptive effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which negatively impacted communities' livelihoods across LIFT implementation areas. Consequently, LIFT programmatic interventions were adapted. In the second half of 2020, LIFT supported the Government of Myanmar in responding to the emergency humanitarian and livelihood needs as outlined in the Government's COVID-19 Economic Relief Plan (CERP). Some of LIFT's COVID-19 programmatic response activities were directly aligned to the existing projects' theories of change and measurement frameworks. Beneficiary reach for those activities are reported under the relevant indicators as part of the target achievements for 2020.

#### Refreshed LIFT MEAL Framework Implementation

The MEAL framework was designed to serve three key interrelated functions.

- » **Accountability:** Demonstrating the extent to which LIFT's investments are in line with its strategy, and that key results are achieved efficiently, effectively and with good value for money.
- » **Learning and adaptive management:** Generating, sharing and using evidence about what works and what does not to improve performance and make course corrections.
- » **Contribution to policy development:** Generating and using policy- and practice-relevant evidence to inform government policies and the design and implementation of public programmes.

LIFT's Fund Management Office (FMO) conducted an internal workshop in the first quarter of 2020 to agree on how the MEAL framework would be put into practice, taking into consideration the findings of the 2015-2018 MEAL framework review. Based on the outcomes of this workshop, LIFT FMO developed comprehensive guidelines for implementation of the refreshed MEAL framework. Theories of change, adaptive management guidelines, strategic evaluation questions, IP MEAL and reporting guidelines were developed and introduced to LIFT's programme and M&E teams. Further inductions and related capacity building activities for LIFT partners based on the guidelines will take place in 2021.

#### **LIFT's refreshed logical framework and reporting**

The new strategy logframe had 63 indicators: 11 purpose-level indicators and 52 programme-level indicators, consisting of 26 outcomes and 26 outputs. Following the indicator review exercise that was conducted in the first quarter of 2020, one Decent Work and Labour Mobility output indicator (DS-1.2 # of private sector enterprises whose compliance with ethical code of conduct related to recruitment and employment practices is audited) was dropped. Consequently, the LIFT logframe currently consists of 62 indicators.

The purpose-level indicators measure LIFT's contribution to its goal and purposes as defined through these impact-level outcomes:

- » **Improved nutritional status, particularly of women and children** - measured through household diet diversity, stunting, and minimum diet diversity;
- » **Increased household income and assets with greater control by women** - measured through household poverty levels, income, asset ownership and women's and men's control over assets and income;
- » **Reduced vulnerability of households and individuals to shocks, stresses and risks** - measured through prevalence of moderate and severe food insecurity, household resilience, vulnerability and informal employment in non-agricultural employment.

#### **The remaining 51 indicators measure changes at programme and project levels:**

- » **Nutrition:** 4 policy indicators (2 outcome and 2 output level), 3 system level indicators (all outputs) and 5 household level indicators (all outcomes)
- » **Financial inclusion:** 4 policy indicators (2 outcome and 2 output level), 4 system level indicators (all output levels) and 5 household indicators (all outcome)
- » **Agriculture, Markets and Food Systems:** 4 policy indicators (2 outcome and 2 output level), 4 system level indicators (all outputs) and 5 household level indicators (all outcomes)
- » **Decent Work and Labour Mobility:** 4 policy indicators (2 outcome and 2 outputs), 2 systems indicators (all outputs) and 7 household indicators (4 outcome and 3 output)

LIFT sets targets for all indicators and these are reviewed annually.

The review process takes into account contextual changes impacting on programming, changes in underpinning assumptions as well as reported achievements. For 2020, LIFT thematic programmes reviewed the logframe indicator targets that were set in 2018. The review was primarily informed by data and information from the projects contracted by the end of 2019, under the 2019-2023 strategy. The design of new programmes was still ongoing in 2020 and LIFT anticipates another comprehensive indicator target review exercise during the first half of 2021. Finally, even though various project interventions were adapted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, corresponding indicator targets were not adjusted in the logframe. This decision was taken as most of the COVID-19 interventions were considered short-term and, in most cases, were targeting similar beneficiaries to those of the regular programmes.

#### **Data and reporting**

Eighty-three projects were implemented in 2020. Twenty-two of those were carried over from the 2015-2018 strategy phase and these projects closed during 2020. Performance in 2020 is exclusively based on the data provided by the implementing partners for 40 programme-level and partner-level indicators.

LIFT reviewed the reporting guidelines and formats with a view to addressing feedback that was received on the reporting system during the 2019 MEAL systems review. In the revised reporting guidelines, the LIFT Strategic Evaluation Questions (SEQs) are embedded in the structure of the partner's narrative reports. This is intended to ensure that performance on the SEQs can be easily reviewed and managed at the individual project level. Ultimately, this is also expected to facilitate a process of synthesis and aggregated performance review at the thematic/geographic programme level. It will also identify priority areas requiring attention so that corrective measures, further guidance and capacity support can be provided.

#### **Household survey data and reporting**

LIFT conducts household surveys every two years to measure the purpose-level indicators and some of the outcome indicators. In the years between household surveys, LIFT conducts tracker surveys with a smaller sample size, which allows for some indicator measurement but does not capture the full range of data achieved in the household survey. The 2019 household survey was postponed and was re-scheduled for 2020. However, it did not occur in 2020 due to measures put in place by the Government of Myanmar to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

**Consequently, LIFT is unable to report on 11 purpose-level indicators, 10 outcome indicators and one output indicator that were earmarked for reporting in 2020 through the household survey data.**

An additional three outcome indicators for the Agriculture, Markets and Food Systems thematic area that were to rely on household survey data are reported based on data provided by LIFT's implementing partners.

LIFT had made the necessary technical preparations for the household survey including seeking approvals from the Institutional Review Board of

the Ministry of Health and Sports and Union Ministry of Investments and Foreign Economic Relations. In anticipation that securing approvals for the main household survey from both institutions might be delayed as a result of COVID-19 restrictions, LIFT designed a rapid phone survey that could be conducted without face-to-face contact. There are limitations in collecting data by phone; only a limited set of less complex questions that do not require physical observations can be asked. So, the phone survey was designed to measure only 13 of 22 indicators. LIFT obtained the required approvals to conduct the phone survey and designed the sampling process to select households. Owing to the unexpected events and consequences of the 1 February military take-over of the Government, however, the phone survey became untenable in terms of participation by targeted communities and overall data quality, and did not take place.

#### Data reported by implementing partners

Based on the 2019-2023 strategy logframe and the subsequent modifications, LIFT partners are responsible for reporting on 40 indicators - 17 outcome and 23 output indicators.

LIFT is able to report on all indicators, except three:

- » FP -1.2 # of changes in FI related public sector budget allocation/ spending supported by LIFT, because no specific project interventions were designed to address this indicator;
- » AS-1.4 % and # of value chain decent jobs created for vulnerable individuals with LIFT support, because most of the project activities contributing to this indicator were concluded in the early 2020;
- » DP-1.2 # of changes in labour related public sector budget allocation/spending supported by LIFT, because no achievements were realised in 2020.

Output level reporting is essentially based on reach attained through the various activities. Data on these indicators is reported every six months in line with LIFT's reporting requirements. LIFT has a standard reporting sheet, which was modified to capture additional levels of desegregation including age groups, various categories and levels of disability, beneficiary occupation and geographical locations. Partners receive training on how to fill various components of the reporting sheets and have a user manual for continuous reference, they were inducted on the refreshed logframe indicator reference sheets and received detailed guidance on the indicators' measurement. This contributed to improved reporting, particularly for the household-level outcome indicators in the Agriculture, Markets and Food Systems Programme and the Decent Work and Labour Mobility Programme.

LIFT has maintained an elaborate IP data review and verification process to assure quality of the reported data. The stages in this process are:

- » IP data is first submitted to LIFT thematic/regional programme officers for first level review and quality checks focusing on accuracy

in aggregations, completeness and double counting.

- » Verified data is submitted to LIFT's thematic M&E officers for a second level of review focusing on consistency with the narrative reports.
- » Verified data is finally submitted to the LIFT Data Management Officer for entry into the LIFT database and final quality checks and aggregation is completed to establish achievement levels as per the indicator measures.
- » Once data has been verified in the LIFT database, the final activity and indicator data reports are produced and submitted to LIFT's MEAL Specialist for final reporting.

#### Fund Management Office

A few of LIFT's activities including policy engagement on some issues across the four thematic areas and support to civil society are undertaken by LIFT's FMO. Data from these activities is collated by the various FMO teams and incorporated in the relevant indicators. A wide range of evaluations and special studies commissioned every year contribute to LIFT's learning, case studies, and insights that are reflected in programmes' narrative reporting.

In line with LIFT's reporting practice, reported data includes cumulative achievements from 2010 to 2020 to indicate LIFT's overall progress over the full period of LIFT's work. For the new and modified indicators however, cumulative data includes achievements only from 2019 when they were first measured. Subsequent columns of the reported results detail specific achievements of the current year, and note the milestones originally set and percentages of targets achieved.

A distinction is maintained between 'core' LIFT programming, where LIFT's geographic, financial inclusion and thematic programmes are implemented, and the areas where only financial inclusion activities take place. The 'core' programme areas are known as Tier 1 and the financial inclusion only areas are known as Tier 2. To avoid double counting, Tier 2 figures are calculated to include all microfinance beneficiary households for the year, and active microfinance beneficiary households are subtracted from Tier 1 figures. Tier 1 and Tier 2 achievements are then added together to obtain the achievements for the year.

For 2020, the number of households reached based on Tier 2<sup>1</sup> programme reach is 2,690,193<sup>2</sup> households (90 per cent women).

<sup>1</sup> A distinction is maintained between the "core" LIFT programming areas where LIFT's thematic, financial inclusion and other programmes are implemented. The "core" programme areas are known as Tier 1 and the financial inclusion only areas are known as Tier 2. To avoid double counting, the total reach is based on Tier 2 reach.

<sup>2</sup> This achievement does not reflect the clients from one MFI. LIFT is currently reviewing and validating the data. Once verified, the total reach for 2020 will be updated accordingly.

## 3.2 LIFT's programme-level indicator results and achievements

### Nutrition - Policy Level

**NP-1: New and/or improved gender-responsive public sector policies, programmes, and expenditure that support:**

- » Implementation of the MS-NPAN<sup>3</sup> including SBCC<sup>4</sup> for MCCT & MIYCF<sup>5</sup>, IMAM<sup>6</sup> scale-up, food fortification, and the ADS<sup>7</sup> nutrition-sensitive agriculture component.

Indicator	Achievement 2010-2019	Achievement 2020	Cumulative Achievement 2010 - 2020	Cumulative Milestone 2020	Per cent Achieved	Data source
NP-1.1 # of changes to nutrition related public sector policies and programmes supported by LIFT	9	2	11	12	92	Programme/IPs
NP-1.2 # of changes in nutrition related public sector budget allocation/ spending supported by LIFT	5	1	6	5	120	Programme/IPs
NP-1.3 # of LIFT supported nutrition related policy oriented events organized	48	29	77	25	308	Programme/IPs
NP-1.4 # of LIFT supported nutrition related policy oriented publications provided to key policy makers	18	9	27	20	135	Programme/IPs

*Table 3.1: Programme-level NP-1 indicators and achievements*

<sup>3</sup> Multisector National Plan of Action for Nutrition (MS-NPAN)

<sup>4</sup> Social and behaviour change communication

<sup>5</sup> Maternal, infant and young child feeding

<sup>6</sup> Integrated management of acute malnutrition

<sup>7</sup> Agriculture development strategy

- » Increased sub-national support for the implementation of the MS-NPAN
- » Implementation of NSPSP<sup>8</sup> including MCCT<sup>9</sup>, social pensions, people with disabilities

#### NP-1.1 # of changes to nutrition-related public sector policies and programmes supported by LIFT

Reported achievements in 2020 were realised through the interventions of two LIFT partners: the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) and Lodestar Company Ltd/SPRRG. As part of DSW's response under the COVID-19 Economic Relief Plan (CERP), top-up benefits for MCCT and social pension beneficiaries were included as one of the interventions for mitigating the impacts of COVID-19 on households' livelihoods. In addition, the Government approved a reduction in the qualifying age (from 85 years to 80 years) for those receiving the one-off social pension, courtesy of the continued advocacy efforts spearheaded by another LIFT partner, HelpAge International. LIFT contributed towards the top-up benefits for the usual MCCT and social pension beneficiaries and the Government financed the one-off benefits for MCCT beneficiaries in other states/regions not funded by LIFT, as well as for the people aged 80-84 years, in response to the COVID-19 situation.

The second contribution to policy was the inclusion of people with a disability (PwD) in the Department of Rural Development's (DRD) M&E framework and the addition of disability-disaggregated data in the CERP. This achievement was the result of evidence emerging from SPRRG's activities under the Inclusive Development by Enabling Existing Actors (IDEA) project. SPRRG worked in two different types of communities: villages that received benefits from the Mya Sein Yaung (MSY) project delivering nutrition and health training, and those that did not. SPRRG collaborated closely with township, district and regional level DRD structures. The key lesson learned from the IDEA project was that the inclusion of PwDs in DRD's programmes is feasible and that small modifications to the design of DRD's programmes can increase PwDs' access to benefits.

#### NP-1.2 # of changes in nutrition-related public sector budget allocation/ spending supported by LIFT

Following the policy achievements mentioned in NP-1.1 above, DSW allocated MMK 655,920,000 (around USD 500,000) from DSW's budget for the top-up social pension in Magway and some parts of Nay Pyi Taw when the beneficiary numbers exceeded the funds provided by LIFT.

<sup>8</sup> National Social Protection Strategic Plan

<sup>9</sup> Maternal and child cash transfer

### NP-1.3 # of LIFT-supported, nutrition-related policy-oriented events organised

LIFT, through the FMO and its partners, recorded significant achievements in organising and promoting policy events to support Myanmar's nutrition agenda. There were 29 policy events conducted by LIFT FMO, WFP/SBN, DSW, Community Partners International and HelpAge International during 2020. Some of these events are highlighted below:

**Multi Sector National Plan of Action for Nutrition (MS-NPAN):** LIFT policy and nutrition teams organised a high level advocacy meeting with members of parliament in February to update the relevant parliamentary committees on the progress of the MS-NPAN planning and implementation. The meeting was part of a broader strategy concerning resource mobilisation to support the longer-term sustainability of the MS-NPAN. As part of the COVID-19 response, LIFT FMO with the National Nutrition Centre and UNREACH organised six multisectoral virtual meetings between June and November with MS-NPAN union level focal points (MoE, MoALI, MoHS, MonREC, MoSWRR) with a view to reaching consensus on proposed steps and actions for ensuring MS-NPAN implementation in the context of COVID-19. Also discussed at the meetings was initiating implementation workshops at the state/region level. Two state-level online consultative meetings with MS-NPAN Kayin State multisectoral focal points were conducted. The meetings agreed to share the revised targets and interventions from each sector with all focal persons and to share the revised costs based on the second meeting's discussions and recommendations.

On 17 December 2020, LIFT's FMO together with UNREACH organised a high-level advocacy meeting attended by key officials from MoHS, MoE, MoSWRR, MoALI and MoNREC. It was decided that MoALI, FDA, DoPH and DMR would coordinate on the Food Law and that the micronutrient survey results would be shared in the third parliamentary session.

**Maternal and Child Cash Transfer (MCCT):** LIFT FMO organised an event in February titled Social and behaviour change approaches for nutrition outcomes: Lessons and policy implications from and for the MCCT Programme. During the event, LIFT shared the findings of a collaborative review that examined different SBCC modalities and the implications for supporting a sustainable and government-led approach. Speakers and panelists included government representatives from MoHS, MoSWRR, DFID, the World Bank, and LIFT's implementing partners. IPA shared evidence from the LEGACY project's randomised control trial in the Dry Zone and Save the Children delivered a presentation looking at the different modalities applied within MCCT programmes. In November 2020, LIFT and Access To Health organised a Chin Nutrition Programme Scoping Workshop attended by Chin State Health Department leaders who discussed ways of improving Chin State's nutrition status through

collaboration with the cash transfer programme led by DSW.

**SUN Business Network (SBN):** On 14 February, SBN held an advisory committee meeting with ministry focal officials, private sector representatives, donor agencies, CSOs, officials from the SUN Civil Society Alliance and focal UN organisations in Yangon. Participants discussed the draft SBN strategy, terms of reference of the Advisory Committee, and the SBN membership recruitment process. A virtual meeting for strategy endorsement was organised again on 17 June with officials from the Department of Public Health (DOPH), National Nutrition Centre (NNC) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). At this meeting, progress was made on getting the SBN strategy endorsed by the Director General of DoPH (SUN country focal point) and it was decided to change the Advisory Committee into a Technical Support Group with representatives from NNC, FDA, MoALI, Ministry of Planning, Finance & Industry, Ministry of Commerce (Department of Consumer Affairs), and Yangon City Development Council (YCDC) as requested by DoPH. On 21 December, a consultative meeting was organised with the Deputy Director General of DoPH, NNC, the Social Security Board, Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population (MoLIP) to deliberate on developing and strengthening existing guidelines/policies related to health and nutrition in the workplace across the country. Participants discussed the next steps for SBN Myanmar's workplace nutrition interventions including continuation of factory nutrition assessments, and developing programme design and monitoring frameworks for each company and factory engagement.

**Social Pension:** HelpAge International organised the National Committee on Ageing Meeting 2020 with the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) on 27 January 2020. The meeting made a final revision of the draft rules (by-laws), which was subsequently submitted to the Cabinet. DSW also presented the outline of the draft National Policy on Ageing and introduced the draft Action Plan framework.

### NP-1.4 # of LIFT-supported, nutrition-related, policy-oriented publications provided to key policy makers

LIFT's policy publications remain a critical element of its broader policy agenda to strengthen legislative and policy frameworks. During 2020, 10 policy-oriented publications were developed by LIFT's FMO, Save the Children, The Border Consortium and HelpAge International.

In January 2020, LIFT FMO published a paper Social and Behaviour Change for Nutrition in Maternal and Child Cash Transfer Programmes: Lessons for Policy and Programming in Myanmar.<sup>10</sup> The paper examines how the provision of social and behaviour change (SBC) interventions, alongside the provision of routine health services and cash, can be leveraged for positive nutrition outcomes in MCCT programmes, referencing data and insights from LIFT-funded programmes and global evidence. The paper

<sup>10</sup> [https://www.lift-fund.org/sites/lift-fund.org/files/publication/LIFT\\_tech-ful-report\\_SBCC-modalities-in-MCCT\\_Myanmar\\_Feb\\_2020.pdf](https://www.lift-fund.org/sites/lift-fund.org/files/publication/LIFT_tech-ful-report_SBCC-modalities-in-MCCT_Myanmar_Feb_2020.pdf)

identifies 10 priorities for joint action and programme improvement and specific recommendations targeted to the DSW, the DoPH and LIFT. The findings of the review were presented in the event on 19 February that brought together LIFT, the MSWRR, the MOHS, nutrition partners and donors.

Other publications in 2020 included:

- » National Social Pension Results Assessment report exploring how the national social pension has affected recipient older people, their households, communities and local governance (HelpAge International, June 2020).
- » Left Behind and Destitute: How IDP Communities in Southern Burma/Myanmar are Struggling to Survive during COVID-19 in Burmese and English, documenting the impacts of restrictions on movement on livelihoods of internally displaced people (HURFOM, a Border Consortium partner). A video documentary on how Mon IDPs were coping with restricted access to fields, employment and markets in Thailand and Myanmar was also produced.
- » Stepping into Uncertainty: Refugee and IDP Experiences of Return in Southeast Myanmar (KHRG, a Border Consortium partner).
- » Adapted NiE Program Guidance during COVID -19 pandemic in Myanmar (SUN UN Network).
- » Nutrition Sensitive Guidance in the context of COVID-19 in Myanmar (SUN UN Network with LIFT support, September 2020).
- » Statement in Support of Stronger Regulation and Enforcement of the Order of Marketing of Formulated Food for Infant and Young Child in Myanmar (Save the Children International/ SUN CSA). The statement endorsed the FDA's public announcement not to purchase or consume Nurilatt breast milk substitute products made by MS Nutrition Pte Ltd. in Singapore.

## Nutrition - Systems Level

### NS-1: Increased quality and coverage of nutrition interventions

Indicator	Achievement 2010 - 2019	Achievement 2020	Cumulative Achievement 2010 - 2020	Cumulative Milestone 2020	Per cent Achieved	Data source
<b>NS-1.1 # of individuals reached with LIFT supported nutrition specific interventions</b>	40,122 40,122 F	4,759 3,751 F 1,008 M	44,881 43,873 F 1,008 M	19,591	229	IPs
<b>NS-1.2 # of individuals reached with LIFT supported nutrition sensitive interventions</b>	151,992 131,389 F 20,603 M	72,194 56,233 F 15,961 M	224,186 187,622 F 36,564 M	295,957 <sup>11</sup>	76	IPs

**Table 3.2** Programme-level NS-1 indicators and achievements

#### NS-1.1 # of individuals reached with LIFT-supported, nutrition-specific interventions

In LIFT's 2019-23 logframe, NS-1.1 was added as a new indicator to measure the number of individuals reached with LIFT-supported nutrition-specific interventions, which address the immediate causes of malnutrition: inadequate dietary intake and disease. Only women of reproductive age, adolescent girls and children under five years of age can contribute to this indicator if they are directly targeted, i.e. a) the intervention is intended to reach them specifically, b) the project includes a component to actively promote the uptake of intervention(s) by these groups, and (c) the uptake is monitored in some way. In particular, LIFT programming prioritises women and children in the first 1,000 days, the critical window of opportunity for nutrition.

In 2020, three LIFT partners (Save the Children International, The Border Consortium and World Concern Myanmar) reached 4,759 individuals (79 per cent women/girls) through nutrition-specific interventions. The males reached are boys under five who benefitted from nutrition-specific projects and the females are women of reproductive age, adolescent girls and girls under the age of five. Though the cumulative achievement is still well above the overall target for this indicator, the number of individuals reached through nutrition-specific projects in 2020 is much lower than the previous year. This is because achievements reported in 2019 were mainly attributed to project activities undertaken by Save the Children International, which contributed to over 90 per cent of the indicator's achievement, and other projects implemented by Catholic Relief Services and CDN which closed in late 2019 or early 2020.

<sup>11</sup> 540,803 was the cumulative achievement (2010-2018) of a previous LIFT indicator, PR 5.1: Number of LIFT households reached with nutrition sensitive information. However, this was not counted towards the overall achievement of NS 1.2 since the indicator was changed significantly.



In line with global guidance, all three partners conducting nutrition-specific activities aligned them with complementary nutrition-sensitive activities.

Save the Children's Building Resilience in Conflict Affected Areas of Kachin and Shan States (BRICKS) project aims to improve the incomes and nutrition status of vulnerable people in northern Shan State by promoting resilient livelihoods and food security. BRICKS targets youth and adolescent boys and girls, pregnant and breastfeeding women and children 0-23 months of age who are living in camps for internally displaced people, host communities and conflict-affected villages. In 2020, Save the Children organised meetings for mother leaders of mother-to-mother support groups in six townships of the project intervention area reaching 1,505 new beneficiaries, of which 1,460 were members of the mother groups; 45 children (62 per cent women/girls) received referrals for malnutrition and psychosocial support.

Save the Children's Healthy Choices project seeks to ensure adequate health and nutrition for women of reproductive age and their children during the first 1,000 days through sustained access to decent work, improved nutrition behaviours, and reduced risk from water-borne and communicable diseases in four target wards of Shwe Pyi Thar Township, in peri-urban Yangon. In 2020, Save the Children reached 1,502 female beneficiaries. In Rakhine, Save the Children's Tat Lan Plus's nutrition-specific project activities included the treatment of severe malnutrition among Muslim children in camps for internally displaced people. The project conducted mid-upper arm circumference (MUAC) screening for early detection of malnutrition cases in camps and villages in targeted areas of Sittwe and Pauktaw Townships; 433 children (58 per cent girls) with severe acute malnutrition received treatment and support, were cured and discharged. Information on the project's systems for following up cases of malnutrition and the causes of inadequate nutrition are reported at 4.1 Nutrition and 5.1.1 Rakhine of this report.

World Concern Myanmar's Improving the Nutrition Outcomes of Conflict-Affected People in Kachin State project reached 1,654 beneficiaries (54 per cent women) with LIFT-supported, nutrition-specific interventions which includes participation in mother group sessions, monthly growth monitoring of children aged under five, and individual infant and young child feeding (IYCF) counseling.

The Border Consortium's Sustainable Transformation for Agriculture, Nutrition and Development in Uplands (STAND UP) Phase Two project promotes agricultural productivity, nutrition and social protection in conflict-affected and displaced communities across south-eastern Myanmar. TBC reached 115 (65 per cent women) new beneficiaries; 52 were malnourished children aged under five (52 per cent girls) who received supplemental nutrition support.

The Consortium of Dutch NGOs (CDN's) Improving the incomes and Nutrition Outcomes of Rural Poor in Northern Kayin State project continued implementing mother-to-mother support group sessions and child growth monitoring to reduce stunting. CDN reached 2,143 beneficiaries, although none of them were new and were therefore not counted towards NS 1.1 in 2020.

### NS-1.2 # of individuals reached with LIFT-supported, nutrition-sensitive interventions

NS-1.2 was added to LIFT's logframe to measure the number of unique individuals reached with LIFT-supported, nutrition-sensitive interventions. Nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive interventions are complementary; both are needed to solve the problem of malnutrition.<sup>12</sup> Nutrition-sensitive interventions are those that address the underlying and basic causes of undernutrition.<sup>13</sup> To qualify as nutrition-sensitive interventions, according to LIFT's definition, projects must have an explicit aim to improve nutrition in some way, and must track the achievement of nutrition outcomes. While a wider population group might benefit from nutrition-sensitive projects, the specific target population for this indicator is women of reproductive age, adolescent girls and children under five years of age, as this target group is globally regarded as the most nutritionally vulnerable. Those who are targeted as key influencers also may be counted towards this indicator (NS 1.2) if programme activities are directed towards supporting them to facilitate the target population's adoption of positive behaviours.<sup>14</sup>

The achievement of 72,194 individuals (78 per cent women) reached through nutrition-sensitive programming is largely due to LIFT's social protection and agriculture interventions. Implementing partners such as DSW, CDN, CORAD, TBC, PATH (Smart Move Project), KMSS, Golden Pearl, HPA, Nyein (Shalom), SCI (Healthy Choice, BRICKS and Tat Lan Plus Projects), People In Need and World Concern Myanmar all implemented nutrition-sensitive activities in 2020. As was also the case in 2019, LIFT-supported MCCT programmes led by DSW, with the support of partner organisations, reached a high number of beneficiaries and contributed significantly to the achievement of this indicator.

The Department of Social Welfare's Maternal and Child Cash Transfer (MCCT) Programme, implemented in Chin, Kayah and Kayin States with LIFT support includes the distribution of cash transfers, alongside a SBCC approach and institutional capacity strengthening. The MCCT, which aims to improve the nutritional outcomes for women and children in the first 1,000 days of life, has benefited a cumulative total of 119,866 pregnant and breastfeeding women and their children. Of these beneficiaries, 32,882 have been reached through the Chin MCCT Programme, 71,219 in Kayin, and 15,765 in Kayah. New beneficiaries reached in Chin, Kayah and Kayin in 2020 is 22,046. The Chin State programme was able to report new beneficiaries for the whole year while Kayah and Kayin could only report new beneficiaries for the first

<sup>12</sup> According to a 2013 Lancet Journal publication, nutrition-specific interventions can only address 20 per cent of the global nutrition problem, while the remaining 80 per cent must be tackled through nutrition-sensitive interventions, including agriculture, social protection, decent work, education, and so forth

<sup>13</sup> Underlying and basic causes, according to the UNICEF causal framework for malnutrition, include household food insecurity, inadequate social and care environment, unhealthy environment, poor access to health care, inadequate access to food, income poverty, lack of political stability, limited access to education, gender inequality, lack of financial/physical/human/social/natural capital, etc.

<sup>14</sup> These key influencers may include fathers, grandmothers, community leaders, health workers, or others who can be intentionally supported to positively influence the behaviours of women of reproductive age, adolescent girls, and children under 5 years of age. In order for individuals to be included in the achievement of this indicator, the intervention must be intended to reach those individuals specifically; the project must include a component to actively promote the uptake of intervention(s) by these groups, and the uptake must be monitored in some way.

half of the year. MCCT beneficiaries receive regular and predictable cash transfers: each pregnant woman and mother with a child under two in those states and regions served by the programme are eligible to receive MMK 45,000 (USD 32) every three months. This cash assistance provides mothers with additional income, which is intended to be used for nutrition, health and hygiene related expenses during the first 1,000 days. To facilitate the adoption of positive nutrition, health and hygiene behaviours alongside cash provision, voluntary health workers and basic health staff from the Department of Public Health (DoPH) with the support of village leaders or village tract administrators, implement SBCC field activities, including mother support group sessions, at the village level.

In the Chin MCCT, which is the first government-led MCCT supported by LIFT, an estimated 10,713 new beneficiaries were reached in 2020. Post-distribution monitoring findings continue to show that beneficiaries spend the majority of the transfer on food for themselves, for their child, and on health care costs. For instance, 85 per cent of the mothers reported using the cash to buy additional varieties of food for consumption by their child, marking a significant increase from 54 per cent in the previous round of monitoring. The results demonstrate that pregnant women and mothers have improved knowledge from SBCC on the importance of using the cash to meet their nutrition and health needs.

In the Kayah MCCT, 1,161 new beneficiaries entered the programme in 2020. The Kayah MCCT Programme, which started in October 2018, has now reached a cumulative total of 15,765 beneficiaries. Four rounds of cash payment have been disbursed. Payments of MMK 45,000 (USD 32) are distributed every three months by the Department of Social Welfare and the General Administration Department in government-controlled areas; in areas controlled by ethnic armed organisations the Community Health and Development Network (CHDN) provides this support. As in the other MCCT Programmes, women receiving cash also receive nutrition messaging through mother support groups, established and facilitated by health staff and by CHDN staff. A post-distribution monitoring survey conducted in early 2020, found that 90 per cent of women received information in advance on the time and place to receive the MCCT cash transfer. Of the beneficiaries who were enrolled, 99 per cent received three-monthly payments, as scheduled. Around 70 per cent of the beneficiaries regularly received awareness sessions from skilled health personnel, including midwives and auxiliary midwives. Eighty-four per cent of the beneficiaries reported purchasing a greater quantity or variety of food for themselves. Half the beneficiaries used the cash to buy food for their children and 41 per cent used it to buy food for themselves. Around one-third used the cash for meeting health care costs. In terms of beneficiaries' health-seeking behaviours, skilled birth personnel provided antenatal care services to 96 per cent of the beneficiaries and assisted 91 per cent of them during the delivery of their babies. However, only 16 per cent of mothers received at least one visit post-delivery visit of their youngest child within 48 hours. Hygiene behaviours are widely reported; 94 per cent of the beneficiaries reported washing their hands with water and soap. Overall, findings indicate that women are using the cash for the right purposes, and the level of knowledge on nutrition and hygiene practices has increased.

In the Kayin MCCT Programme, 10,172 new women entered the programme. The Kayin Programme, which also began in 2108, has now reached a cumulative total of 71,219 beneficiaries, with nutrition awareness sessions and payments distributed every three months by the Department of Social Welfare and the General Administration Department. Areas under Karen National Union administration are served by the Karen Department of Health and Welfare. Four rounds of cash transfer have occurred.

Save the Children's Tat Lan Plus project reached 14,391 new beneficiaries (54 per cent women), bringing the cumulative total number of beneficiaries to 17,620 (62 per cent women). Tat Lan Plus delivers social and behaviour change communication (SBCC) activities to mothers, fathers and key influencers, including nutrition education activities related to maternal and child health and nutrition. The Border Consortium's (TBC) Stand Up Phase II project in Kayin, Kayah, Mon and Tanintharyi reached 14,638 new beneficiaries (61 per cent women) through activities such as IYCF education in relevant ethnic languages, MUAC screening, nutrition assistance in nursery schools, capacity building of community health workers and malnutrition surveillance.

KMSS's Supporting Conflict-Affected Women and Infants for Nutrition (Safe Win) reached 2,796 unique female beneficiaries through care groups. Women received nutrition information and seeds for homestead food production. PATH's Smart Move project reached 9,318 beneficiaries (99 per cent women) with SBCC training on basic nutrition, healthy diets and food preparation and nutrition for mothers and children in the first 1,000 days. Save the Children's Healthy Choices project targets four wards of Shwe Pyi Thar Township in peri-urban Yangon, where Rakhine and Ayeyarwady migrant populations from rural areas live; the project reached 1,447 mothers who received cash transfers and one SBCC session.

CDN's improving the Incomes and Nutrition Outcomes of Rural Poor in Northern Kayin State project includes nutrition-sensitive programming to address the underlying causes of child malnutrition and to build household resilience through home gardening and WASH activities. In addition to nutrition-specific activities (NS-1.1 above), CDN reached a cumulative total of 24,533 beneficiaries (53 per cent women) through its nutrition-sensitive activities. Of these, 118 are unique beneficiaries for NS-1.2 in this reporting period.

CDN reported that home gardening provided an important source of nutritious foods when access to markets was restricted due to COVID-19. Quantified data on production from home gardens and its effects on consumption could not be collected due to COVID-19 restrictions. However, partner staff observed that access to fresh vegetables increased among project beneficiaries over the past two years as a result of home gardening activities. The positive effects of home gardening on food security and increased resilience to shocks

were especially visible during the COVID-19 crisis when food supply chains were disrupted and incomes fell, especially in remote areas of Kayin State. WASH activities also significantly contributed to addressing the underlying causes of malnutrition in targeted areas by helping to reduce the incidence of water-borne illnesses. CDN is implementing community-led total sanitation as part of its participatory hygiene and sanitation transformation (PHAST) approach.

CORAD's Promoting Agricultural Diversification and Economic Integration in Northern Chin State project seeks to increase year-round availability of nutritious crops and vegetables, improve diet diversity through introduction of intensive vegetable production, and improve nutrition practices. In 2020, the project distributed seed kits and conducted home gardening activities, reaching 4,746 new beneficiaries (86 per cent women).

Golden Pearl's Improving the Socio-Economic Situation of The Person with Disability project promotes positive nutrition practices, aiming to prevent disability related to poor nutrition. Project interventions include providing nutrition education and nutrition support to pregnant and breastfeeding women, particularly mothers who have children with disabilities. In 2020, the project reached a total of 421 new beneficiaries (86 per cent women).

Additional LIFT-funded projects also contribute to nutrition programming, however do not contribute beneficiary numbers towards NS-1.1 or NS-1.2: Koe Koe Tech's Shwe Maymay project, World Food Programme's Scaling up Fortified Rice Production and Consumption throughout Myanmar project, and Path's national Introduction of Fortified Rice in Myanmar project. The beneficiaries in these projects are not eligible to be counted, either because the project does not have an explicit nutrition objective or did not track nutrition outcomes among individuals. Although these projects' beneficiaries may not be included in NS 1.1 or NS 1.2, the projects contribute towards a number of other nutrition and policy-related indicators in the logframe. The FMO continues to work with partners to ensure that new projects, where relevant and feasible, contribute to the achievement of NS-1.1 and NS-1.2.

Koe Koe Tech's Shwe Maymay project, which seeks to provide credible and reliable first 1,000 days nutrition content accessible for pregnant women, mothers and their partners, distributed its m-health App to 14,583 new users through referrals from Koe Koe Tech and its implementing partners, including PSI and World Vision Myanmar. The maymay App contains digitised and gamified nutrition and health information, including government nutrition messages and content developed by Save the Children's LEARN Project.

PATH's Introduction of Fortified Rice Production in Myanmar project reported that 39,373 new beneficiaries were reached in 2020 with fortified rice distribution, nutrition education and coordination meetings with government and partners. Since 2017, the project has reached a cumulative total of 103,640 beneficiaries. The project finished in June 2020.

The World Food Programme's Scaling Up Fortified Rice Production and Consumption Throughout Myanmar project reached 29,419 new beneficiaries (55 per cent women) in 2020 through distribution of rice as part of a general food distribution and promoting resilience and food security in crisis-affected populations in Rakhine. WFP has distributed 6,448 metric tonnes of fortified rice to 83,210 beneficiaries in Sittwe, Pauktaw, Myebon and Rathedaung townships of Rakhine State.

Indicator	Achievement 2010 - 2019	Achievement 2020	Cumulative Achievement 2010 - 2020	Cumulative Milestone 2020	Per cent Achieved	Data source
FP-1.1 # of changes to FI related public sector policies and programmes supported by LIFT	6	6	12	4	300	Programme/ IPs
FP-1.2 # of changes in FI related public sector budget allocation/spending supported by LIFT	N/A	NA	NA	NA	NA	
FP-1.3 # of LIFT supported FI related policy oriented events organised	29	14	43	16	269	Programme/ IPs
FP-1.4 # of LIFT supported FI related policy oriented publications provided to key policy makers	3	2	5	6	83	Programme/ IPs

**Table 3.3: Programme-level AP-1 indicators and achievements**

## Financial Inclusion

### Financial Inclusion - Policy Level

#### FP-1: New and/or improved gender-responsive public sector policies, programmes, and expenditure that:

- » Support FRD's examination and supervision of MFIs
- » Support MoPF's implementation of the National Savings Mobilisation Policy
- » Support the revision of micro-insurance regulation and practice to better serve MFI clients

### **FP-1.1 # of changes to financial inclusion- related public sector policies and programmes supported by LIFT**

Achievements under this indicator were realised through the policy engagement activities undertaken by LIFT's FMO. LIFT's financial inclusion team sent an official letter to the Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) and Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry (MoPFI) outlining concerns about CBM directives in response to COVID-19. Among the key issues addressed was CBM's directive to lower the interest rate for unsecured loans, which LIFT and other stakeholders identified would reduce foreign investment flow, further reducing liquidity and access to loan capital. As a result, the COVID-19 Economic Relief Plan (CERP), released by Myanmar Government on 27 April 2020 included actions that supported the microfinance sector and the CBM's Director General announced that foreign loans to MFIs would be approved with a 16 per cent interest rate, which was above the CBM's downward adjustment to 14.5 per cent in earlier directives.

Other changes realised were:

- » Due to LIFT's joint effort with the Myanmar Microfinance Association, MoPFI's Financial Regulatory Department released Directive 2/2020 on 6 April that clarified how MFIs could operate under the COVID-19 regulations to ensure business continuity. Among other measures, they were allowed to remain operational by limiting their branch staff to a maximum of five people and as an emergency service, disburse loans and conduct deposit transactions. However, they were not allowed to collect loan principals, interest or savings.
- » The government announced a list of essential businesses including banking and finance that were allowed to continue operations during the COVID-19 outbreak after undergoing inspection to ensure compliance with the government's health and safety guidelines.
- » MoPFI/FRD released a Complementary Notice for MBSC 2/2020 on COVID-19 preparedness and MFI operations on 7 May 2020. MFIs were allowed to operate normally if they complied with the government's COVID-19 health and safety guidelines.
- » LIFT recommended to MoPFI to increase Myanmar Agricultural Development Bank (MADB) loan disbursements by USD 210 million as a COVID-19 response. Starting from June 2020, MADB disbursed an additional USD 180 million for the COVID-19 response. MADB provided a special COVID-19 relief loan of MMK 50,000 (USD 36) per acre to the farmers, in addition to the MMK 150,000 (USD 108) per acre monsoon loan that farmers previously received.

FMO developed new formats for on-site and off-site examination, which the FRD duly adopted and instructed all regional offices to use.

### **FP-1.2 # of changes in financial inclusion-related public sector budget allocation/spending supported by LIFT**

No reportable achievements were realised on this indicator during 2020.

### **FP-1.3 # of LIFT-supported, financial inclusion-related, policy-oriented events organised**

All the 14 policy-oriented activities reported under this indicator were undertaken by LIFT's FMO. Some of these events were:

- » In collaboration with Asia Development Bank (ADB), LIFT and the consulting team organised a meeting at the Financial Regulatory Department (FRD) in Nay Pyi Taw attended by senior government officials, MoSWRR, MoALI, representatives of DFID, ADB, LIFT and the Myanmar Microfinance Association to kick-off the technical assistance component of the Strengthening Climate and Disaster Resilience of Myanmar Communities project. LIFT presented the work plan and an overview of the project that builds capacity for disaster risk financing among the government and the private sector MFIs in Myanmar.
- » The team organised an event on strengthening the resilience of MFIs to natural disasters as part of the ADB-funded Contingent Disaster Liquidity project. The event was attended by regional managers from the Ayeyarwady Region Financial Regulatory Department, Department of Disaster Management, ADB, the Canadian Embassy, MMFA, and MFIs. Participants discussed disaster risk assessment and MFI stress test models, the design of the disaster liquidity facility and MFI disaster planning.
- » LIFT's FMO delivered four workshops on on-site examination and due diligence for deposit taking licensing processes with FRD. Seventy-four participants from 10 FRD Regional offices (Yangon, Mandalay, Bago, Ayeyarwaddy, Tanintharyi, Magwe, Mon, Kayin, Rakhine and Kachin) participated in the training. FMO also delivered two online basic accounting training in which 83 participants from all state and regional offices participated. An online financial analysis training was conducted for 38 participants from seven state and regional FRDs (Mon, Ayeyarwaddy, Bago, Kayin, Rakhine, Tanintharyi and Yangon).

### **FP-1.4 # of LIFT-supported financial inclusion- related, policy-oriented publications provided to key policy makers**

Based on research activities undertaken by its partners, LIFT issued a series of constructive recommendations to the regulators to allow the microfinance sector to rapidly contribute to economic resilience. One such publication, titled Sustaining Myanmar's Microfinance Sector during the COVID-19 Economic Crisis to Support Food Security, Resilience, and Economic Recovery was published by IFPRI based on a desk review conducted soon after the pandemic started. It discussed the significant risks facing microfinance institutions in Myanmar in the wake of the COVID-19 health and economic crisis and the implications for poverty and food insecurity. LIFT's FMO outlined additional policy recommendations through a weekly newsletter Myanmar Financial Services Brief.

## Financial Inclusion Programme - System Level

### FS-1: Increased institutional capacity for provision of inclusive and socially responsible financial services

Indicator	Cumulative Achievement 2010 - 2019 <sup>15</sup>	Achievement 2020	Cumulative Achievement 2010 - 2020	Milestone 2020	Per cent Achieved	Data Source
FS-1.1 %/# of LIFT supported MFIs financially self-sustaining	20	14	N/A	24*	58	Programme/IPs
FS-1.2 %/# of LIFT supported MFIs operating efficiently	25	19	N/A	24*	79	Programme/IPs
FS-1.3 # of individuals with access to LIFT supported financial services (individual clients)	3,295,040 2,955,466 F 339,574 M	2,912,271 2,628,452 F 283,819 M	N/A	3,000,000	97	Programme/IPs
FS-1.4 Value of private sector investment leveraged	USD 257 mln (Yoma) USD 261 mln (TCX)	USD 50.5 mln (Yoma)	USD 307 mln (Yoma) USD 261 mln (TCX)	310,000,000 <sup>16</sup>	183	Programme/IPs

Table 3.4: Programme-level AH-1 indicators and achievements

#### FS-1.1 %/# of LIFT supported MFIs financially self-sustaining <sup>17</sup>

LIFT aims to make responsible financial services accessible in rural and urban areas by supporting the institutional and financial sustainability of its financial service providers. LIFT expected 24 MFIs it supports to attain financial self-sustainability in 2020. However, there were only 23 MFIs operating with LIFT support in 2020. Of the 23 MFI partners (10 local MFIs, two credit cooperatives, 10 international MFIs and one joint venture microfinance company), 14 were financially self-sustaining (covering operational costs by income after adjusting for financial costs and inflation). This represents an achievement of 60 per cent of the 2020 target based on the 23 MFIs currently receiving support and 58 per cent based on the targeted 24 MFIs.

COVID-19 had a significant impact on financial institutions and on clients' businesses, which consequently affected MFI's sustainability. The Financial Regulatory Department's directives to MFIs to stop loan collections and loan disbursements to reduce clients' loan stress during the pandemic impacted on MFIs' operations and contributed to the fall in achievement of indicators 1.1 and 1.2.

#### FS-1.2 %/# of LIFT-supported MFIs operating efficiently

Operational self-sufficiency (OSS) is the measurement of sustainability, indicating whether revenues from operations are sufficient to cover all operating expenses. By focusing on cost coverage, OSS reflects an MFI's ability to continue operations if it receives no further subsidies. Nineteen MFIs demonstrated operational self-sufficiency, achieving 79 per cent of the 2020 milestone (based on 24 MFIs). As the 2020 achievement is based on only 23 MFIs operating with LIFT support, the achievement on OSS parameters is 83 per cent.

#### FS-1.3 # of individuals with access to LIFT-supported financial services (individual clients)

LIFT's assistance to households through its microfinance partners, at the financial and institutional levels, has grown consistently since 2011. By the end of 2020, LIFT partners had provided financial services, primarily in the form of loans, to 2,912,271 clients; 90 per cent were women. This is an achievement of 97 per cent of the 2020 milestone. The reduced number of individuals is attributable to the fact that LIFT's contract with six MFIs (Myanmar Finance, ASA Myanmar, Fullerton Myanmar, ACLEDA, Sathapana and CARD) came to an end.

#### FS-1.4 Value of private sector investment leveraged

The Currency Exchange Fund (TCX) (capital markets) and Yoma Bank (agribusiness finance) are private sector partners of LIFT's Financial Inclusion Programme. Yoma Bank provided financial services for supporting small and medium rural agri-businesses of USD 50.5 million in 2020, reaching 720,000 rural households.

The amount of funds leveraged from international investors did not change in 2020, a year characterised by significant increases in hedging costs. LIFT's Fund Board approved an additional USD 5.5 million to support MFIs' COVID-19 response in April 2020. In total, LIFT was able to fast-track USD 113 million to respond to the COVID-19 crisis in 2020. As leverage reflects the increasing amount of private sectors' investment in LIFT interventions, cumulative results best capture LIFT's leverage results. For this indicator, 183 per cent of the 2019/20 cumulative target was achieved in 2020.

<sup>15</sup> Achievements for indicators FS-1.1, FS-1.2 and FS-1.3 are non-cumulative. Therefore, numbers reflected are for 2019.

<sup>16</sup> This figure includes the cumulative milestones for 2019 (USD 70,000,000 million) and 2020 (USD 240,000,000 million)

<sup>17</sup> Operating costs and financial costs adjusted for inflation are used to calculate MFIs' financial self-sustainability (FS-1.1). A financially self-sustaining MFI can cover all its expenses and make provisions for adjustments through their incomes. Only operational costs are used to calculate FS-1.2; an MFI is operationally self-sufficient when it can meet all its expenses through income.

## Financial Inclusion - Household Level

### FH-1: Increased utilisation of socially responsible and sustainable financial services

Indicator	Cumulative Achievement 2010 - 2019**	Achievement 2020	Cumulative Achievement 2010 - 2020	Milestone 2020	Per cent Achieved	Data source
FH-1.1 # of clients using micro, small and medium enterprise loans from LIFT supported MFIs and banks	3,816,936 * (MFI) 7,388 (Yoma AFP)	2,387,978 (MFI) 22,394 (Yoma, AFP)	NA	2,400,000 (80%)	100 %	Programme/ IPs
FH-1.2 Total value of loans disbursed by LIFT supported MFIs and banks	USD 3,700 mln (MFI: 3,443, Yoma Bank USD 257 mln. (Yoma Bank)	USD 1,416 mln (MFI: 1,366 mln Yoma Bank: 50.5 mln)	USD 5,048 mln (MFI: 4,741 mln Yoma Bank: 307 mln)	USD 1.35 billion	105%	Programme/ IPs
FH-1.3 % of clients of LIFT supported MFIs and banks who do not meet their loan repayment terms	MFI - less than 1% (>30 days)*  Bank- 5% (>60 days)*	MFI-21% (>30 days)  Bank-7% (>60 days)	NA	1%	20% <sup>18</sup>	Programme/ IPs

Table 3.5: Programme-level DP-1 indicator and achievements

#### FH-1.1 # of clients using micro- small- and medium- sized enterprise loans from LIFT-supported MFIs and banks

In 2020, LIFT supported 23 MFIs that reached 2.9 million clients in all geographical locations in Myanmar. Of these clients, 2.4 million used their loans for micro- small- and medium-sized enterprises (agriculture, business, trade, production and service delivery). This achievement represents 100 per cent of the target for 2020.

#### FH-1.2 Total value of loans disbursed by LIFT-supported MFIs and banks

In 2020, the LIFT-supported financial institutions disbursed a total loan value of USD 1,416 million to their clients. Of this, the MFIs provided USD 1,366 million to about 2.4 million clients and Yoma Bank provided USD 50.5 million to 22,394 clients. The achievement of this indicator is 100 per cent based on the 2020 targeted disbursement amount of USD 1.35 billion.

\*\* Indicators FH-1.1, FH-1.2 and FH-1.3 are all new indicators under the refreshed LIFT Strategy 2019-23 Logframe. Therefore, achievements reflected are not cumulative (from 2010) but represent 2019 achievements

<sup>18</sup> This achievement represents a 20 percentage point increase from the base value of 1 per cent implying more clients were unable to meet their loan commitments. This increase from the base value represents a negative performance for LIFT in terms of clients who were able to meet their loan repayment terms as at June 30, 2020

Indicator	Achievement 2010 - 2019	Achievement 2020	Cumulative Achievement 2010 - 2020	Cumulative Milestone 2020	Per cent Achieved	Data source
AP-1.1 # of changes to agriculture related public sector policies and programmes supported by LIFT	15	2	17	9	189	Programme/ IPs
AP-1.2 # of changes in agriculture related public sector budget allocation/ spending supported by LIFT	2	1	3	1	300	Programme/ IPs
AP-1.3 # of LIFT supported agriculture related policy oriented events organised	40	28	68	17	400	Programme/ IPs
AP-1.4 # of LIFT supported agriculture related policy oriented publications provided to key policy makers	29	46	75	25	300	Programme/ IPs

Table 3.6: Programme-level DS-1 indicators and achievements

#### FH-1.3 % of clients of LIFT-supported MFIs and banks who do not meet their loan repayment terms

Most financial institutions were significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions on their operations in 2020. As a result, 21 per cent of clients of LIFT-supported MFIs and 7 per cent of Yoma Bank clients were unable to meet their repayment terms during this reporting period. The overall achievement of 21 per cent represents a 20 percentage point increase from the base value of 1 per cent and shows a negative performance overall.

## Agriculture, Markets and Food Systems (AMFS) - Policy Level

### AP-1: New and/or improved gender-responsive public sector policies, programmes, and expenditure that support: AP-1.1 # of changes to agriculture-related public sector policies and programmes supported by LIFT

Michigan State University's phone surveys on the impact of COVID-19 confirmed that all actors in the agricultural food system (input retailers, mechanisation service providers and equipment retailers, farmers and traders) were experiencing liquidity constraints and lower revenues as result of lost income sources and barriers to internal and regional trade. This analysis contributed to the Government's decision to provide an

additional COVID-19 recovery loan for the monsoon season of MMK 50,000 MMK (USD 36) per acre for 12 million acres, amounting to MMK 600 billion (USD 432 million), through the Myanmar Agricultural Development Bank (MADB). The agricultural small- and medium-enterprises (SMEs) were included in the list of eligible recipients for a second round of COVID-19 SME loans. The findings of the survey were shared with LIFT, USAID and the agriculture, rural development sector coordination group stakeholders.

In March 2020, under the REAL DEV project, funded by LIFT and implemented by Network Activities Group (NAG), Land Core Group (LCG) and Centre for Development and Environment (CDE), a high level ad hoc committee was established, chaired by the regional MoALI Minister with the Department of Agricultural Land Management and Statistics (DALMS) Director as secretary. This ad hoc committee was formed by the Union MoALI Minister to provide strategic guidance to the land reallocation process and any land related issues in Minhla Township, Magway Region; demonstrating government commitment to the project's implementation.

#### **AP-1.2 # of changes in agriculture related public sector budget allocation/spending supported by LIFT**

As mentioned in AP-1.1, the Government decided to provide an additional COVID-19 recovery loan for the monsoon season. Michigan State University's research contributed to the decision.

#### **AP-1.3 # of LIFT-supported, agriculture-related, policy-oriented events organised**

LIFT recorded significant achievements on this indicator consistent with the trend over the past five years. LIFT's FMO and its partners, including Welthungerhilfe, Land Core Group, Network Activities Group and Michigan State University, conducted 28 policy-related events surpassing the planned overall target of nine for 2020. A few of the key events undertaken were:

A Parliamentary field visit was held to support better policy engagement between Union and State level governments. The group visited IFDC's Agro-Input and Farm Services Uplands project, which is implemented through a partnership between the government, private sector and IFDC in Kayah State.

National land use policy (NLUP) and customary tenure dialogue, jointly with National Democratic Institute (NDI) and AHEFC, where LCG presented how customary tenure is interconnected with the existing land laws and NLUP. The event highlighted the need for more clarity on customary land tenure, given the different interpretations and legislations existing in the states and regions, particularly in ethnic states. These considerations also need to part of the national land law formulation.

In February, 2020, the Rice Seed Sector Development (RSDD) project, implemented by Welthungerhilfe (WHH) organised the official handover of seed farm assets to the Ayeyarwady Region DoA, which firmly committed to reserve an annual budget for the infrastructure's maintenance.

The REAL DEV project organised three meetings with the regional ad-hoc committee formed in 2020. The project also conducted three multi-stakeholder workshops on land reallocation processes at township, regional and national levels. The national strategic meeting on the land reallocation process was conducted in August with the Department of Agriculture Land Management and Statistics (DALMS), LIFT and the project team. The meeting focused on legislation and mapping in the project area.

LCG organised and facilitated a workshop for DALMS to review the VFV Lands Management Law (2018). The workshop resulted in a common understanding of the challenges, lessons learned and standard operational procedures used to address implementation issues in relation to the land legislation. In August, LCG conducted a meeting with the Union Attorney General's Office (UAGO) Director General and Directors on public consultation about the law. Following the meeting, materials were uploaded to the UAGO website and an invitation for public feedback was published in newspapers and on television.

Michigan State University organised three webinar sessions and presented findings of phone surveys conducted to assess the impacts of COVID-19 on Myanmar's crop value chains, on Myanmar's economy and the impact of falling remittances on poverty and on Myanmar's livestock and fishery sectors. Another three webinar sessions were conducted in the second half of 2020 to update stakeholders on the welfare of urban and rural households and communities in terms of employment, income and food security after the economic disruption caused by COVID-19.

A virtual national policy round table titled Developing Myanmar's Edible Insect Sector was held by SPECTRUM on 10 December 2020 as part of Spectrum's edible insect work. Key policy gaps, opportunities for investments and strategies for future development of the sector were discussed. Around 100 participants including parliamentarians, the Karen State Minister and Director, Director of MoALI, Deputy Director of MoHS (nutrition sector), Director General of the Forest Department, Chairman of National Education Policy Commission Session, other stakeholders from universities, fishery farmers, farmers groups, INGOs and NGOs participated in the event.

#### **AP-1.4 # of LIFT-supported, agriculture-related, policy-oriented publications provided to key policy makers**

Policy-oriented publications remain a critical pillar of LIFT's evidence-based approach to influencing gender responsive, climate-smart and nutrition-sensitive policy development and reforms in agriculture markets and rural development. Publications in 2020 were mostly

generated from research activities undertaken by Michigan State University (MSU).

Commercial Poultry and Pig Farming in Yangon's Peri-Urban Zone presented results from a comprehensive structured survey of medium- and large-scale pig and poultry farms in the peri-urban zone surrounding Yangon. Policy implications were highlighted.

Maize and Pigeon Pea Production, Profitability, and Tied Credit in Southern Shan State was published by MSU in 2020 and presented results from the most comprehensive survey of maize cultivators conducted in Myanmar. The research was designed to test characterisations of hybrid maize farming in the literature on Myanmar empirically, and identify implications for development policy and programming.

Thirty-five policy notes were prepared from the COVID-19 phone surveys, highlighting the impacts of COVID-19 on agricultural input retailers, mechanisation service providers and agricultural equipment retailers and how to strengthen smallholder agriculture to defend food and nutrition security and rural livelihoods. MSU also prepared four policy notes concerning community perceptions of the social and

Indicator	Achievement 2010- 2019	Achievement 2020	Cumulative Achievement 2010 - 2020	Cumulative Milestone 2020	Per cent Achieved	Data source
AS-1.1 # of LIFT supported value chain service providers (public, private, CSO) promoting inclusive, climate smart and nutrition-sensitive agricultural production	158	3	161	72	224	IPs
AS-1.2 %/# of LIFT-supported input/service providers reporting business growth	71	36	107	75	142	IPs
AS-1.3 %/# of individuals reached by LIFT-supported agricultural advisory services	302,760 105,048 F 197,712 M	7804 3654 F 4150M	310,564 108,702F 201,862M	331,200	94	Ips
AS-1.4 # of value chain related decent jobs created for vulnerable individuals with LIFT support	591	0	591	840	70	IPs

**Table 3.7: Programme-level DH-2 indicator and achievements**

economic impacts of COVID-19 in Myanmar. Other contributions to this indicator came from The Border Consortium, which published its Report on Survey of Natural Resource Management Practices of Indigenous People in October 2020.

## Agriculture, Markets and Food Systems (AMFS), System Level

### AS-1: Value chain actors promote inclusive, climate smart and nutrition-sensitive agriculture

#### AS-1.1 # of LIFT supported value chain service providers (public, private, CSO) promoting inclusive, climate smart and nutrition-sensitive agricultural production

Four implementing partners (Mercy Corps, Welthungerhilfe, IFDC and CDN/ZOA) reported engaging with 41 value chain service providers in 2020. Thirty-eight of these had already been identified and supported in 2019 while three were new service providers identified in 2020 in the Rice Seed Sector Development project. There were limited new interventions because of COVID-19 restrictions and a reduced number of new projects under the AMFS thematic area. Cumulatively, LIFT partners have reached 161 value chain service providers exceeding estimated targets, as was reported in 2019. Based on the 2020 milestone of 72 providers, the target achievement for this indicator is 219 per cent.

Mercy Corps assisted five companies (Golden Sunland, U Hla Yee and another three millers) to carry out fixed-price contract farming with 374 farmers. In total, 182 farmers received loans from Daung Capital (for farmers engaged with Golden Sunland) and U Hla Ye (for farmers engaged in contract farming with the miller); the total loan amount was around USD 73,000. USD 4,000 worth of seed was provided on credit to 186 farmers and USD 98,000 worth of fertiliser was provided on credit to 305 farmers. Fifty-three private sector actors were engaged in these activities and 2,977 smallholder farmers (29 per cent women) accessed new or improved private sector extension and agriculture services. Mercy Corps supported millers to access other potential sources of finance, including through the green finance scheme provided by the Responsible Business Fund (RBF). Mercy Corps assisted A Bank and Daung Capital (MFI) to provide loans to farmers through farmer producer enterprises engaged in contract farming for summer paddy 2019/2020.

IFDC supported 27 input service providers (ISPs); 51 per cent were women. Two ISPs resigned from the programme due to time and resource restrictions. The ISPs submitted business development plans, which focused mostly on warehouse expansion, post-harvest processing (drying, milling), machinery purchase (for hire and delivery services) and investment in new inputs. Ten business training sessions were conducted with the ISPs. CDN/ZOA collaborated with four national



partners and the Department of Agriculture (DoA) to build the capacity of farmers on sound environmental practices for cardamom production. The project also worked with 97 crop producer groups who received agricultural extension training and crop visits.

Welthungerhilfe's Rice Seed Sector Development project collaborated with three companies that increased their seed storage capacity by completing warehouse construction. The seed companies expanded their seed production areas through the contract farming modality. Forty seed growers (50 per cent women) developed their seed production capacity with additional warehouses and farm machinery. The 40 seed growers participated in COVID-19 response activities and developed monsoon seed production plans without compromising their current seed production capacity.

#### **AS-1.2 %/# of LIFT-supported input/service providers reporting business growth**

This indicator measures business growth of input/service providers supported by LIFT. LIFT's support focused on strengthening networking and linkages between the various market actors including private input and services providers (ISP), farmers, extension services and the Department of Agriculture. Business growth is broadly perceived to encompass quantity or value of inputs provided (for input providers), value of financial services provided (for financial service providers), or total revenue or net profit from input/ service provision. In 2020, 36 input service providers, (IFDC: 27, WHH: 3 and CDN: 6) reported business growth. Based on the 2020 milestone of 75 inputs /service providers the target achievement of this indicator is 142 per cent.

IFDC's Agro-Input and Farm Services Uplands project provided farmer training and demonstrations, farmer field days, and a cost-share grant model for business enhancement targeting low-income smallholder farmers and ISPs in Kayah and Kayin. The ISPs received business grants with the requirement that 25-30 per cent would go towards farmer vouchers, 25 per cent for technology transfer and 50 per cent for business development.

Under the WHH-RSSD project, the seed growers and the contract farmers faced negative impacts of COVID-19 due to restrictions that prevented farmers reaching markets, limiting cash flows that restricted their seed production for the monsoon season. RSSD designed a quick cash support intervention to encourage the seed growers and contract farmers to continue their seed production business during the pandemic, and this ensured that the companies could still expand the area under seed production.

#### **AS-1.3 %/# of individuals reached by LIFT-supported agricultural advisory services**

LIFT partners continued to deliver advisory services in a variety of ways including direct extension to individuals in villages, training courses at different levels, farmer field schools and training conducted by village trainers. In 2020, 7,293 individuals (46 per cent women) were reached with advisory services. Cumulatively, LIFT has now reached 310,053 individuals since 2010. The achievements reported were mainly derived from activities undertaken by CORAD, CDN/ZOA, the International Fertilizer Development Center (IFDC), Welthungerhilfe, Awba, The Border Consortium and World Concern Myanmar.

CORAD, in collaboration with GRET and the Department of Agriculture, reached 4,895 rice and vegetables farmers (51 per cent women) with training in seed selection, cultivation techniques, water management and other key practices.

IFDC conducted its regular training for rice farmers by using extension videos; 19 videos were produced during the COVID-19 work-at-home phase. The use of videos limited the number of farmers reached, and in 2020, 390 farmers received training each month, compared to the 700 usually reached each month with in-person training. IFDC estimates that at least 2,000 farmers missed out on training opportunities due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, 1,400 individual farmers were reached with training on good agricultural practices and budgeting.

CDN contributed to improved knowledge on agricultural crop production through training producer groups on agricultural extension, water infrastructure operation and maintenance and soil fertility management. CDN reached 113 beneficiaries (26 per cent women) in 2020.

Welthungerhilfe assisted 118 farmers who were engaged in contract farming to prepare around 387 acres of land for seed production during the monsoon season.

The Border Consortium (TBC) and World Concern Myanmar (WCM) reached a combined total of 911 beneficiaries (47 per cent women) through their various interventions on agricultural production, agribusiness, nutrition and social protection targeting the conflict-affected and displaced communities across south-eastern Myanmar. TBC delivered intensive training on sustainable agriculture, the extension of irrigation canals and repair of motorbike roads to improve access to markets. Training activities conducted by WCM focused on setting up producer groups, inclusive agri-business, markets for the poor and value chain development.

#### **AS-1.4 # of value chain related decent jobs created for vulnerable individuals with LIFT support**

There were no reportable achievements under this indicator in 2020.

## Agriculture, Markets and Food Systems (AMFS), Household Level

**AH-1: Increased production, income and food security through commercialisation and/or diversification of sustainable and nutrition-sensitive agriculture<sup>19</sup>**

Indicator	Achievement 2010 - 2019	Achievement 2020	Cumulative Achievement 2010 - 2020	Cumulative Milestone 2020	Per cent Achieved	Data source
AH-1.1 %/# of people reached by LIFT-supported advisory services using Good Agricultural Practices, inputs and technologies (including mechanisation)	19,819 4,731 F 15,088 M	6,857 3,269 F 3,588 M	26,676 8,000 F 18,676 M	22,000	121	IPs
AH-1.2 Area/% of cultivated land under Good Agricultural Practices in LIFT areas.	17,127	18,921	36,048	37,000	97	Programme/ Ips
AH-1.4 #/% of LIFT supported farmers reporting increased income from agricultural activities	7,972	1,789	9,761	18,900	52	IPs

**Table 3.8: Programme-level DH-2 indicator and achievements**

### AH-1.1 %/# of people reached by LIFT-supported advisory services using Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), inputs and technologies (including mechanisation)

This indicator tracks the adoption of GAP through regular or periodic data collection activities targeting farmers who received GAP training, inputs and technology. IPs adopted mixed method qualitative and quantitative approaches to evaluate rates of GAP adoption. LIFT IPs reported that more than 26,676 people (121 per cent achievement) were using at least one GAP. Almost 8,000, or roughly 29 per cent, were female-headed households. In 2020, 6,857 people were reached by IFDC (1,159), CORAD (4,806), CDN (55) AWBA (296) and TBC (541). CORAD's follow up monitoring activities on slash and mulch techniques allowed farmers in 20 villages to see the crop results on experimentation plots and to observe farmers applying the technique in other villages. The 895 farmers (52 per cent women) who adopted GAP reported that crops in mulching plots had improved growth rates. Chin farmers applying GAP achieved average corn yields of 31.2 baskets; which were higher than yields achieved by farmers not applying GAP. IFDC sought farmer

feedback on the new 'farmer walks' extension model, which facilitates more private sector/service-oriented information exchange with farmers. Responses from the GAP adopters suggest the approach is working well and is another tool that can be adopted by other stakeholders, including DoA, input service providers and NGOs.

### AH-1.2 Area/% of cultivated land under Good Agricultural Practices in LIFT areas.

This indicator measures the area of land in acres where farmers who have been supported by LIFT IPs apply GAP. Four implementing partners reported that LIFT farmers had applied at least one GAP practice on 18,921 acres of land. Mercy Corps reported about 9,891 acres of farmland had been put under GAP through contract farming schemes. Based on individual farmers, as well as group records, CORAD reported about 4,748 acres had been put under GAP. The WHH-RSSD project reported 3,203 acres of land under contract farming for certified seeds production. Awba reported 1,079 acres of land under GAP for seed production: black gram (yezin-5) 14.44 acres, chickpea (yezin-11) 1.77 acres, chickpea (yezin-12) 38.82 acres, chickpea (yezin-6) 93.61 acres, green gram (yezin-14) 39.69 acres, sesame (Magway black) 73.46 acres, sesame (sin-14) 99.87 acres, soybean (yezin-15) 1.29 acres and 716.415 acres of land used for rice cultivation.

### AH-1.4 #/% of LIFT supported farmers reporting increased income from agricultural activities

This indicator measures the number of households reached by LIFT-supported advisory services who reported increased income from agricultural activities since the commencement of the new strategy in 2019. The percentage is the fraction of the total number of households reached by LIFT-supported advisory services as reported in AS-1.3, who reported increased income. IFDC reported their achievements based on initial analysis of the end-line survey. A total of 1,789 farmers (32 per cent of all farmers) had increased incomes/revenue ranging from 10-44 per cent depending on crops and 29 ISPs had increased their revenues. The remaining three implementing partners reported achievements in 2019 and no more studies were conducted in 2020 because the projects ended. The achievement of this target is 52 per cent since most of the agriculture projects ended by early 2020, and no new agriculture projects were contracted.

<sup>19</sup> LIFT will adopt a dual approach to measuring the three household indicators AH-1.1, AH 1.2 and AH-1.4. To mitigate against potential IP level data gaps and variations in methodology. This will entail tracking performance through the implementation partners monitoring systems as well as through the LIFT household survey. Indicator AH-1.3 will be measured through the LIFT household survey.

## Decent Work and Labour Mobility (DWLM) - Policy Level

**DP-1: New and/or improved gender-responsive public sector policies, programmes, and expenditure on:**

- » Labour rights and social protection (e.g., ratify C189, Violence Against Women Law, Social Security Law)
- » Labour migration governance (e.g., Law Relating to Overseas Employment, Plan of Action on Labour Migration)
- » Forced labour, child labour and anti-trafficking (e.g., Plan of Action on Forced Labour, Anti-Trafficking in Persons Law)
- » Employment and skills development (e.g., Skills Development Law, TVET Law, National Occupational Competency Standards)

Indicator	Achievement 2010 - 2019	Achievement 2020	Cumulative Achievement 2010 - 2020	Cumulative Milestone 2020	Per cent Achieved	Data source
DP-1.1 # of changes to labour related public sector policies and programmes supported by LIFT	11	1	12	12	100	Programme/IPs
DP-1.2 # of changes in labour related public sector budget allocation/spending supported by LIFT	3	0	3	1	300	Programme/IPs
DP-1.3 # of LIFT supported labour related policy-oriented events organised *	133	37	170	97	175	Programme/IPs
DP-1.4 # of LIFT supported labour related policy oriented publications provided to key policy makers	42	26	68	19	358	Programme/IPs

**Table 3.9: Programme-level DH-2 indicator and achievements**

### DP-1.1 # of changes to labour-related public sector policies and programmes supported by LIFT

In 2020, the Working Group on Migration Mainstreaming was established with the support of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in its Tve Let project. The working group will serve as a sub-group to the Interministerial Coordination Group responsible for the implementation of the 2nd National Plan of Action for the Management of International Labour Migration. It will convene quarterly and will be chaired by the Director General of the Department of Labour with IOM as secretary.

### DP-1.2 # of changes in labour related public sector budget allocation/spending supported by LIFT

No reportable achievements were realised under this indicator.

### DP-1.3 # of LIFT supported labour-related policy-oriented events organised

Reported achievements were based on a broad range of policy-related activities undertaken by ILO, CARE, BBC Media Action, WON, People In Need, IFPRI, ADRA and LIFT's FMO. The events included bilateral meetings with government officials, working group meetings, workshops and public events, at national and regional levels. The events addressed a number of issues, key ones being labour protection for domestic workers, employment and skills development, labour migration governance, forced labour and anti-trafficking, migrant labour rights and women's rights, discussion on the laws relating to overseas employment and social security and the adaptation of project activities to COVID-19.

Some of the policy events undertaken by ILO included:

- » Consultative meeting on the draft Domestic Work Bill with Amyotha Hluttaw Committee on Immigration, Local and Overseas Workers and the Domestic Worker Working Group meeting with Parliamentarian Women and Peace Group, both in February.
- » Presentation of the draft paper Extension of social protection to internal migrants in the informal sector to stakeholders at a validation workshop held in Nay Pyi Taw, attended by the Director Generals of the Department of Labour, Department of Social Welfare and National Skills Standards Authority.
- » An online meeting conducted in June with the Department of Labour on the draft revised Law on Overseas Employment, during which it was agreed that tripartite consultations would be organised to move to enact the amended bill as soon as possible.
- » The first meeting of the Rakhine State Skills Development Technical Working Group was organised in February. The meeting discussed the establishment of a database that would collect and analyse programmes, plans and achievements of various providers of TVET and skills development services and interventions.
- » Televised discussion programmes were recorded with key stakeholders who discussed issues related to international labour migration, dispute resolution and occupational health and safety, allowing workers to directly ask questions and have their voices heard by high-level policy makers within the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population.

Care International submitted an advocacy paper and held follow-up meetings to provide recommendations for the enactment of the Prevention of Violence Against Women Law, as well as advice on ratifying the ILO Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190) to 43 members of parliament. PIN organised an advocacy workshop for trade unions and civil society organisations on constructive policy dialogue in June 2020. Two media and migration workshops were organised in Nay Pyi Taw and Mon State to improve collaboration between media and migration stakeholders, during which parliamentarians from the Immigration, Local and Overseas Workers Affairs Committee (Amyotha Hluttaw) and Farmers and Workers Affairs Committee (Pyithu Hluttaw) expressed their commitment to amending the legal framework for

international migration to enhance protection of migrant workers.

WON organised a 16 Days of Activism campaign in December 2020 that involved 1,348 people (53 per cent women). The campaign raised awareness of migrants' labour rights, women's rights and the roles of women in leadership.

LIFT's FMO organised a UK Trade Envoy field visit to Eden Myanmar's office in Yangon. As a LIFT community of practice, the FMO conducted a workshop with implementing partners on adaptive management of skills development activities during COVID-19. It included presentations by six INGOs, group discussions and presentations on lessons identified and best practices of adaptive management.

#### DP-1.4 # of LIFT-supported, labour-related, policy-oriented publications provided to key policy makers

LIFT's policy publications remain a critical element of its broader policy influencing agenda to strengthen legislative and policy frameworks on labour and social protection, migration governance, anti-trafficking and skills development. Achievements in 2020 consisted of 26 publications by LIFT FMO and implementing partners including:

- » CARE published a feasibility study report titled Vocational Skills Training & Educational Opportunities for Out of School Youth, a reflection paper titled Advocating for safe and respectful workplaces: Experiences of a collaborative advocacy initiative on sexual harassment in Myanmar's garment sector and advocacy papers related to the Prevention of Violence Against Women Law and Convention 190.
- » IFPRI published one policy note that focused on the likely impact on household income and poverty in Myanmar of declines in international and domestic remittances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- » ILO published COVID 19: Impact on Migrant workers and country response in Myanmar and Experiences of ASEAN migrants during COVID-19.
- » IOM published 11 situation reports on the COVID-19 response in Myanmar.
- » PIN published the Post-Distribution Monitoring Report Shwe Pyi Thar Township for COVID-19 response.
- » World Vision published Labor Market Mapping for IDP Households and Vulnerable Communities in Kachin State and Household Economy Analysis for IDP Camps in Kachin State.
- » LIFT's FMO contributed to the drafting of the United Nations Joint Statement on Support for Myanmar Nationals Returning from Abroad.
- » LIFT's FMO published a policy brief on Impact of COVID-19 on Migrants and Remittances in Myanmar, in collaboration with the UNCDF regional and national offices.
- » ADRA published 6 TVET short courses curricula: (1) Basic motorcycle

repair and maintenance, (2) Basic electrical house wiring & installation, (3) Basic computer & office administration, (4) Basic construction, (5) Advanced motorcycle repair and maintenance and (6) Sewing.

- » ADRA published the COVID-19 Socio-Economic Impact Assessment report. The impact assessment is a follow up to a labour market study conducted in 2019, to reassess the relevance of trades previously identified, the status and viability of existing and potential markets, employment and self-employment opportunities in light of the pandemic. The study engaged with businesses across each key trade to understand the short-, medium- and long-term impacts of COVID-19 on business and the status of employment and potential opportunities for trainees.

## Decent Work & Labour Mobility (DWLM) System Level

**DS-1: Enhanced capacity of stakeholders to support decent work (including reducing gender wage gap), labour mobility and anti-trafficking**

**DS-1.1 # of stakeholder representatives trained to support decent work and labour mobility**

Indicator	Achievement 2010 - 2019	Achievement 2020	Cumulative Achievement 2010 - 2020	Cumulative Milestone 2020	Per cent Achieved	Data source
<b>DS-1.1 # of representatives of government, private sector, civil society, labour organizations and media trained with LIFT support on labour and social protection, safe migration and anti-trafficking, by sex.</b>	4,093 2,426 F 1,667 M	2,765 1,586 F 1,179 M	6,858 4,012 F 2,846 M	3,999	171	IPs
<b>DS-1.3 Amount of money awarded to workers for redress of grievances and fulfilment of benefit claims (modified)</b>	MMK 658.8 m. (equivalent of USD 470,571)	MMK 1200.7m. (equivalent of USD 877,086)	MMK 1859.5m. (equivalent of USD 1,347,657)	US\$ 700,000	193	IPs

**Table 3.10: Programme-level DH-2 indicator and achievements**

Eleven LIFT partners provided training to different stakeholders including representatives from government, CSOs, labour organisations, private sector firms, media and community leaders. Training topics focused on labour rights, labour attache services for migrants, complaint mechanisms, sexual harassment, media reporting on migration, supervision and management in factories, enterprise development, pedagogical skills for TVET teachers and case management and trauma counselling for trafficking survivors.

Trainings conducted by IOM included:

- » Capacity building training on migration research to the Center for Economic and Social Development (CESD), in partnership with Australian National University (ANU). This partnership was initiated with an eight-day capacity building workshop held in February for 21 local researchers (50 per cent women), facilitated by ANU experts in migration, demography and survey design.
- » Online qualitative research practices training to 37 Twe Let partners staff (14 per cent women).
- » Training of trainers on the safe migration curriculum and on providing direct assistance to victims of people trafficking.
- » Prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse training to 12 staff (67 per cent women) and safe migration training to all IOM staff and staff from local partner organisations.
- » Training on revolving fund management to 11 participants (55 per cent women), and a migration governance workshop for local CSO/CBO partners, 13 participants (38 per cent women).

World Vision provided gender and disability inclusion training to 194 Village Development Committee members from 71 target areas in Kachin State. The project is designed to advance the status of women and people with disabilities through implementation of community action plans.

Care International through the Aung Myin Hmu project supported the Confederation of Trade Unions in Myanmar to provide training on prevention of sexual harassment in the workplace to trade union leaders from Sagaing, Magway and Bago regions, reaching 132 participants (83 per cent women). To support greater compliance with labour laws, ActionAid Myanmar provided training to 96 stakeholders (59 per cent women) from private sector companies in peri-urban Yangon.

In 2020, 120 government officials joined capacity building events provided by LIFT partner organisations. Labour Attaches attended ILO training and government officials attended anti-trafficking prevention and response training delivered by Eden and a media and migration workshop conducted by BBC Media Action. Eden trained five psychology graduates on trauma-informed counseling.

#### **DS-1.3 Amount of money awarded to workers for redress of grievances and fulfilment of benefit claims (modified)**

Legal assistance is a key service provided by LIFT partners to migrant workers to ensure they can obtain fair remedies for exploitation and abuse and claim the social protection benefits to which they are entitled. The ILO's CSO and labour organisation partners reported that 706 migrant workers (30 per cent women) obtained compensation amounting to more than MMK 490 million (USD 353,000) as a result of the legal services provided through their Migrant Centres. Solidarity

Trade Union Myanmar and Action Labour Rights handled labour cases, resulting in 5,792 (87 per cent women) workers receiving compensation of around MMK 670 million (USD 482,000). The SECURE project led by ActionAid Myanmar is also providing legal services and reported that 105 individuals (48 per cent women) received more than MMK 33 million (USD 24,000) in compensation. Overall, 6,628 workers (80 per cent women) received compensation of MMK 1.2 billion (USD 864,000), with each worker receiving an average amount of MMK 181,160 (USD 130).

## **Decent Work and Labour Mobility (DWLM) - Household Level**

**DH-1: Increased access to information, training and support services for women and men migrants and other vulnerable workers**

**DH-1.1 # of individuals successfully completing LIFT-supported training on technical and vocational skills and enterprise development**

Indicator	Achievement 2010-2019	Achievement 2020	Cumulative Achievement 2010 - 2020	Cumulative Milestone 2019	Per cent Achieved	Data source
DH-1.1 # of individuals completing LIFT supported skills development training	76,389 48,418 F 27,971 M	6,083 4,364 F 1,719 M	82,472 62,782 F 29,690 M	95,186	87	IPs
DH-1.2 # of migrant workers and family members provided with LIFT supported information, training and support services	85,828 48,221 F 36,250 M	1,004,482 579,594 F 424,888 M	1,088,953 627,815 F 461,138 M	60,000	1,815	IPs
DH-1.3 # of survivors of trafficking provided with LIFT supported shelter and/or support services	276 F	424 366 F 58 M	700 642 F 58 M	300	233	IPs

**Table 3.11: Programme-level DH-2 indicator and achievements**

Twenty LIFT implementing partners trained a total of 6,083 individuals (72 per cent women), of which 88 reported a single disability and six had multiple disabilities. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, some of the training could not be completed or undertaken as planned. These disruptions contributed to the lower achievements reported in 2020. The primary focus of the training was on vocational and soft skills and enterprise development. Vocational skills training was geared towards employment in the garment sector, construction, hospitality, domestic work, jewelry-making, tailoring, air conditioning repair, motorbike repair and electrical wiring. The partners with major contributions towards this achievement are:

- » Adventist Development & Relief Agency working in Kachin and

northern Shan State trained 434 individuals (25 per cent women) on basic computer, motorbike repairing, electrical wiring, life skills and business skills through in-person classes and online modules. The trainees also received mentorship support.

- » CARE International (Aung Myin Hmu project) trained 838 individuals (92 per cent women) on various courses for the garment sector and provided training on basic computer skills and labour law courses.
- » Eden (Rescue Migrant Women and Girls who have been Trafficked into Sexual Exploitation in Yangon project) trained 722 women, of which 648 received mask making training in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the remainder received training on sewing, jewelry making, hairdressing and beauty salons.
- » International Labour Organization (Skills for Improvement of Livelihoods, Economic Opportunities and Security (TVET) project) trained 278 individuals (50 per cent women) on bricklaying and electrical wiring, business planning, entrepreneurship, hospitality and laundry services.
- » International Organization for Migration (Twe Let project) trained 390 individuals (69 per cent women) on topics including hair cutting, beautician skills, sewing, housekeeping and air-conditioning services.
- » People In Need (Aye Chan Thaw Ein project) trained 500 individuals (64 per cent women) on soft skills, career counseling and food vendor hygiene and sanitation.
- » Save the Children (Tat Lan Plus project) trained 410 individuals (52 per cent women) on financial literacy and business skills.
- » World Vision International (See, Hear, Empower project) trained 747 individuals (93 per cent women) on the 'business eye opener' course, bookkeeping, generating business ideas, business start-up, motorbike and car repair among others.
- » Mercy Corps (Linking Laputta to Markets project) trained 200 individuals (64 per cent women) on business, tailoring and garment skills, driving and mechanic repairs.

#### **DH-1.2 # of migrant workers and family members provided with LIFT supported information, training and support services**

Twelve of LIFT's implementing partners reached 1,004,482 beneficiaries (58 per cent women) with information, training and support services through 14 projects. The high achievements are attributed to COVID-19 response activities that were implemented as part of the large-scale nationwide efforts by Decent Work and Labour Mobility partners to the pandemic. Consequently, 87 per cent of the total reach during this reporting period is attributable to the COVID-19 response activities.

As part of the regular activities, LIFT partners continued to provide a wide range of awareness raising, training and support services for migrants, aspirant migrants and migrant communities, including safe migration training, job matching, legal assistance and psychosocial support, financing for migration, provision of temporary housing for women in crisis, and case management for gender-based violence survivors. As part of the COVID-19 response, the partners provided support including cash, psychosocial support, and distribution of personal protective

materials and hygiene items to the migrants, returnees and migrants' families at their homes and at quarantine sites. Partners with major contributions towards these achievements were:

- » CARE International (Aung Myin Hmu Project) provided legal counselling and other legal services, awareness raising and training on sexual harassment and gender-based violence to 7,623 migrants (88 per cent women). The project provided COVID-19 relief supplies to 324,182 individuals (71 per cent women), of which 549 (81 per cent women) received direct cash support.
- » Eden (Rescue Migrant Women and Girls who have been Trafficked into Sexual Exploitation in Yangon project) provided post-traumatic stress assessments, psychosocial support and trafficking awareness information to 105 individuals (54 per cent women) as regular activities, and provided health safety materials and food items support to 104,385 individuals (54 per cent women) as part of COVID-19 response activities.
- » International Labour Organization (Development of Internal and International Labour Migration Governance project) reached 24,805 individuals (44 per cent women) through regular activities of safe migration and pre-departure training, in-person and hotline legal services, and community mobilisation on migration and labour rights. ILO reached 233,899 beneficiaries (44 per cent women) with health safety materials and other support to migrants, migrants' families and returnees related to COVID-19.
- » International Organization for Migration (Twe Let project) reached 42,640 individuals (56 per cent women) through theatre and edutainment shows, training on remittance savings, hybrid migration and pre-migration, life skills, and migration related services through Migrant Assistant Centers and Migration Resource Centers. In response to COVID-19, the project distributed health, non-food items and hygiene items, and provided mental health and psychosocial service for returnees/migrants and their families, and reached 87,675 people (36 per cent women). The MILDAS project, also implemented by IOM, in the Ayeyarwady Delta area, reached 1,639 individuals (61 per cent women) with loans and material support for migration and non-food and hygiene items for 7,746 returnees/migrants (44 per cent women) as part of a COVID-19 response. Through its SAFE project implemented in Kachin and northern Shan, IOM reached 556 individuals (77 per cent women) through its regular activities focusing on migration training and services. Another 7,566 returning migrants (36 per cent women) were reached through COVID-19 response activities.
- » People In Need (Aye Chan Thaw Ein project) provided training on safe migration, psychosocial services, peer exchange visits and legal assistance to 43,739 individuals (76 per cent women). The project also provided handwashing solutions to 40,301 individuals (48 per cent women).
- » Women's Organizations Network of Myanmar (Ending Vulnerability and Exploitation for Migrant Workers project) carried out regular activities of training and awareness raising on gender-based violence and labour rights, peer volunteer training, shelter services and job

matching services reaching 1,659 beneficiaries (90 per cent women), and distributed hand sanitiser and liquid soap as part of COVID-19 measures to 63,928 individuals (79 per cent women).

### DH-1.3 # of survivors of trafficking provided with LIFT supported shelter and/or support services

LIFT partners continue to provide support services to survivors of trafficking. In 2020, 37 survivors enrolled in Eden's programme were provided with shelter at Eden's shelters in Yangon and Lashio. Survivors received comprehensive rehabilitation services, including counseling, referrals, skills development training and job matching. Eden assessed 62 trafficking survivors referred by DSW and CSOs for post-traumatic stress disorder.

With the support of the Aung Myin Hmu project, 127 vulnerable migrant women received immediate support services from Thone Pan Hla (TPL) Women in Crisis Hotline and peer leaders. Services provided included short-term housing, food, clothing, job and housing placement, travel fees, psychosocial counselling, legal and medical services.

In 2020, the IOM's SAFE project in Kachin and northern Shan State began providing direct assistance, referrals and reintegration services for trafficking survivors through CSOs. The programme conducted training for five CSO partners in northern Shan State on case management for trafficking survivors. In partnership with the Department of Rehabilitation, IOM provided dignity kits to 30 survivors in quarantine.

### DH-2: Expanded opportunities for decent work, particularly for workers who are at a heightened risk of exploitation and abuse.

LIFT developed methodological guidelines for tracer surveys, which were shared with the relevant partners. The guidelines are a reference tool to standardise data collection for indicators DH-2.1, DH-2.2 and DH-2.3, thereby enhancing the quality of data across the programme. LIFT also revised the relevant indicator reference sheets, including the definition and indicator calculation method. Previously, the percentage calculation was based on the total number of individuals who received training as reported by IPs. In the revised sheets, the denominator is based on the number of tracing survey respondents. This provides a more accurate assessment.

#### DH-2.1 %/# of individuals successfully completing LIFT supported training who establish their own enterprises (including trafficking survivors)

This is a modified indicator which measures the number of trained individuals under (DH 1.1) who establish small- or medium-sized enterprises in any economic sector but excluding subsistence farming and fishing. Reporting of this indicator is contingent upon IPs undertaking follow-up monitoring or assessments to establish whether the trainees

Indicator	Achievement 2010 - 2019	Achievement 2020	Cumulative Achievement 2010 - 2020	Cumulative Milestone 2020	Per cent Achieved	Data source
DH-2.1 %/# of individuals successfully completing LIFT supported training who establish their own enterprises (including trafficking survivors)	1,792 1,244 F 548 M (76.4%)	747 539 F 208 M (67%)	2,539 1,783 F 756 M	40%/1,040	244	IPs
DH-2.2 # of individuals employed six months after completing LIFT supported vocational skills training	1,972 1,086 F 886 M (74.1%)	2,596 1,717 F 879 M (83%)	4,568 2,803 F 1,765 M	60%/16,440	28	IPs (Tracer studies)
DH-2.3 %/# of individuals successfully completing LIFT supported training with increased income from their employment or enterprise.	3,673 2,294 F 1,379 M (75.2%)	3,343 2,256 F 1,087 M (79%)	7,016 4550 F 2466 M	70%/12,236	56	IPs

Table 3.12: Programme-level DH-2 indicator and achievements

have succeeded in establishing their own enterprises or not.

By the end of December 2020, nine LIFT IPs reported that 747 individuals (72 per cent women) who had completed training had established their own enterprises. Nearly 33 per cent of these individuals were operating business enterprises in Rakhine State after receiving small grants and business start-up trainings from LIFT partners Save the Children, Danish Refugee Council and Relief International. LIFT's local partner KDN, which works with internally displaced people in Tanintharyi Region, reported that 105 individuals (73 per cent women) had established small businesses after receiving business development training and small grants support. In the Ayeyarwady Delta, IOM reported that 94 individuals (67 per cent women) established small businesses after micro-enterprise start-up coaching training. The negative impacts of COVID-19 on the business environment and livelihoods are expected to continue and will impact on achievement of targets. Ongoing training and support is required to ensure that more comprehensive data is reported by implementing partners.

#### DH-2.2 # of individuals employed six months after completing LIFT supported vocational skills training

This indicator measures the total number of trained individuals (DH-1.1) who are employed six months after completing LIFT-supported vocational skills training. The employment may be in any off-farm economic sector. It is inclusive of all forms of paid employment, including self-employment and contributing family workers. Like the previous indicator, reported reach is based on tracer studies conducted by the LIFT IPs that provided vocational skills training, as reported under DH-1.1.

LIFT implementing partners reported that 2,596 individuals (66 per cent women) who had benefited from the different training sessions were now employed. IOM (Twe Let project) reported that 518 individuals (54 per cent women) found jobs. In IOM's MILDAS project 184 individuals (42 per cent women) found jobs. As one of its COVID-19 initiatives, Eden provided mask and soap making training to 648 migrant women and supported them to obtain employment in Hlaing Thar Yar making masks and soap, enabling these households to thrive in the face of increased financial stress. As part of its regular activities, 56 female trafficking survivors who received Eden's vocational training were employed. CARE International's Aung Myin Hmu project reported that 321 of its trainees, (95 per cent women) were employed in the garment sector.

In Rakhine State, Danish Refugee Council and Relief International reported that 286 individuals (53 per cent women) from camps for internally displaced people and host communities obtained employment following training. With the support of Mercy Corps, 250 vocational training beneficiaries (30 per cent women) from Labutta, were linked to job opportunities and subsequently employed. HelpAge International's project specifically works with persons with disabilities and their family members with the aim of increasing their access to income through skills development and livelihood training in Magway Region and Kayin State. In 2020, 145 individuals (78 per cent women) who had benefited from training in this project were employed.

**DH-2.3 %/# of individuals successfully completing LIFT supported training with increased income from their employment or enterprise.**

This indicator measures the number of individuals who achieved increased income six months after completing vocational or enterprise development training as reported in

DH-1.1. It is based upon the respondents' subjective perception of an increase in personal income and does not capture empirical data to quantify the change. It is inclusive of increases in income resulting from finding employment after previously being unemployed. Until further improvements in IP tracing are completed, all enterprise development trainees who succeed in establishing enterprises as reported in DH-2.1 and vocational skills development trainees that manage to secure gainful employment in DH-2.2 qualify to be considered as having increased

income. The denominator is the total number of trainees interviewed in IP tracer studies.

Based on the reported achievements under DH 2.1 and DH 2.2, 3,343 individuals (68 per cent women) were perceived to have increased income in 2020 from their own enterprises or through gaining employment.

## Summary of LIFT RESULTS 2020

**Despite a challenging year characterised by the COVID-19 pandemic and the necessary containment measures which impacted on activity implementation, LIFTs overall performance was good across the four thematic areas.**

Overall, LIFT met or exceeded target milestones on 24 out of the 37 indicators reported in 2020.

Performance on policy indicators across the four thematic areas remained exceptionally high, particularly in regard to output-level policy-related events and publications. Target milestones for all eight indicators (two per thematic area) were exceeded. Performance was equally good on the outcome-level indicators focusing on changes to public sector policies and budgets as a result of LIFT initiatives. Except for Nutrition, target milestones for changes in public sector policies indicators for the remaining three thematic areas were met or exceeded. Similarly, in regard to budget allocation and spending, all three thematic areas reporting on this indicator (Nutrition, Decent Work and Labour Mobility and Agriculture Markets and Food Systems) met or exceeded their respective cumulative target milestones. This performance underscores the gains that LIFT has continued to make over the years in ensuring policy engagement translates into concrete and actionable pro-poor changes in policies, programmes and resources at all levels of government. On the other hand, the performance also underlines the need for review of the target milestones as well as further reflections and learnings associated with the positive outcomes over the years.

Performance on nutrition is based on the two systems-level output indicators NS-1.1 and NS-1.2 in 2020 as the LIFT household survey did not occur and therefore there was no data available to measure nutrition-related purpose and outcome indicators. Although the target milestone for indicator NS-1.1: # of individuals reached with LIFT supported nutrition specific interventions was exceeded, the number of individuals reached through nutrition-specific projects in 2020 is much lower than the previous year. This is due to the fact that reported achievements in 2019 were mainly attributed to community-based SBCC interventions undertaken by Save the Children, which contributed to over 90 per cent of the indicator's achievement, and other projects implemented by CRS and CDN which closed in late 2019 or early 2020. Performance on NS-1.2 # of individuals reached with LIFT supported nutrition sensitive interventions was also good at 76 per cent of the 2020 milestone.



All the four AMFS systems-level indicators have recorded good performance, with two indicators, AS-1.1 (# of LIFT supported value chain service providers (public, private, CSO) promoting inclusive, climate smart and nutrition-sensitive agricultural production) and AS-1.2 (%/# of LIFT-supported input/service providers reporting business growth) exceeding their respective cumulative target milestones for 2020. Achievements relating to 2020 for both indicators were within the expected range of performance. For indicator AS1-1, three new value chain service providers were established compared to the expected seven, while for AS-1.2, 36 input service providers reported business growth compared to the expected 30. Whereas indicator AS-1.3 attained 94 per cent of the cumulative target milestone for 2020, this achievement is mainly attributable to the spillover of the 2019 overachievement. For 2020, only 7,293 individuals were reached by LIFT-supported agricultural advisory services compared to the 43,000 that were planned. Similarly for AS-1.4, the 70 per cent achievement of the cumulative indicator target for 2020 is attributable to 2019 overachievement. For 2020, no new value chain decent jobs were reported. The expectation was to create 340 new jobs. In the case of both indicators AS-1.3 and AS-1.4, this is attributable to most of the large agriculture projects coming to an end in 2020, and they were in the process of winding up.

Although LIFT intended to report the AFMS IP level outcome indicators (AH-1.1, AH-1.2, AH-1.3, AH-1.4) through the LIFT household survey due to the complexity in their measurement, LIFT IPs provided data on three of the indicators (AH 1.1, AH-1.2 and AH-1.4) based on their routine monitoring and evaluation activities. AH 1.1: %/# of people reached by LIFT-supported advisory services using Good Agricultural Practices, inputs and technologies (including mechanisation) exceeded the cumulative target milestone for 2020 while AH-1.2: Area/% of cultivated land under Good Agricultural Practices in LIFT areas attained 97 per cent of the cumulative target milestone for 2020. Both indicators also exceeded their respective specific target performance for 2020. The low achievement on indicator AH-1.4 (52 per cent) is mainly attributable to the lack of data from the IPs that had previously conducted training on GAP, since the projects ended in early-2020.

The overall performance on DWLM systems-level and household-level indicators is good. Cumulative target milestones and 2020 targets for the two systems level indicators, DS-1.1 and DS-1.3 were exceeded. The exceptionally high performance on DH-1.2: # of migrant workers and family members provided with LIFT supported information, training and support services mirrors the success of the DWLM in adapting its interventions to address the immediate needs of migrant workers and family members in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Through this adaptation, DWLM exceeded the cumulative target for 2020 by 1,815 per cent. Moving into 2021, the target for this indicator will be reviewed accordingly to take into account the prevailing COVID-19 context. Performance for the three outcome indicators (DH 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3) relied on the outcome of tracer studies for beneficiaries of skills development trainings reported under indicator DH 1.1. Performance

on all three indicators was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic which disrupted economic and livelihood activities, both of which are critical for the achievement of the planned targets. The negative impact is likely to extend into 2021.

The Financial Inclusion Programme continued to perform well, although target milestones for half of the indicators were not met, partly owing to the overall effect of the COVID-19 pandemic containment measures on financial institutions and economic activities in general. In terms of beneficiaries, it remained the largest single intervention reaching 2,912,271 households (90 per cent women).

Overall performance across the indicators illustrates the necessity for periodic target adjustment/revision exercises that LIFT has undertaken in the past and which it proposes to do annually during the 2019-2023 phase. Target setting for 2021 will be informed by a number of critical factors, including, continuation of existing COVID-19 containment measures, impacts of COVID-19 on household livelihoods and the economy in general, LIFT programming, specifically in Rakhine State, reduction in the scale of the Agriculture Markets and Food Systems portfolio and the current status of achievement on the indicators.

The overall reach for 2020 is **2,912,271** beneficiaries; **90 per cent are women**.

## Lessons identified from COVID-19 adaptations to ensure effective M&E

In 2020, LIFT's FMO implemented short-term monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in response to COVID-19. These were geared towards measuring specific outputs related to beneficiary reach such as trainings, distributions of supplies and awareness building as well as equipment and infrastructure improvements related to COVID-19 mitigation.

A COVID-19 data tracking tool and database were introduced to allow for monthly collation of partner data on selected COVID-19 indicators, allowing LIFT to effectively track output-level achievements of COVID-19 interventions. Specific guidelines were developed to ensure accuracy and consistency of data and information reported by LIFT's partners. Other key monitoring activities conducted included rapid needs assessments to understand contextual changes resulting from the pandemic and post-distribution monitoring to assess the efficacy of cash, voucher and food distributions.

Quick adaptation of M&E systems ensured that LIFT collected data specific to COVID-19 activities that aligned with the LIFT logframe, allowing LIFT to track and report specific achievements and link the

results to logframe indicators.

Strong and adaptable M&E systems of partners are critical to LIFT being able to obtain quality data in a rapidly changing context and LIFT works with partners to appropriately adapt tools and guidelines as needed in emergency situations. A key lesson identified in 2020 when designing the post-distribution monitoring mechanism for social protection activities was that it is critical that M&E questions are incorporated in the design of interventions whose outcomes need to be measured through surveys.

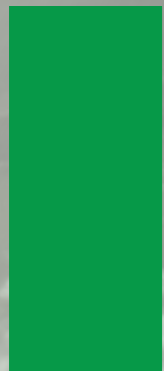
Rapid phone surveys proved to be an effective mechanism for accessing beneficiaries and ensuring that LIFT and its partners could assess the immediate outcomes of the COVID-19 interventions. Despite the methodological challenges inherent in conducting such surveys, they still remain a reliable alternative to direct face-to-face interviews. A key limitation however is the limited scope of indicator data that can be collected through phone surveys. LIFT and its partners will consider investing in this approach to mitigate data gaps that may arise in future as Myanmar's context continues to change.

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# THEMATIC PROGRAMMES



# 04

## THEMATIC PROGRAMMES

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# NUTRITION

## THEMATIC PROGRAMMES

# 4.1

## NUTRITION

### CONTEXT

Myanmar continues to suffer from a high prevalence of maternal and child undernutrition, manifested through stunting, wasting and micronutrient deficiencies. Decreased access to community nutrition and health services, disruptions to food systems, escalating food prices, and declining incomes as a result of COVID-19 mitigation and prevention measures have provided the perfect storm of conditions, placing many of Myanmar's already vulnerable citizens at even greater risk of negative nutrition and food security outcomes. The impacts of COVID-19 measures are especially pronounced in hard-to-reach areas where these factors are weakening the potential for social and economic resilience at a time where individuals, households and communities need it most.

While stunting, or chronic undernutrition, has declined from around 50 per cent in the 1990s to 29 per cent in 2016<sup>20</sup>, there are still some 1.4 million children aged under five years who are classified as stunted. Acute undernutrition, or wasting, remains high, affecting 7 per cent of pre-school aged children. Global modelling predicts that as a result of COVID-19, Myanmar will see an 8.6 percentage-point drop in the rate of national income growth in 2020. This could lead to an additional 110,000 children under the age of five becoming acutely malnourished, which means they are 12 times more likely to die before their 5th birthday<sup>21</sup> than a well-nourished child.

To prevent malnutrition and improve overall health and development outcomes of children well into adulthood, a focus on interventions targeting the first 1,000 days continues to be relevant and necessary. The indicators of poor nutrition during the first 1,000 days continue to be a concern in Myanmar with a high burden of anaemia among 58 per cent of children aged 6-59 months and 46 per cent of women of

<sup>20</sup> Demographic Health Survey 2015-16

<sup>21</sup> IFPRI Myanmar. (August 2020). "The impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on maternal and child malnutrition in Myanmar."

reproductive age<sup>22</sup>. There is a high likelihood that this can be attributed in part to poor diet quality and limited intake of iron.

The intergenerational cycle of malnutrition continues to perpetuate the ongoing vulnerability that households and communities face. Recent evidence in peri-urban Yangon<sup>23</sup> confirms the strong correlation between maternal nutrition and childhood undernutrition, with women who are short in stature (height less than 145cm) being up to six times more likely to have a child that is stunted. The national prevalence of low birth weight at 8 per cent is an important indicator of both maternal and child nutrition, since low birth weight is the direct result of poor nutrition in pregnancy. This evidence reinforces the imperative to take a whole-of-household approach to nutrition. This approach requires improving the diet quality and reducing risk factors among women of reproductive age and adolescent girls in order to reduce families' overall vulnerability and to increase their resilience to poverty and shocks.

Dietary diversity and quality during nutritionally vulnerable life stages, including the first 1,000 day period, is known to be low across Myanmar. Recent data from LIFT projects in Rakhine, Kayin and Kayah States were aligned with national survey results that show only 16 per cent of children aged 6-24 months received a nutritionally adequate diet. Suboptimal diets can have a devastating impact on a child's health and development now and in the future. While traditional food taboos and dietary restrictions still heavily influence women's and children's diets, especially during the life stages of pregnancy<sup>24</sup>, breastfeeding and complementary feeding, other factors including poverty and poor access to foods are strong determinants of nutrition insecurity. Access to a diet that is adequate and of sufficient quality is particularly problematic for those in areas affected by conflict and among migrant communities.

There are regional variations in key nutrition indicators that highlight the disparities between rural and urban communities, and show an overall worsening situation in conflict-affected and hard-to-reach areas. A recent baseline survey conducted on behalf of the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement (MoSWRR) with LIFT's support in Kayin and Kayah States showed that child stunting rates in Kayah State were as high as 48 per cent in hard-to-reach areas and as low as 17.4 per cent in urban areas, where access to services and livelihoods is greater. There is a geographical gradient in childhood stunting with prevalence progressively and significantly increasing from urban to rural to hard-to-reach areas. Wasting in Kayah State is as high as 6 per cent in rural areas and as low as 3.8 per cent in urban areas. This is not necessarily a pattern that continues in non-conflict-affected areas, however. In peri-urban Yangon, for example, the data shows a much higher prevalence of wasting (9.4 per cent) than the national figures, according to a recent survey carried out by NNC, UNICEF and WFP<sup>25</sup>.

Poor access to sufficient, diverse, nutritious food has been, and continues to be, a challenge for Myanmar families. Even before COVID-19, the lack of equitable food access was highlighted by the fact that while 90 per cent of households in Myanmar could afford a diet that met their energy

needs, only 40-52 per cent could afford a diet that met their nutrient needs.<sup>26,27</sup> This is a result of the high cost of nutrient-dense foods, including animal source foods, fruit and vegetables. In the context of COVID-19 this is a growing concern as market prices are expected to rise, especially in hard-to-reach areas. This, combined with job losses and other economic hardships is reducing families' purchasing power, limiting their access to sufficient, diverse foods.

In the context of already poor nutrition indicators, the efforts and measures being implemented to curb the spread of COVID-19 are expected to have a dramatic impact on the nutrition and food security of the most vulnerable communities in Myanmar. While there is limited data available yet to draw concrete conclusions of the impact of the pandemic on nutrition outcomes, there are serious concerns that disruptions to employment, schooling, reduction in remittances, and breaks in access to community nutrition and health services will have immediate, medium- and long-term consequences on nutrition.

### LIFT Nutrition Programme's response to COVID-19

The LIFT Nutrition Programme's response to COVID-19 supports partners to adapt nutrition-specific interventions to respond to urgent nutrition needs and the immediate causes of malnutrition, including insufficient intake and poor health. Simultaneously, LIFT is supporting the scale-up and delivery of nutrition-sensitive interventions that address the underlying causes of malnutrition, which are significantly impacted by COVID-19 measures. LIFT's Nutrition Programme continues to promote and support a holistic, multisectoral, systems-strengthening approach, which is critical to building the resilience of individuals and communities to the impact of shocks, including COVID-19.

LIFT-supported responses to COVID-19 that contribute to the multiple pathways to improve nutrition, include:

- » Increased access to resources through social protection mechanisms. The national maternal and child cash transfer (MCCT) and social pension scheme, two responsive safety net programmes to support nutritionally-vulnerable individuals, were expanded. An additional one-time payment of MMK 30,000 (USD 22) was funded by LIFT and delivered by the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) to all beneficiaries of the MCCT and social pension programmes, in addition to their regular transfers.
- » Supporting nutrition-sensitive food systems. Leveraging agriculture and food systems interventions through increased production of diverse foods, including homestead food production, as well as market and food price monitoring. Applying a nutrition lens in the design, targeting and measurement is particularly crucial to achieving an impact on nutrition given the potential food system vulnerabilities exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- » Ramping up food safety and health protocols in markets. LIFT's implementing partners support market-level food safety and COVID-19 protection measures at markets to protect populations from food contamination and illness.
- » Continuation of essential health and nutrition services. Communities are supported to adapt and continue the provision of health and

<sup>22</sup> Demographic Health Survey 2015-16

<sup>23</sup> NNC, UNICEF and WFP. (2018). Status and Determinants of Food Security and Undernutrition (SDFU) in Poor Urban Communities in 14 Townships in Yangon.

<sup>24</sup> Demographic Health Survey 2015-16

<sup>25</sup> NNC, UNICEF and WFP. (2018). Status and Determinants of Food Security and Undernutrition (SDFU) in Poor Urban Communities in 14 Townships in Yangon.

<sup>26</sup> WFP. (2019). Fill the Nutrient Gap Survey.

<sup>27</sup> Mahrt, K. et al. (2019). Household dietary patterns and the cost of a nutritious diet in Myanmar. International Food Policy Research Institute. Accessed at: <https://www.ifpri.org/publication/household-dietary-patterns-and-cost-nutritious-diet-myanmar>

nutrition services, especially to the most vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups. These efforts include strengthening community components of the integrated management of acute malnutrition.

- » Scaling up water, sanitation and hygiene activities. The WASH component of LIFT-funded nutrition projects was scaled up considerably, with improved WASH activities adapted to include infection prevention and control.

In addition to ensuring the continuation of essential nutrition-specific interventions delivered through the health sector and system, in the context of COVID-19, nutrition-sensitive interventions in agriculture, decent work, social protection, gender, education and other sectors are just as critical.

Nutrition-specific projects focus on the most immediate causes of poor nutrition and health for nutritionally vulnerable groups. Examples include treatment of acute malnutrition among children under five years or provision of micronutrient supplements to pregnant and breastfeeding women. To complement nutrition-specific interventions, which meet a vulnerable population's immediate needs, nutrition-sensitive activities can address the many underlying and basic causes of poor nutrition. Nutrition-sensitive projects are diverse; they include supporting families' access to diverse foods, increased production of micronutrient-rich foods, access to clean water, adoption of positive health-seeking behaviours, women's access to income, and more. Agriculture, social protection, decent work, gender and education projects, among other thematic areas, can be nutrition-sensitive provided that the project has a nutrition objective, and that progress towards its achievement is measured among the target population. LIFT's Nutrition Programme targets the most nutritionally vulnerable: women of reproductive age (15-49 years old), very young adolescent girls (10-14 years old), and children under five years. Special focus is paid to pregnant and breastfeeding women and children under two years in the first 1,000 days period.

#### Partner adaptations to COVID-19

For most implementing partners, 2020 was a turbulent year, characterised by the need to adapt project activities and routine staff operations to the COVID-19 pandemic. Changes that affected a number of partners' operations were travel restrictions, partial or complete lockdown in project areas, curfew, limits on the number of people gathered, limited testing capacity, and localised rules for quarantining. In the first half of 2020, projects assessed the feasibility of activity implementation. By the second half of the year, many partners had devised alternate strategies that enabled activities to continue by moving to online platforms for activity delivery, surveys and communication or by diverting funding to new activities, including those related to prevention of disease transmission, WASH, expanding social protection schemes, and supporting local government responses.

Although the year was challenging, with many health resources being shifted towards the COVID-19 response, it also paved the way for new opportunities.

A number of large-scale investment programmes initiated in the country by the Government of Myanmar, the World Bank and the European Union during 2020 had a positive impact on nutrition and presented opportunities for LIFT to collaborate through policy and programming to improve nutrition outcomes. These include: (1) The Myanmar Government-led COVID-19 Economic Relief Plan (CERP) for economic recovery. With a particular focus on micro, small & medium-sized enterprises, the CERP calls for support to all actors in the agro-food

Implementing partner	Project name	Main activities	Duration	Geographic coverage
Catholic Relief Services (CRS)	Productive Agriculture through Community Engaging (PACE)	Nutrition and nutrition-sensitive agriculture	Jun 2016 -Jun 2020	Chin State- Falam, Thantlang, and Matupi townships
Catholic Relief Services	Community Health, Agriculture, Nutrition and Gender Empowerment (CHANGE)	Nutrition, agriculture, health and women's empowerment	Jun 2020 - May 2023	Chin State
Consortium of Dutch NGOs (CDN)- ZOA	Improving the Incomes and Nutrition Outcomes of Rural Poor in Northern Kayin State	Nutrition-sensitive agriculture	Jul 2016- Sep 2020	Northern Kayin
Community Partners International (CPI)	Project Nourish: Empowering Populations in South East Myanmar through Improved Nutrition and WASH	Nutrition & WASH to support Kayin MCCT	Sep 2020-Aug 2023	Kayin State
Department of Social Welfare (DSW)	Implementation of a grant in Myanmar	Nutrition - MCCT	Mar 2017 – June 2020	Chin State
Department of Social Welfare (DSW)	Support to DSW MCCT Programme in Kayin State	Nutrition - M&E	Feb 2019 – June 2020	Kayin State
Department of Social Welfare (DSW)	Support to DSW MCCT Programme in Kayah State	Nutrition - M&E	Feb 2019 – June 2020	Kayah State
Health Poverty Action (HPA)	Improve nutrition status of the vulnerable population in conflict-affected Kachin and northern Shan	Nutrition	Jan 2020 - Dec 2022	Northern Shan and Kachin
International Rescue Committee (IRC)	Kayah Integrated Nutrition (KIN) Project	Nutrition, WASH & Women's Empowerment - to support Kayah MCCT	Aug 2020 – July 2023	Kayah State
Karuna Mission Social Solidarity (KMSS)	Supporting Conflict-Affected Women and Youth with Nutrition and Employment (SAFEWAY NET)	Nutrition	July 2019 - June 2022	Kachin State - Myitkyina, Waingmaw, Moegaung, Hpakant, Bhamo, Mansi, and Momauk townships Northern Shan State - Hsenwi, Kutkhai, and Muse townships
Koe Koe Tech Co.,Ltd.	Shwe Kayi LanBawga Maymay (Shwe Maymay)	Nutrition messaging	Jun 2018 – Jun 2020	National
PATH	Introduction of Fortified Rice in Myanmar	Nutrition and rice fortification	Jul 2013 – Jun 2020	Ayeyarwady, Yangon, Bago, Mandalay Regions
PATH in Partnership with Terres des Hommes Italy, BKM, and BoPInc.	SMART MOVE	Food system, food fortification	Oct 2019 - Sep 2022	Yangon peri-urban

**Table 4.1: LIFT-supported nutrition projects**

Implementing partner	Project name	Main activities	Duration	Geographic coverage
People in Need (PIN)	Aye Chan Thaw Ein: Empowering Labour Migrants in Shwe Pyi Thar	A Decent Work and Labour Mobility project with a nutrition component	Oct 2019-Sept 2022	Yangon peri-urban
Save the Children	Building Resilience In Conflict-affected areas of Northern Shan States (BRICKS)	Nutrition, social protection	Jul 2019 – Jun 2022	Northern Shan State - Kutkai, Namkham, Kyaukme and Namtu Townships Kachin State - Mansi, and Momauk Townships
Save the Children	Healthy Choices	Nutrition, health, WASH, protection & livelihoods/ decent work	Jan 2020 - Dec 2022	Yangon peri-urban
Save the Children	Leveraging Essential Nutrition Actions to Reduce Malnutrition (LEARN)	Nutrition - capacity building	May 2020-May 2023	National
Shalom Nyein Foundation	Supporting Nutrition and Livelihoods through SGH in Kachin State, Myanmar	Nutrition, livelihoods supporting access to decent work opportunities for IDPs, self-help groups	Jan 2020 - Dec 2021	
Sustainable Development Knowledge Network (Spectrum)	Unlocking the Future Growth Potential of the Edible Insect Sector in Myanmar	Nutrition - research on edible insects	Sep 2018 - Sep 2020	National
The Border Consortium (TBC)	Sustainable Transformation for Agriculture, Nutrition and Development in Uplands (STAND UP) Phase Two	Nutrition and Agriculture	Oct 2019 - Sep 2022	Tanintharyi, Kayah, Karen and Mon
World Food Programme (WFP)	Engaging Businesses to deliver the Government's national nutrition strategies through SUN Business network in Myanmar	Nutrition private sector, food fortification, nutrition in the workplace, food systems, food safety	Nov 2019 - Oct, 2021	Yangon peri-urban
World Food Programme (WFP)	Scaling up fortified rice production and consumption throughout Myanmar	Nutrition - distribution of fortified rice	Aug 2017 – Jun 2020	Rakhine State
World Concern	Improving the nutrition outcomes of conflict-affected people in Kachin State	Nutrition, nutrition-sensitive agriculture	Jan 2020 - Dec 2022	Kachin State
World Vision	Growing Livelihood in Bogale	Nutrition, vocational skills, small IGA, home gardening, CBO capacity, building, and disaster risk reduction	Sep 2015 – Jun 2020	Ayeyarwady Delta, Bogale Township

Table 4.1: LIFT-supported nutrition projects

value chains in order to protect jobs and livelihoods. Additionally, the CERP provided support for communication campaigns by the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation (MoALI) and strengthened social protection mechanisms through top-up benefits for MCCT and social pension beneficiaries. (2) The World Bank and the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement (MoSWRR) signed an International Development Association (IDA) loan, which financed the expansion of the national MCCT Programme to Shan State and Ayeyarwady Region as part of an initiative to strengthen the country's social protection system. The MCCT Programme was planning to be fully operational in Shan and Ayeyarwady in 2021<sup>28</sup>. This loan complements existing IDA operations, also contributing to the reduction of malnutrition, including support of the Ministry of Health and Sports (MoHS) to improve health service delivery and implementation of the National Health Plan and the Ministry of Education (MoE)'s efforts to strengthen female education. (3) Food Safety Roadmap - a food regulation framework developed as part of an ASEAN initiative with support from MoALI and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). (4) EU budget support to MoALI to support achieving the nutrition-sensitive agriculture objectives of the MS-NPAN.

## HIGHLIGHTS

### Policy level

#### MS-NPAN: Progress and Adaptation to COVID-19

The Multisectoral National Plan of Action for Nutrition (MS-NPAN), the national strategy and guiding policy for nutrition, endorsed in 2018, is based on the underlying assumption that collaboration between key actors and stakeholders from different sectors is imperative for the long-term and sustainable improvement of nutrition for women, children, and adolescents in Myanmar. By leveraging the collective inputs of multiple sectors at the community, household and individual levels it will be possible to have a significant impact on nutrition outcomes. The complementary inputs of various sectors, with different strengths, enables the convergence of interventions and services. LIFT's commitment to the MS-NPAN process is reflected in the policy and programming objectives of the current LIFT strategy. The strategy supports gender-responsive public sector policies, programmes, and expenditure for the delivery of prioritised MS-NPAN interventions, including social and behaviour change communication (SBCC) for the government's Maternal and Child Cash Transfer (MCCT) Programme and for maternal and infant and young child feeding (MIYCF), integrated management of acute malnutrition (IMAM) scale-up, and food fortification.

The goal of the Myanmar MS-NPAN 2018-2022 is to reduce all forms of malnutrition in mothers, children, and adolescent girls through collaborative effort and alignment across five ministries: Ministry of Health and Sports (MoHS), Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation (MoALI), Ministry of Education (MoE), Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement (MoSWRR), and Ministry of National Resources and Environmental Commission (MoNREC). There is also a MS-NPAN Core Group, a team of 15 people led by the National Nutrition Center (NNC) in the MoHS, which includes specialists in capacity assessment, M&E, state and regional planning, data analysis and cross-sector coordination. The

<sup>28</sup> Given the current political situation in the country at the time of writing in 2021 this is no longer possible.

MS-NPAN is supported by an Extended Technical Network made up of UN agencies, multi-donor funds, donors and civil society organisations.

LIFT supported a high-level advocacy meeting in January 2020 with 24 parliamentary members from various committees<sup>29</sup>. Parliamentarians convened with the NNC-led MS-NPAN Core Team to engage in nutrition and the MS-NPAN process. The session succeeded in building understanding and garnered the support needed to work towards the mobilisation of resources and sector budget allocation. Crucially, the MS-NPAN secured the support and commitment of the parliamentary committees from both Pyithu and Amyothar Hluttaw. Members of Parliament committed their support for the integration of State/Regional MS-NPAN into national and sub-national development plans and budgets.

Context-specific state/region Multisectoral Nutrition Plans have been developed, verified and finalised by MS-NPAN sector focals in Ayeyarwady, Kayah, Chin, Kayin, and Southern Shan State.

### Adaptation to COVID-19

As Myanmar responded to the COVID-19 pandemic, the MS-NPAN pivoted to respond to the changing context. The MS-NPAN provides a valuable and relevant framework through which nutrition-specific and -sensitive programmes and services can be delivered at individual, household and community levels through multisectoral efforts. In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for a multisector response became more evident than ever to ensure: (1) that programmes are targeted to the most nutritionally vulnerable, and (2) that sector plans align to ensure that interventions converge at the household level to address the complex and interrelated causes of nutrition insecurity.

Consultations with sub-national sector leads, who are important advocates and champions for the process led to adaptation of state MS-NPAN plans to COVID-19.

### Guidance for COVID-sensitive programming

LIFT was an active member of the Nutrition in Emergencies (NiE) Strategic Advisory Group (SAG) in support of shifts in programming towards the COVID-19 response and recovery under the umbrella of the MS-NPAN, and in the development of two guidance documents<sup>30</sup> designed to support partners in making the necessary adaptations to nutrition programming in the context of COVID-19 mitigation, prevention and recovery. These guidelines are valuable technical adaptations to the core interventions laid out within the MS-NPAN framework.

### SBCC Strategy

To ensure that many of the behavioural determinants linked to nutrition are adequately addressed in the MS-NPAN, LIFT collaborated with UNICEF Myanmar to develop a Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) Strategy, or the SBCC-National Plan of Action for Nutrition (SBCC-NPAN). With leadership and technical guidance from the National Nutrition Centre (NNC) and Health Literacy and Promotion Unit (HLPU) within the MoHS, LIFT and Access to Health are collaborating with UNICEF to move the strategy forward.

The SBCC-NPAN will include a branded implementation toolbox and costed implementation plan of interventions that will become an integral part of the MS-NPAN. These interventions will strengthen and accelerate MS-NPAN results towards improved nutrition outcomes for children under five years of age. The SBCC-NPAN will include activities relevant to core MS-NPAN and LIFT interventions. The initial focus will be on SBCC activities implemented within MoHS, but the SBCC-NPAN will contribute to other relevant plans in nutrition-sensitive sectors, including the DSW's Maternal and Child Cash Transfer (MCCT) Programme. The innovative and effective SBCC approaches and tools that LIFT's partners continue to create, test and measure will contribute to the toolbox. Partner projects will support the scale up and replicability of innovative tools and approaches across a number of pathways affecting nutrition, including agriculture, decent work, WASH and social protection.

Negotiation with MoHS to secure the appropriate expertise to lead this process was ongoing at the end of 2020. However, it was agreed that a local organisation would work closely with a reputable global partner with experience in supporting country-level SBCC strategies to deliver the final products.

### Scaling Up Nutrition

Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) is a cross-sectoral movement that brings together multiple stakeholders to coordinate, collaborate and leverage individual strengths to achieve collective progress in the fight against malnutrition. LIFT funds two of the five SUN networks in Myanmar, including the SUN Civil Society Alliance (SUN-CSA) and the SUN Business Network (SUN-BN). The SUN-BN was established to mobilise and intensify business efforts in supporting people's right to food and nutrition. The SUN-CSA brings together multiple civil society actors at national and sub-national levels to engage in policy and programming debates, using the architecture of the SUN movement to engage with the private sector, government, the UN and donors.

### SUN Business Network

Throughout 2020, the SUN-BN advocated for private sector engagement in the country's nutrition agenda through the multisectoral strategies and activities of the government. SUN-BN also aimed to foster enabling policies, law and regulations for the private sector to act on nutrition. The four focus areas for SBN are: (i) food fortification (ii) food safety (iii) health and nutrition in the workplace and (iv) nutrition awareness and education. In 2020, 16 businesses, six led by women, became members of SBN. In total, there are now 10 international companies and nine Myanmar companies that are SUN-BN members.<sup>31</sup>

SUN-BN has the potential to provide the policy and engagement framework to support a number of LIFT project priorities, especially within the peri-urban programme. SUN-BN's primary focus is on food-related policies, laws and regulations, including food safety, labelling, and fortification standards. The SBN aims to work closely with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and NNC in the development and application of these standards and has initiated engagement with these key institutions. Despite engagement with the private sector initially being slow at times, the SUN-BN has worked diligently to build the support within the government departments necessary to take this

<sup>29</sup> Agriculture, Livestock and Rural Livelihoods Development Committee; Women and Children's Rights Committee; Health and Sports Development Committee; Farmers and Labour Committee; and the Public Affairs Management Committee

<sup>30</sup> 1. Adapted Emergency Nutrition Programming Guidance during COVID-19 Pandemic in Myanmar - Nutrition Specific Interventions & 2. Adapted Emergency Nutrition Programming Guidance during COVID-19 Pandemic in Myanmar - Nutrition Sensitive Interventions

<sup>31</sup> SBN members include BASF, DeHeus, Dakota, Fedwell, Healthy & Happy Families, Kasanta, Koe Koe Tech, MAPCO, METRO, MILS, MRF, Unilever and Wilmar, among others.



work forward.

The spread of COVID-19 in early 2020 led to a change in the priorities of all stakeholders, especially the government, which impacted on the nascent SUN-BN stakeholder engagement and project activities. Despite this challenging context, during a parliamentary session, Members of Parliament and relevant ministers emphasised the role of SUN-BN and the private sector's contribution towards improved nutrition in the country.

### **SUN Civil Society Alliance (SUN-CSA)**

LIFT has supported the SUN-CSA since 2017 to leverage nutrition advocacy efforts at the sub-national, national, regional, and global levels. SUN-CSA membership has now reached 70 organisations. According to a recent project survey, 32 of these organisations are aligned with the national nutrition agenda through the MS-NPAN. During 2020, the SUN-CSA sought to represent and ensure participation of civil society actors across multiple sectors, focusing on strengthening the capacity of members, accelerating advocacy efforts in nutrition policy achievement, and promoting local ownership and sustainability of the network. The SUN-CSA has been an important body representing nutrition CSOs in a number of nutrition platforms, including the SUN UN Extended Technical Group and the development of the Maternal, Infant and Child Nutrition (MICN) strategy.

### **LEARN (Phase 3)**

LEARN is a technical advisory service provider funded by LIFT. The SUN-CSA has worked collaboratively with the LEARN project to ensure LEARN technical support is provided strategically to civil society actors. Support platforms include the SUN-CSA website and the SUN-CSA resource e-library. LEARN support to SUN-CSA members and LIFT partners is wide-ranging, including nutrition programme design and evaluation, technical training, and institutional capacity training. During the inception period alone, 8 per cent of local CSO members in the SUN-CSA benefited from institutional capacity development training conducted by LEARN.

A primary goal of this new phase of LEARN is to engage with partners operating in ethnic areas, including ethnic service providers and ethnic health organisations. LEARN developed a strategy on how best to identify the roles these organisations can play in supporting improved nutrition outcomes.

### **Community-based health worker policy**

The Community Based Health Worker (CBHW) policy was endorsed by MoHS and released in November 2020. The policy is an important milestone in supporting field-level implementation of community and clinical health and nutrition services. It provides important guidance to partners on the roles of community-based health workers and volunteers and supports advocacy and engagement with MoHS at the state- and township-level. Working within this policy, LIFT and its partners were able to further reinforce auxiliary midwives and community health workers in their roles implementing MCCT and cYCF programmes. The institutionalisation of CBHWs is crucial for the long-term success of nutrition and health service delivery in Myanmar. To support the practical application of this policy, LIFT and Access to Health collaborated with state-level MoHS and MoSWRR to develop a comprehensive Chin State Nutrition Action Plan to strengthen nutrition-related behaviour change led by the CBHW through the MCCT.

Additional guidance is needed from MoHS before terms of reference (ToRs) and standard operating procedures (SOPs) can be developed.

The guidelines will give a much clearer indication of how essential nutrition services will be delivered in the community, and by whom. LIFT and ACCESS are willing to support the development of these guidelines, ensuring that essential community nutrition activities are adequately included within specific ToRs, training packages and SOPs.

### **Myanmar Food Based Dietary Guidelines**

The development of the government-led Myanmar Food Based Dietary Guidelines (FBDG) began in 2020 with the support of international and national consultants. The FBDG are designed to provide valuable evidence-based guidance to the government and LIFT partners, which will support efforts to improve nutrition through SBCC approaches. Guidelines will be developed for seven different target groups: pregnant and breastfeeding women, children 6-24 months old, school children, adolescents, adults and the elderly.

Under the leadership of the National Nutrition Centre (NNC), a FBDG task force was formed with UN Nutrition <sup>32</sup>members, <sup>33</sup>South-East Asia Ministers of Education Organization and Regional Center for Food and Nutrition (SEAMEO RECFON) and the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI). Myanmar government institutions including the University of Public Health, MoHS Department of Medical Research, the Department of Public Health's Health Literacy Promotion Unit (HLPU) and Non Communicable Diseases Division (NCD) are also members.

Drawing on targeted support from UN agencies and other collaborating institutions based on their technical strengths and capacities, the FBDG Task Force also pursued synergies with other national resources and initiatives in Myanmar, including the PLW food plate (FAO), the Complementary Feeding Bowl (UNICEF) the Banana Bag (SCI/UNICEF), the Cost of Diet/Fill the Nutrient Gap analysis tool (WFP), and the National SBCC Strategy (MoHS, with support from LIFT and UNICEF).

In 2020, the FBDG for pregnant and breastfeeding women was finalised. The remaining target groups are still under review. As part of this national effort to create dietary guidelines for Myanmar, in 2021 LIFT-funded partner PATH plans to develop guidelines targeting pre-school children and other vulnerable groups, including migrants and people with disabilities (PWD).

### **Food Fortification**

Food fortification remains a key focus area for LIFT and the MS-NPAN. The potential for fortified foods to increase nutritionally vulnerable groups' access to key micronutrients still requires investment, research and advocacy in order to improve products' affordability, accessibility and acceptability. LIFT-funded Smart Move partners under the leadership of PATH, as well as the LIFT-funded SUN-BN are working diligently to advance food fortification objectives in Myanmar. The SUN-BN's Fortification Thematic Group promotes the development, distribution and marketing of safe and nutritious fortified foods. The initial focus of the group was to develop a logo for fortified foods to support marketing and branding, to initiate a study on the context of food fortification in Myanmar, and to develop a position paper to outline current food fortification challenges, opportunities, and key policy and programme recommendations. Key partners in food fortification include PATH, BoPInc, BASF, Myanmar Rice Federation of Rice Millers (MRF) and Wilmar.

<sup>32</sup> formerly known as the SUN UN Network

<sup>33</sup> WFP, FAO, UNOPS, UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO

Ministry of Health and Sports (MoHS) in Chin State implemented other core nutrition-specific activities. Coordinated funding was approved and MoHS and DSW were to apply a cohesive approach at the systems level to impact on the multiple underlying causes of malnutrition in order to achieve improved nutrition outcomes.

In Kayah State, 15,765 women were provided with MCCT MMK 45,000 (USD 32) on a quarterly basis and SBCC activities through mother-to-mother support groups. The findings from the first post-distribution monitoring showed good progress on beneficiaries using the funds to meet their nutrition and health needs.

In Kayin State, 71,219 women received four MCCT payments. Village and ward administrators received MCCT training in 2020. In government-controlled areas, voluntary health workers and basic health staff delivered SBCC with the support of village leaders. In non-government-controlled areas, the Karen Department of Health and Welfare register beneficiaries and distribute cash transfers.

For Kachin State, DSW secured a budget and approval from Parliament to start the MCCT programme in fiscal year 2020/2021. The first step was to be a baseline survey, planned in early 2021.

#### **COVID-19 top-up payment for MCCT beneficiaries**

In May and June, the MCCT Programme distributed a MMK 30,000 (USD 22) one-time payment to 238,410 pregnant women and mothers of children under the age of two as a 'top-up' to the on-going MCCT programme. The total budget for this effort was USD 9 million: USD 4.9 million for MCCT beneficiary households and USD 4.1 million for social pension beneficiary households. The cash transfers were distributed in envelopes, along with COVID-19 prevention and mitigation information.

LIFT's full COVID-19 cash transfer programme in 2020 is presented in this report at 5.4 Social Protection.

#### **Partners synergise with national MCCT Programme**

A number of partners' programmes involved active collaboration with the government's MCCT Programme, whether through programme learning, strategy development, M&E or community-based support for SBCC activities to complement the cash transfers. In some non-government controlled areas, such as in Kayah, LIFT partners supported the cash delivery component of the programme in order to ensure universal access to the programme among eligible beneficiaries.

#### **Piloting MCCT + SBCC in peri-urban Yangon**

In the past, LIFT-funded MCCT programmes demonstrated that, when combined, cash transfers and SBCC can result in greater nutrition outcomes among pregnant and breastfeeding women and their children than when cash is provided alone. As part of Save the Children International's Healthy Choices project in peri-urban Yangon 122 mother care groups were formed to facilitate behaviour change among 1,502 pregnant and breastfeeding women who had begun to receive MCCT support in July 2020. Consistent with the national government-led MCCT Programme in Chin, Rakhine, Shan and Ayeyarwady, the Healthy Choices project follows DSW protocol by providing pregnant and breastfeeding mothers MMK 15,000 (USD 11) per month until the child is two years of age. Although mother groups were formed through the project to support behaviour change, monthly meetings did not occur as planned, due to COVID-19. Instead, the project focused on group formation and foundational virtual trainings, including basic nutrition, designing for behaviour change and breastfeeding counselling. To inform possible

urban expansion of the DSW-led national MCCT Programme, the project had planned to coordinate with the Township Health Department and Department of Social Welfare and share lessons learned from the project to promote nutrition during 1,000 days in urban areas.

#### **Timely Handover of CDN's Mother Support Groups**

In Kayin State, LIFT IP CDN-ZOA was already implementing mother-to-mother support group meetings and monthly awareness sessions to support the project's SBCC approach when the DSW rolled out the MCCT programme in government-controlled areas. CDN-ZOA worked alongside MoHS and basic health staff to integrate the activities of the project into the MOHS's planned SBCC activities. Despite some early indications that basic health staff would be able to collaborate with project volunteers at the community level, this did not happen by the end of the project. Nevertheless, there was a timely handover of SBCC activities at the community level. The CDN-ZOA project finished in September and the government health staff started SBCC sessions in October.

#### **Projects launched to support Kayah and Kayin MCCT programmes**

The International Rescue Committee's Kayah Integrated Nutrition Project (KIN), which launched in August 2020, was designed to strengthen the technical capacity of service providers to facilitate the roll-out of the Kayah MCCT in government-controlled and non-government controlled areas. The DSW's MCCT programme started in 2019 and reached 15,765 beneficiaries through eight transfers. The LIFT-supported project is being implemented in partnership with Civil Health and Development Network (CHDN) and the Karenni National Women's Organization (KNWO), working closely with DSW. The International Rescue Committee (IRC) worked to build a sense of ownership of the project's products (SBCC messages, information, education and communication (IEC) materials and learning aids) among the main counterparts of the project. To ensure sustainability of the WASH infrastructure built as part of the project activities to enhance MCCT nutrition outcomes, the project will strengthen the capacity of communities to construct and maintain the infrastructure.

In September 2020, Community Partners International (CPI) launched Project Nourish: Empowering Populations in South-East Myanmar through Improved Nutrition and WASH in partnership with the Karen Department of Health and Welfare (KDHW), Karen Ethnic Health Organizations Consortium (KEHOC), Yoma Social and Development Association (YSDA) and Committee for Internally Displaced Karen People (CIDKP) in all seven townships across Kayin State, in government-controlled areas and non-government controlled areas. This project is also designed to strengthen the roll-out of the national MCCT. CPI and its local partners aim to improve the operationalisation of MCCT in Kayin State while also working to improve nutrition and WASH knowledge, attitudes and practices using a community-driven approach. Women's empowerment is a cross-cutting theme. The Department of Social Welfare MCCT programme in Kayin has so far reached 52,000 beneficiaries. Voluntary community social workers and mothers support Groups, which are part of the national MCCT Programme structure, are integral elements of the project.

#### **Nutrition Communities of Practice Support Peri-Urban Projects**

In 2020, thematic working groups for nutrition in peri-urban Yangon were established. Partners decided to focus on two thematic areas, resulting in the formation of the SBCC Working Group and the Food Vendor Working Group. Operating in close geographic areas with similar beneficiary communities, partners in both groups focused on

information and technical resource sharing, establishing common approaches, harmonisation of common behaviours and messaging, and sharing information and strategies for engagement with local government. Both groups collaborated to identify common behaviours across the nutrition component of their projects. For those working with women of reproductive age, three common behaviours were identified: (1) mothers feed their child breastmilk only until the child is six months old, (2) women of reproductive age consume foods from all four food groups every day, and (3) mothers and caregivers of children aged under two wash their hands with soap and water at the critical times<sup>34</sup>. With the support of the LEARN Project, the Food Vendor Working Group also identified a common set of behaviours to promote through their training and certification programmes related to food vendor hygiene, food sanitation, nutrition, and commercialisation of healthy meals.

## WASH

### Increasing Access to Water for Improved Nutrition

In 2020, CDN-ZOA finalised a four-year multi-sector project in northern Kayin State that included a WASH component to improve access to safe water, as well as to strengthen hygiene and sanitation knowledge and practices. The project resulted in significant changes, with the use of protected water sources increasing significantly in the wet season, when the number of households using a protected water source increased from 39 to 65 per cent. The project evaluation team attributed this to improved access as a result of water infrastructure construction in 27 villages. People are now able to consume higher quantities of water from protected water sources not only for drinking, but also for practising safe personal and home hygiene behaviours, including washing hands with soap and water, and for sanitary use. According to the endline report, improved access to water sources led to an increase in the number of households using latrines from 69 per cent (2016) to 93.5 per cent (2020). In combination with complementary nutrition interventions, increased access to water has likely contributed to a reduction in the incidence of diarrhoea, which fell from 29 per cent to 7.9 per cent, by preventing faecal-oral transmission of pathogens.

Another benefit of the new water systems is the reduction in time spent collecting water. The average time taken to collect 20 litres of water reduced significantly from 20 to 60 minutes to 5 to 10 minutes, giving women and others time for other productive tasks, including agriculture, homestead food production and income-generating activities.

Through the project, CDN-ZOA formed a successful collaboration with KORD, a local CSO that is a key service provider in hard-to-reach and conflict-affected areas. KORD was able to bring expertise related to engineering in hilly and challenging terrain. This, combined with the technical skills from CDN, led to the introduction of effective and sustainable water systems that benefited numerous communities.

Also in collaboration with KORD, The Border Consortium's (TBC) STAND UP Phase II Project supported the supply and quality of water for domestic purposes. Local partners BPHWT and KnMHC installed gravity flow water supply systems in five village tracts, eight shallow wells in four village tracts, and a multi-stage water filtration system in 10 village tracts; intervention sites were spread across six townships. In addition,

partner KDHW installed seven gravity flow water supply systems in areas surrounding Village Tract Health Clinics. Following a survey by partner MNHC in New Mon State Party (NMSP) ceasefire areas across Ye Township, two gravity flow water supply and storage systems were subsequently constructed to improve access to domestic water for 2,622 people in 524 households.

While access to water for domestic consumption has certainly improved, the installation of water filtration systems to improve the quality of water was hampered by COVID-related restrictions on travel. Nevertheless, since access to water for domestic purposes has increased, environmental hygiene has also reportedly improved. Anecdotal reports from health workers suggest the prevalence of skin infections, diarrhoea and vomiting has decreased in these areas. A common concern identified by the assessments in Mon and Karen communities relates to controlling water quality, given the limited access to testing equipment for monitoring chemical and biological contaminants in water resources.

### Collaboration with YCDC to strengthen urban WASH systems

In Save the Children International's Healthy Choices Project, communities are at the centre of decision-making processes for their own development, in order to maintain and supervise WASH services. Through partner WaterAid, the project engages relevant government departments, including the Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC), to understand the needs of those living in informal settlements and advocate for their rights to safe drinking water and waste management systems. By the end of 2020, the project had secured an agreement from YCDC to provide technical training to project staff in 2021.

### Building capacity of local leadership to respond to COVID-19

Recognising the importance of supporting systems-level responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, LIFT nutrition partners engaged with national, state/regional and local-level government and ethnic service providers to bolster their efforts to fight the pandemic.

World Concern Myanmar's Improving the Nutrition Outcomes of Conflict-Affected People in Kachin State project scaled back routine development activities in favour of COVID-19 response activities, including: (1) coordination with MoHS to support state-level COVID-19 responses, (2) staff prevention measures, and (3) community prevention measures, including awareness-raising in the community on COVID-19.

KMSS activated an emergency response mechanism in Kachin and Northern Shan State by forming emergency response teams in townships, villages and camps for internally displaced people.

TBC's STAND UP Phase II project in Kayah, Karen and Mon States and Tanintharyi Region re-allocated additional resources to environmental hygiene, including installation of gravity flow water supply systems and shallow wells to increase access to water; installation of multi-stage water filtration systems to improve water quality, and latrine installation. These sanitation upgrades were accompanied by public meetings across 17 village tracts and in-service training for community health workers from six Village Tract Health Clinics which covered topics such as water sterilisation, water filter construction, personal hygiene, hand washing, waste management and data collection.

Health Poverty Action's (HPA) COVID-19 response activities in Kachin and northern Shan State also aimed to help vulnerable communities, especially migrants, to better cope with the shock through community-driven prevention strategies. This included risk communication through

<sup>34</sup> (a) after using the toilet/defecating, (b) after cleaning a baby's bottom or changing diapers, (c) after handling animal feces, (d) before preparing food for a baby, and (e) before feeding a baby.

community volunteers and actors, installation of handwashing stations and soap distribution.

CDN-ZOA consortium partners were called upon in order to support the response to COVID-19 in Kayin State. The partners had already been working with the Thandaunggyi Township Medical Officer and the Kayin State Health Department supporting communication and coordination through the sharing of information and guidelines and attending regular meetings on nutrition and WASH. This relationship enabled a more synchronised and effective implementation of project activities across government-controlled and Karen National Union-controlled areas during the early days of the pandemic.

Additionally, some partners also supplied local governments with necessary supplies. For example, Save the Children distributed 500 sets of personal protective equipment including gowns, goggles, hand-gel, boots, surgical masks and N95 masks to State and Regional Health Departments of Chin State, Kayin State, northern Shan State and Magway Region.

#### **Market assessment and food price monitoring in Kachin State**

Given the high risk of food shortage and malnutrition faced by migrant communities due to lost income during the COVID-19 pandemic, LIFT partner Health Poverty Action (HPA) developed a market assessment tool in April 2020 to understand the availability and affordability of essential food items. The food market assessment, based on data collected by trained project field staff from food shops and food vendors near and in migrant camps in Kachin State, included food price monitoring information on the availability of eight food groups: cereals, meat and fish, legumes, vegetables, fruit, dairy products, eggs and other commodities. The market assessment found that most food markets in the area are small- or medium-sized and operate daily.

According to monitoring data, most food items were widely available, except for dairy products. The overall food supply remained stable, as local food vendors and shops were able to access food from medium and large markets in Waingmaw and Myitkyina, even during the pandemic. Restrictions on transportation, however, may lead to some delay in re-stocking food supplies. Monitoring results found that the overall retail price of rice decreased slightly (less than 1 per cent) between April and September 2020. The market price of the fresh foods, including vegetables, meat and fish were stable. While overall findings of the food market assessment were that food was available and generally accessible, people's ability to afford food in a struggling economy remains to be seen.

#### **Household level**

In 2020, partners were able to continue many activities as planned, although a number of operational approaches had to be adapted to the new context. Partners worked not only to prevent the spread of COVID-19, but also to mitigate the negative impacts of the pandemic on nutritionally-vulnerable households.

#### **COVID-19**

Nutrition partners quickly shifted course in 2020 to implement a variety of interventions to address the negative socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 on households, and to prevent the spread of the disease. Partner responses at the household-level included:

#### **Mask production to build resilience among migrant workers**

Smart Move implementing partner BoPinc collaborated with BKM to build the short term resilience of migrant workers in peri-urban Yangon through employing workers who had lost their jobs to support the production and distribution of 10,000 garment face masks. This activity was partially funded by LIFT and through BoPinc's own capital.

#### **COVID-19 response cash transfers**

The country's COVID-19 economic slow-down has hurt countless small businesses, as well as many garment workers suffering from job losses and employers evading wage payments. Through the Save the Children's Healthy Choices project in peri-urban Yangon, multipurpose cash transfers were distributed to the most affected garment workers, 87 per cent of them women, and to small business owners. More than 1,200 garment workers received the MMK 120,000 (USD 86) transfer, intended to meet basic household needs while reducing the potential risks of child labour and child exploitation, which was uncovered in a number of situations where families were experiencing financial hardship. A post-distribution monitoring exercise found that 85 per cent of respondents used their cash to purchase food. The 52 small businesses who received transfers had lost investments or closed their businesses due to lockdown rules during the pandemic.

In response to COVID-19, TBC provided one-time cash transfers or food assistance to around 3,000 beneficiaries. Cash assistance (15,000 -20,000 MMK) was provided to 1,429 individuals. Additionally, food assistance was provided through quarantine centres to 860 individuals. A total of 708 students also received basic food items, or the cash equivalent (MMK 2,600).

#### **In-kind distributions**

A number of projects supported in-kind distribution of supplies to communities, as well as health workers. To help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in densely populated areas, the Healthy Choices project distributed soap to 89,100 households across Shwe Pyi Thar Township. Also in peri-urban Yangon, PATH's partner BKM distributed in-kind packages of high-quality cooking oil, 2 kg of Emahta FR, face masks, and hygiene products to vulnerable female garment workers who were unemployed through their Migrant Crisis Center.

In conflict-affected areas, TBC's STAND UP Phase II project distributed face masks, infra-red thermometers and hand-washing basins to community health workers. KMSS's SAFE-WIN project supported the distribution of preventive items to the township health departments, such as soap, basins for hand washing and vinyl for the COVID-19 response. World Concern Myanmar provided support to 52 communities by distributing masks, hand sanitiser, soap, hand speakers, and infrared thermometers. In Kachin and northern Shan State, Save the Children's BRICKS project distributed vinyl banners, pamphlets, and soap to Muse District's DSW staff.

LIFT's nutrition work in 2020 in Rakhine State is presented in 5.1.1: Conflict-Affected Areas of this report.

#### **COVID-19-related behaviour change**

After the onset of COVID-19, a number of LIFT partners already engaged in behaviour change programming for nutrition expanded their interventions to include the promotion of disease-prevention behaviours, including handwashing with soap and water. Other COVID-related behaviours which nutrition partners promoted in 2020 included early, exclusive and continued breastfeeding, consuming a diverse diet

to support good health, maintaining social distance, avoiding crowded areas, wearing masks, and seeking early treatment when showing symptoms of COVID-19. In some cases, messaging was accompanied by the distribution of supplies (soap, masks, etc.) or other interventions at the household and systems levels to help create an enabling environment to adopt promoted behaviours.

### **Nutrition-sensitive agriculture**

#### **Fortified rice**

In 2020, fortified rice was made increasingly available and affordable through the Smart Move consortium, led by PATH, by reducing the cost of the actors (premix, fortified rice kernel, and blending operations) involved in the fortified rice manufacturing process for five rice millers. Identifying a new source for vitamin and mineral premix brought the cost down from 23 USD/kg to 12.5 USD/kg, leading to a 27 per cent reduction in the cost of the fortified rice kernel, from MMK 5,400 (USD 3.90) per kilogram to MMK 3,850 (USD 2.80). These price reductions, along with other factors, including a change in the blending ratio (from 98:2 to 99:1), led to a cost reduction of MMK 150 (USD 0.10) per kg to the consumer. PATH collaborated with rice millers to produce Emahta variety fortified rice and promoted it via public health providers, including the World Food Programme, to ensure its inclusion in their in-kind food packages. Progress was also made in raising awareness about fortified rice among migrant workers, small food vendors (SFVs), and small- and medium-enterprises by increasing the distribution points through existing and new sales points, and including fortified rice in meals cooked by SFVs.

By December, Smart Move had identified three marketing models and held discussions with three rice millers to develop a strategy for central marketing and distribution of fortified rice in the context of COVID-19. BoPinc and Be Kind Myanmar identified key sales points and distributors to scale-up sales as the partners simultaneously created demand at the consumer level. A total of 26 metric tons (MT) of fortified rice was produced and distributed through all partners. Over 18,579 beneficiaries per year are consuming Emhata fortified rice and 48 selling points are engaged through Smart Move's efforts.

In 2020, the project also gathered a number of lessons through consumer and market insight research led by BoPinc, including that some of the main barriers to the consumption of fortified rice included concerns that it was not "natural" and may therefore harm the body, that fortified rice was for "elite" people, and that trusted sales points were important. In response, the Smart Move project transformed its fortified rice education sites to also serve as sales points. From January to December 2020, 1,213 packets of fortified rice were sold at-cost through these sites, where staff also solicited customer feedback on the experience of consuming the product.

#### **Homestead gardens**

CDN-ZOA demonstrated through the successful implementation of a multisectoral project in northern Kayin State that a combination of interventions targeted to address income, WASH and nutrition knowledge and practice and access and availability of diverse foods can have a dramatic impact on stunting, as well as on a number of the key pathways that lead to stunting and wasting. The endline found that stunting amongst children under five reduced from 53.7 per cent in 2016 to 46.5 per cent in 2020 and wasting from 15.1 per cent to 6.5 per cent within the 40 core villages who received the full package of interventions. Over two-thirds of the respondents (70 per cent), reported that the project strongly improved their lives, highlighting motorbike

path construction, provision of water systems, home gardening, and savings and loan activities.

The project worked with over 600 households, supporting homestead food production through regular and focused training of home gardening technicians, women focal persons and community facilitators, as well as the development and distribution of a home gardening manual and provision of selected inputs (seeds and tools). At baseline, only six crops were grown by more than 10 per cent of households, while at the endline as many as 23 crops were grown by more than 10 per cent of households; the project helped increase the local availability of a much wider variety of nutritious foods. As many as 84.3 per cent of women confirmed that more food had become available in the past three years, and linked this to increased vegetable/home gardening production.

These improvements were also seen in increased diversity of food consumed with proportion of mothers consuming the minimum dietary diversity improved from 21.8 per cent to 44.4 per cent and the consumption of vitamin A-rich foods by 6-23 months old children increased from 24 per cent to 47 per cent and of iron-rich foods from 23 per cent to 46 per cent.

The endline revealed that an unintended positive consequence of the project, which also contributed to its success, is that households shared not only the surplus vegetables grown in their own gardens, but also the inputs and knowledge they had gained so that others could also improve their homestead food production.

#### **Organic homestead food production in Kachin host communities and Kokang Self-Administered Zone**

To support Kachin host communities in increasing production of micronutrient-rich foods to market to nearby migrant communities, Health Poverty Action (HPA) led trainings in organic homestead food production, as well as in livestock and animal care. The homestead training covered basic techniques of organic homestead gardening, soil and water management, plant disease and organic pest management, and post-harvest handling. The training was delivered in a participatory style, combining classroom learning with hands-on practice at a demonstration plot. The participatory livestock training covered key topics on animal breeding, animal health and animal management for poultry and hogs. These trainings were followed up with distribution of chicks and piglets to households with women of reproductive age and children aged under five. Post-training monitoring found that all those households visited had set up their own homestead gardens after completing the training. Not only did the monitoring find that homestead gardens were already producing decent yields of vegetables, but also that families were sharing the produce with their neighbours. Some of the households who received training are planning to set up small livestock businesses, such as homestead chicken farms, to generate income.

By the end of the year, in Kokang Self Administered Zone (SAZ), HPA had conducted similar homestead food production and livestock (chicken) raising for families with pregnant and breastfeeding women and children aged under two with the support of a local CSO partner and MoALI staff. Vegetable seeds (cabbage, mustard, carrot, white French bean) and chicks were distributed to families to help kickstart homestead food production. Results of this effort will be seen in 2021.

### **Educating conflict-affected youth on nutrition-sensitive agriculture practices**

The Border Consortium's STAND UP (Phase II) project works with 18 ethnic service providers and civil society organisations (CSOs) in conflict-affected communities across 14 townships. To build resilience among these communities, TBC promotes the adoption of nutrition-sensitive agricultural practices. In 2020, TBC partner KAD collaborated with the KNU's Education and Culture Department and district leaders to introduce nutrition-sensitive agriculture to boarding students at the only KNU administered High School in Thandaunggyi Township. Similarly, partner MWO collaborated with the Mon National Education Committee (MNEC) to promote nutrition-sensitive agriculture techniques, including organic vegetable gardening and fruit tree cultivation, among Nyi Sar High School students in the New Mon State Party (NMSP) administered area of Ye Township. Partner KESAN facilitated a training in Hpapun Township on compost making and natural pest control, emphasising the importance of maintaining indigenous knowledge of practices, such as mixed cropping and continuing to plant a wide variety of indigenous seeds to protect their nutrition and food security in the event of a shock.

### **First 1,000 days fresh food vouchers**

To overcome migrant community members' limited ability to afford nutritious food, Health Poverty Action (HPA) distributed food vouchers to households in Kachin State plantations and nearby host communities with pregnant and breastfeeding women and children aged under two. This had the added benefit of supporting local small- and medium-sized vendors, who reported selling food and other non-food items to migrants on credit, suffering losses when those debts were not repaid. A food voucher scheme with the backing of a credible organisation helped them secure a stable stream of income and increase their financial security. In total, 35 vendors (21 shop owners, 14 motorbike sellers) were trained and contracted to provide nutritious food to first 1,000 days households from three plantation areas. The food vouchers reached 451 women and 324 children aged under two. Each woman and child was entitled to MMK 15,000 (USD 11) per person per month in vouchers: MMK 5,200 (35 per cent) for meat and fish, MMK 4,000 (25 per cent) for Vitamin A and iron-rich vegetables and MMK 5,800 (40 per cent) for eggs, milk, pulses and other dry groceries.

The value of vouchers was calculated based on the World Food Programme's minimum expenditure basket for food items (MMK 15,000 per month) as well as market assessment findings on the current prices of targeted foods. Regular price monitoring was conducted to ensure that the values of the vouchers continued to reflect current market prices and could be adjusted accordingly, if necessary. To support the purchase of perishable foods, food vouchers are distributed on a bi-weekly basis, which also aligns with beneficiaries' shopping patterns.

### **Livestock**

CRS's CHANGE project in Chin State strives to strengthen the resilience and sustainable livelihoods of poor and vulnerable groups, especially women and smallholder farmers, to achieve positive outcomes in nutrition, hygiene, gender equity, and livestock production. The nutrition-sensitive project targets households with pregnant and breastfeeding women and children aged under five to impact on a number of pathways to reduce stunting and build household resilience. A critical component of the project to building resilience, increasing income and improving diets is to improve livestock production by building beneficiary household members' skills in chicken and pig husbandry. The project increases access to chicken and pig husbandry skills through targeted training and demonstrations, and through the formation of livestock

groups, which include women and men.

To promote women's participation in the project, pigs and chickens were selected as they were identified as livestock assets primarily controlled by women. Gender transformative messaging is incorporated into all livestock lessons. For example, livestock lessons include messages on husbands and wives sharing workloads equally. CHANGE's approach to gender focusses not only on empowering women, but also on encouraging men to practice equitable decision-making and sharing major household tasks.

The role of community animal health workers (CAHWs) in ensuring effective outreach of husbandry practices through the Livestock Breeding and Veterinary Department is critical to the success of the project. However, by the end of 2020 the department had no trainings for CAHWs planned for Chin State. In the meantime, the project's livestock groups are the primary mode through which CHANGE aims to support pig and chicken production within participating households, thereby filling a gap in the service provision by the Chin Livestock Breeding and Veterinary Department.

### **Climate Change**

The climate-smart and nutrition-sensitive Six-Legged Livestock project was an innovative approach to promote farming and safe consumption of insects in Myanmar as well as filling the academic research gaps in the entomology field. The research included an analysis of edible insect consumption, as well as their trade, value chains, and potential use as aquaculture feed in Myanmar.

The project concluded that while the active promotion of insects as food will assist in increasing interest in farming insects, the feed sector is likely to be more than 10 times the value of the food sector. There were a number of significant findings from the project relating to the livelihood opportunities and socio-economic gains that can be achieved through edible insect capture, farming and trade. There remains a lot to be understood about the value in promoting insects as a protein source for human consumption.

Analysis on consumer behaviour, investigating demand, demonstrated that edible insects were widely accepted in Myanmar; a survey carried out by Spectrum showed 97 per cent of respondents ate insects. However there are significant concerns about food safety issues and a lack of accurate data about the nutrient content of Myanmar-specific insects. The project attempted to stimulate the demand for insects and generate bigger markets for producers of a sustainable, climate smart source of protein. An Everyday Insects Recipe Book has been developed and published in Myanmar and English and was accompanied by a TV series, produced in collaboration with MITV to raise awareness of insect cooking.

The project embarked on a food safety assessment and lab analysis in 2020. However, due to COVID-19 restrictions, the samples taken from vendors across 28 townships could not be sent for analysis in Singapore. Evidence to support the safe nature of edible insects for human consumption will need to form a key part of any strategy going forward to overcome well documented food safety fears.

MoHS's National Nutrition Centre participated in the policy round table event that took place in December 2020, an important step in engaging the nutrition sector in this dialogue and aligning some of the findings of the research with priorities under MS-NPAN to improve access to safe and nutrient dense foods.

### Community-level social behaviour change

Using tailored and effective tools and resources

The CHANGE project led by CRS and KMSS in Chin have continued to build on previous investments in development of tools and resources, including a Chin-specific food plate to be used for behaviour change interventions at the community level through the Care Group Model. Materials were updated based on learnings from the previous project and to align with the Ministry of Health and Sports (MoHS) standard nutrition message book along with supplemental knowledge gained from the LIFT-funded Leveraging Essential Nutrition Actions to Reduce Malnutrition (LEARN) project. It was verbally approved by the Chin State Health Department, which is an important step in the development of tools that are context specific and target the specific behaviours and barriers relevant to each area.

### Evidence-based campaigns for behaviour change in peri-urban Yangon

Building on the highly successful #6la campaign designed by creative agency Bridge and led by Save the Children and partners in 2019, the Healthy Choices project extended the #6la social marketing campaign to promote exclusive breastfeeding among women in peri-urban Yangon. In preparation for the campaign, scheduled to be delivered in March 2021 in coordination with the MCCT urban pilot, Bridge conducted desk research to update the campaign content, conducted online stakeholder design workshops, and developed a campaign strategy with an M&E plan.

### Market research to promote fortified rice sales

PATH's Smart Move project partner, BoPInc, is responsible for designing the project's commercialisation approach for fortified rice. This approach is informed by a consumer insights survey as well as an analysis of the fortified rice market. With the onset of COVID-19, BoPInc was able to pivot its community-level activities that were interrupted due to COVID-19 restrictions. Insight surveys were executed in-person and online. With more use of online services during the stay-at-home period, both demand- and supply-side insights were linked with economic slowdown and concerns for daily income. In 2020, BoPInc reached 5,286 individuals via the Facebook page for rice millers. BoPInc engaged with three rice millers to set up an online demand creation and awareness generation channel. For one miller, a pilot was initiated in November 2020, allowing the team to learn and refine a strategy for 2021 and combine these online activities with the NNC-managed Facebook page on fortified rice (once it is revived) and with the Facebook campaigns of the two other rice millers. The project also intends to organise offline demand creation and nutrition awareness activities.

### SBCC in conflict-affected areas

The overall objective of KMSS's SAFE WIN project is to improve knowledge, capacity, skills and self-reliance, while bolstering diet diversity and nutrition-seeking behaviours among people in the protracted conflict context of Kachin and northern Shan State. Target beneficiaries are pregnant women, breastfeeding women and mothers who have children aged under two. Activities to facilitate nutrition behaviour change and promote nutrition-sensitive food security are designed to achieve better nutrition and health outcomes, increased availability of diverse nutritious foods, and functioning lead mother groups. KMSS's SBCC approach operates at the individual, family/peer, community and structural levels to create an enabling environment for positive behaviour change by promoting positive behaviours among the target group members themselves (mothers), while also working at the household, community

and policy levels through homestead gardening, community campaigns, and local policy engagement. In response to COVID-19, the project relied heavily on online communication platforms, such as Viber and Messenger to share health messages with lead mothers. Also to support behaviour change, the project provided vegetable seeds to targeted households, alongside nutrition education and cooking demonstration sessions led by lead mothers, to support the growing of nutrient-rich vegetables in home gardens for family consumption.

To improve the nutritional status of targeted mothers, children 0-23 months, and adolescents in camp and non-camp communities, Save the Children's Building Resilience In Conflict-Affected areas of Kachin and Shan States (BRICKS) project started implementing SBCC activities through community nutrition counsellors (CNC) and mother leaders. These activities are aimed at empowering communities while strengthening the capacity of basic health staff and ethnic health organisations in non-government controlled areas. After a one-month delay in the Institutional Review Board (IRB) process, Save the Children managed to gather nutrition information in November 2020 to inform their behaviour change activities. In the lead up to this data-gathering exercise, the project focused on laying the groundwork for SBCC activity implementation, including staff-led mother leaders meetings, mother leader-led neighbour mothers' meetings and engagement sessions on various topics, including basic nutrition and essential health care services. Several trainings were also organised on mid-upper arm circumference (MUAC), community infant and young child feeding (c-IYCF), behaviour change framework development, mental health and psychosocial support, and facilitation methods for nutrition. SBCC materials, including nutrition education videos, comic books, and manuals, were also developed to support the implementation of SBCC activities. The project has translated its materials into several languages, including Burmese, Kachin, and Shan.

### Nutrition support to internally-displaced people in Kachin

World Concern Myanmar's project, Improving the nutrition outcomes of conflict-affected people in Kachin State, works to improve dietary practices among adolescent girls, women and children aged under two, improve hygiene practices among people who are internally displaced and their host community, and improve communities' access to nutritious food. The project also ensures early detection of children living with disabilities, and includes people living with disabilities in their routine project activities. Despite a number of COVID-19-related constraints, including a decrease in reach due to scaled-down or cancelled trainings and gatherings, restricted staff access to camps due to limited COVID-19 testing capacity, as well as quarantine restrictions, the project was able to achieve 58 per cent of the overall project targeted beneficiary reach through routine project activities. In 2021, the project intends to focus on growth monitoring, mother group sessions, individual nutrition counseling, community awareness sessions, business training for food producer groups, and disability screening.

### Screening, referral and treatment of SAM

The TBC - STAND UP project supported regular screening of children aged 6 and 59 months in five village tracts across Bilin, Thandaunggyi and Hpapun Townships. BPHWT and KDHW conducted mid-upper arm-circumference (MUAC) screenings in their respective areas reaching 4,134 children across 11 village tracts. Collectively, 5,438 children were assessed with 5.3 per cent identified with moderate or severe wasting malnutrition.

KNMHC and MNHC conducted MUAC assessments of 1,127 children

during household visits in Kayah State and Mon ceasefire areas. As KNMHC and MNHC are new partners for STAND UP Phase Two, the protocols used for MUAC assessments and referrals still need to be clarified. However, it appears that 56 children (4.9 per cent) of children were identified with moderate wasting malnutrition.

Children identified with moderate and severe malnutrition were referred to Community Health Clinics for supplementary feeding. BPHWT also introduced a supplementary feeding programme for 336 pregnant women in five pilot village tracts. However therapeutic feeding is not currently available through the community health clinics. LIFT coordinates with Access to Health, UNICEF and WFP and the LEARN project to support partners that identify malnutrition needs in communities requiring additional support.

#### **Supporting treatment of acute malnutrition in Rakhine**

As part of the Tat Lan Plus programme, Save the Children and partners maintained essential nutrition activities for internally displaced people in camps in Sittwe and Pauktaw Townships.

The programme continued MUAC screening and counselling sessions, adhering to MoHS COVID-19 prevention guidelines, referring children with severe and moderate acute malnutrition to Outpatient Therapeutic Programme (OTP) centres operated by Save the Children and Myanmar Health Assistant Association (MHAA) in Pauktaw and SCF and MHAA in Sittwe.

The MoHS is implementing a national Integrated Management of Acute Malnutrition (IMAM) Programme to integrate screening and treatment of acute malnutrition into the existing health system. Save the Children is supporting the Township Department of Public Health, to roll-out the national IMAM guidelines by supporting health volunteers with active case findings and referrals to the Supplementary Feeding Programme or Outpatient Therapeutic Programme. Rural Health Centres are being supported to deliver this service by providing training, mentoring, coaching and skill maintenance for the Nutrition Volunteers.

Basic health staff were supported by the LIFT-funded project to conduct mid-upper arm circumference (MUAC) screening for early detection and referral of malnourished cases at camps and villages. An average of 10,000 children aged 6-59 months were screened each month during 2020 with a coverage rate of 89 per cent; almost 120,000 screened in total. A total of 433 cases of SAM were identified and all received treatment when referred. However, only 58 per cent of the 776 children with moderate acute malnutrition (MAM) received treatment. The low coverage of MAM treatment was largely due to challenges organisations faced delivering the treatment due to funding gaps or restrictions on travel. Save the Children negotiated with other organisations to prioritise cases when they were able to reach the camps, also ensuring each case received one to one counseling and Wheat Soy Blend Plus Minerals and Milk (WSB++).

The project also encouraged mothers to come to OTP centres for screening if they were concerned about their child. There, they were assessed for malnourishment; 1,203 children were screened in this way.

In the OTP treatment site in Pauktaw camp 352 new cases of SAM and 4 readmissions were admitted and achieved a cure rate of 99.7 per cent. Staff followed up children with severe acute malnutrition (SAM) through house visits to provide support for the use of ready-to-use therapeutic food (RUTF) and to provide infant and young child feeding support.

#### **Mothers screening children for SAM**

Community Nutrition Counsellors were trained by Save the Children's BRICKS project to then train mothers and caregivers to screen and identify children with SAM and MAM early using MUAC on children aged 6-24months. For the first five months the counsellors monitored mothers' measurements and provided additional training if required. Over the five months 800 children were measured with a 99 per cent accuracy rate. There were 14 cases of MAM and three cases of SAM.

Children with SAM were referred to the International Rescue Committee (IRC) who supported the treatment of cases. When the IRC project closed, cases were referred to the Township Health Department with the support of Access to Health. Community Nutrition Counsellors supported MAM cases with counselling sessions and their situation was monitored. The results of this project could prove extremely valuable to the debate on mothers or family members performing MUAC measurements and may lead to increased screening and early detection in hard-to-reach areas, along with support for referral to adequate treatment.

Training mothers or family members to use MUAC tapes to screen their own children for acute malnutrition is an approach that has been used in a number of countries worldwide by governments, UN organisations and NGOs, with good evidence to support the use of a simple tool to detect children as soon as they are showing signs of being wasted. Early detection of acute malnutrition is one of the primary factors in a successful and sustainable recovery with less hospitalisations and reduced risk of complications. As part of a three fund collaboration with HARP and Access to Health, LIFT supported an Action contre la Faim (ACF) project in Rakhine that explored the feasibility of family MUAC especially in conflict-affected areas and remote communities who have limited access to community health and nutrition services. The NNC and MoHS were interested to see the outcomes of this study. Advocacy efforts should be continued to see if it can be scaled up for wider use and integrated within the health system.

#### **Multi-sector programming for improvements in nutrition**

Global evidence continues to build in support of multisector strategies for reducing undernutrition reaching populations during the first 1,000 days.

The CDN-ZOA project in Kayin State is contributing to this evidence base by demonstrating that coordinated interventions affecting the causal pathways of undernutrition including access to safe water and sanitation facilities, markets and diverse foods, information about health and nutrition best practices, and increased income can have a significant impact on undernutrition. This project saw a 2.4 per cent annual decrease in stunting from 54 per cent to 47 per cent and a 8 percentage point reduction in wasting building resilience at the individual and household level through improved nutrition and food security.

The project was a multi-partner consortium that incorporated different sectors to achieve a common goal in reducing malnutrition, building partnerships with local and international organisations who brought expertise and skills to deliver impact in nutrition within the first 1,000 days, paying testament to the success of coordination, multisector planning at the point of implementation and crucially, targeting.

Despite some challenges inherent with coordination, the consortium delivered activities aligned to impact on food access and availability, water and sanitation and to support improved behaviours and practices that prioritised pregnant women, mothers and households with children



aged under five. Stronger connections were also made with the Saving and Loans Groups, giving more mothers a chance to participate in these groups.

This intentional coordination and targeting is an essential part of integrated nutrition programming and the lessons learnt and evidence should help to shape how these approaches can be scaled-up and replicated elsewhere in Myanmar.

### **Women's empowerment**

Women's empowerment is a strategic priority for LIFT programmes, as an end in and of itself, as well as a critical pathway for improved nutrition outcomes. LIFT-funded projects address a number of factors that act as barriers to women's empowerment in Myanmar, including low status relative to men, limited access to resources, lack of decision-making power, heavy workload (especially when pregnant and breastfeeding), and psychosocial stress, especially in conflict-affected areas. Though there are variations in the experiences and inequalities faced by women in the various states and regions and in urban and rural areas, there are a number of common issues that persist.

### **Buffering the impact of economic decline on women garment workers**

In peri-urban Yangon, all LIFT-funded partners have committed to advancing women's empowerment through their projects. Many of these projects work with the garment sector, in which over 90 per cent of the workers are women<sup>35</sup> and where they often suffer from a gender wage gap, discriminatory employment practices, and violence and harassment in the workplace, in addition to having a large burden of unpaid work at home. In response to the lack of employment following COVID-19 restrictions, multi-purpose cash transfers were distributed to 1,273 beneficiaries (84 per cent women) as part of the Healthy Choices project. Despite 75 per cent of these women stating they were the primary income earner, only 29 per cent considered themselves head of the household and fewer than half of all respondents (43 per cent) made the decision on how the cash was used by their household, despite the majority of the cash transfer recipients being women.

Over time, the LIFT-funded interventions in the peri-urban programme will work at the policy, systems and household levels to encourage a shift in attitudes about gender, increasing women's decision-making power in the household and in the workplace, improving women's access to resources, and supporting gender-transformative policies for working women.

### **CRS identifies intervention entry points for women's empowerment in Chin State**

The CHANGE project in Chin State has two foundational outcomes that relate directly to gender-equitable behaviours including joint-decision making and shared responsibilities for nutrition/WASH and livestock production, and joint household budgeting and financial management for improved investment in nutrition and livestock production. As part of the inception period work within these two crucial areas, CRS carried out a gender technical assessment. Women's empowerment emerged as a strong theme both in terms of women's short-term practical needs (equitable division of household labour and joint decision-making on the

use of resources including income for nutrition and livestock) and their longer-term strategic needs (female inheritance and land ownership for women). There is a need to operationalise women's empowerment and one way the project proposed to do this was to ensure single-sex spaces and sessions are built into trainings, involving men in community awareness-raising activities, and using livestock and nutrition as entry points for discussions around the benefits to all of gender-equitable behaviors and joint decision-making, particularly within the family.

### **Insights from KMSS's gender and nutrition assessment in Kachin and northern Shan State**

KMSS's SAFE WIN project in Kachin and northern Shan State has mutual objectives around nutrition and women's empowerment. The project conducted a gender assessment on nutrition to understand family power dynamics, the roles and responsibilities of men and women related to food and nutrition, as well as local perspectives on decision-making related to food and nutrition norms. Steered by the findings of a desk review, 86 focus group discussions with mothers, fathers and grandmothers and six key informant interviews with focal contacts of the project in Myitkyina, Lashio and Bamaw were conducted in August and September 2020.

According to the assessment, family daily meal preparation and decision-making tends to be in the domain of mothers, who are also responsible for feeding children aged under two. Grandmothers are less involved in daily meal preparation, though they, or other secondary caregivers, tend to assume this responsibility when women are in their third trimester and in post-birth confinement. Self-reported knowledge on nutrition is higher among those who have been exposed to nutrition programming, including mothers, than among secondary caregivers, such as grandmothers and husbands, who are less often targeted by nutrition interventions. As a result, grandmothers often turn to traditional food practices, which in turn places pressure on their own daughters and daughters-in law to respect those same traditions. The assessment revealed a number of insights.

In terms of male involvement, many fathers do not consider themselves to have a significant role in women and children's nutrition. For example, most fathers said they usually did not cook because it was not a priority for them. All of the female respondents indicated that the men's primary responsibility was to secure income for the family. Due to the pressures of the irregular and low incomes earned by their husbands, women often work to supplement this income, in addition to meeting their normal household responsibilities. This creates a significant added time and work burden on women, which also contributes to mental stress and worry. In addition to limited job opportunities, low pay and irregular work, a number of families have high dependency ratios, which leads to further challenges in meeting the food security needs of all family members.

Financial hardship is the most cited family concern, followed by health issues, education and marital issues. When it comes to nutrition, children's development-- particularly brain development-- is an important motivator for a number of mothers, who said that they want their child to be "bright" and educated so that they do not need to do hard labour, like they do.

Another relevant finding, which relates to decision-making in conflict-affected areas, is that those who live in camps for internally displaced people have limited control and decision-making power over their own diets. They have to eat what they are provided with, rather than being able to make their own choices.

<sup>35</sup> ILO's 2019 Weaving Gender: Challenges and opportunities for the Myanmar garment industry

Key recommendations from the assessment include building negotiation skills among women and finding ways to directly or indirectly engage secondary caregivers, including men and grandmothers in nutrition programming to support mutually positive gender and nutrition outcomes.

## LOOKING AHEAD

### Policy level

#### MS-NPAN

At the end of 2020, the MS-NPAN was ready to move to the implementation of coordinated and targeted interventions across multiple sectors to impact on nutrition. The implementation was based on plans developed and endorsed by the relevant government departments at state and Union level.

The five states and regions where the plans were endorsed planned to move to monitoring the implementation of existing activities in 2021 while also securing the resources for scaling up, expanding or introducing new activities.

The process and capacity that development partners will provide in the implementation of these plans still needs to be established. The contribution that development partners make to achieving the targets within each state plan will be included in the state-level MS-NPAN monitoring system.

Rakhine, Kachin and northern Shan are a priority for 2021 to ensure that the most nutritionally vulnerable communities are receiving the package of nutrition services that are needed to enable resilience and growth in challenging conditions. Rakhine made some initial steps towards integrated nutrition programming as a result of delivering on agreed actions from the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State (ACRS) recommendations. LIFT is funding the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and Community Partners International (CPI) to support the MS-NPAN implementation by the Government in Kayah and Kayah, through facilitating the coordination and supporting additional engagement by the ethnic service providers. The LEARN project and SUN-CSA were also positioned intentionally to support the MS-NPAN stakeholders' participation and monitor implementation and support coordination.

In 2020, LIFT was working with Access to Health and other UN Partners to support the decentralisation of the MS-NPAN process and foster sub-national leadership. The MS-NPAN Core Team, supported by LIFT throughout 2019 and 2020, was planned to continue for the first half of 2021 working with MoHS and MoSWRR to establish sustainable technical resources within government departments. MoALI was supported by EU budget support.

#### SBCC Strategy

The SBCC strategy was intended to move forward and provide the opportunity for MoHS to build on the experience and approaches that have been tested across LIFT programmes. It brings the opportunity to link up the efforts in Food Based Dietary Guidelines, peri-urban campaigns and the work with food vendors, and MCCT-SBCC initiatives. LIFT partners will be extremely important in contributing to the content of the strategy, providing experience, inputs and a critical view of what is

needed and what has worked.

Once developed and agreed upon, the strategy and the toolbox will need to be adapted and made applicable to different areas of the country.

### Scaling Up Nutrition

LIFT's support to the SUN Civil Society Alliance (SUN-CSA) and the SUN-Business Network (SUN-BN), and as a member of SUN UN Network, will continue to build a valuable and relevant platform that brings together different stakeholders who need to be aligned for impact on nutrition. The strength in these networks are their comprehensive membership and clear strategies to operate across development and humanitarian sectors, in the public and private sectors. 2021 will see more efforts to unite these different sectors and to align efforts for some common goals both centrally and at a sub-national level.

The SUN-BN will aim to further enable business engagement in the multisectoral strategies and activities of the government for positive impact on nutrition and to foster enabling policies, laws and regulations for the private sector to act on nutrition, specifically related to food and nutrition, food safety, food fortification and workers' nutrition.

The SUN-CSA will continue to expand into conflict-affected areas, where they will also seek to establish additional networks of CSA nutrition partners.

### Food fortification

The SUN-BN will produce a technical briefing paper on the current food fortification situation, outlining challenges and opportunities in food fortification with key policy and intervention recommendations.

To promote increased uptake and acceptability of fortified rice SUN-BN are working with PATH, WFP and the NNC to carry out a Fortified Rice Acceptability Study of blending ratio of 1:99 that will detail further barriers to uptake. Delayed because of COVID-19 this study will take place in 2021.

### Food Based Dietary Guidelines (FBDG)

The FBDGs are expected to be finalised and endorsed by end-2021

The SUN-BN and LIFT's peri-urban partners will form a public-private coalition to develop a joint nutrition campaign to promote healthy diets based on the FBDGs. The use of these guidelines, targeted to specific groups, are well researched and endorsed and therefore provide excellent resources for partners to develop materials that are cohesive with common, nationally-agreed approaches.

In 2021, as part of a national effort to update Myanmar's Food-Based Dietary Guidelines, PATH plans to develop guidelines targeting pre-school children and other vulnerable groups, including migrants and people with disabilities.

### Systems-level

#### Nutrition in the forthcoming Rakhine Programme

LIFT announced a call for concept notes for the Rakhine Programme, with improved nutrition among women and children being one of the programme's three main pillars. The nutritional status of children in Rakhine is among the worst in the country, with 38 per cent of children aged under five stunted and 14 per cent wasted. In the Rakhine

Programme, LIFT will expand on former investments made in supporting the roll-out of nutrition services (IMAM, IYCF, MCCT) to address stunting and wasting, focusing on underserved communities in camps for internally displaced people, host and neighbouring communities.

#### **Strategic communications package for Chin MCCT**

In 2020, LIFT agreed to provide funding for an agency to work closely with the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) in the design of an innovative government communications package and community feedback mechanism for the MCCT Programme in Chin State. The communications package would build recognition of the MCCT brand and its eligibility criteria among community members and other stakeholders, amplify critical 1,000 days messages promoted by the MoHS, and support the adoption of nutrition-sensitive behaviours by MoSWRR. The community feedback mechanism would serve as a direct channel for the government to receive feedback from beneficiaries and community members, who would have an anonymous and user-friendly mechanism or platform to communicate complaints or grievances, ideas and positive feedback about the programme. Once created, the package and feedback mechanism was planned to be implemented by the Government, with LIFT's support.

#### **Kachin MCCT Baseline**

In 2020, DSW requested support from LIFT for the implementation of a baseline survey for the Kachin MCCT, which was intended to be finalised by July 2021. The baseline is required to provide a basis for measuring and evaluating the outcomes and impact of the programme over time as well as providing an opportunity to develop skills and capacity within DSW to be able to carry out baselines in the future.

#### **Kachin and northern Shan nutrition community of practice**

Building on the success of the peri-urban communities of practice (CoP) for nutrition, a CoP will be launched for partners in Kachin and northern Shan State in 2021 to support project coordination and technical collaboration.

#### **Household level**

##### **Increasing access to fortified rice through online delivery**


Consumers have become more familiar with online shopping during the pandemic and online delivery is increasingly being utilised by the food industry. Rice millers are supported by BoPinc to promote the online sale of rice, which is a new approach that rice millers plan to test in 2021. An online shop with social media promotion will aim to increase the demand for fortified rice from the general population, while PATH and rice millers work collaboratively to increase production.

##### **Piloting incentive system for community-based volunteers**


As part of its LIFT-funded project in Kachin, World Concern Myanmar (WCM) plans to pilot and assess an incentive system for community-based government volunteers, in alignment with the National Nutrition Centre's (NNC) interest in scaling up a sustainable and scalable system as part of the newly released national community-based health worker policy. WCM plans to test an incentive system, based on actual activities and work done by the community volunteers, and conduct a review study to collect lessons learned.

#### **Gearing up for two campaign launches: #61a and Healthy Choices**

Save the Children's partner Bridge moves into the #61a campaign's final phase of preparation in 2021 and will design a follow-on campaign for the Healthy Choices Project promoting healthy eating among urban MCCT beneficiaries.



***LIFT's Nutrition Programme continues to promote and support a holistic, multisectoral, systems-strengthening approach, which is critical to building the resilience of individuals and communities to the impact of shocks, including COVID-19.***



# FINANCIAL INCLUSION & PRIVATE SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS

## THEMATIC PROGRAMMES

# 4.2

## FINANCIAL INCLUSION & PRIVATE SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS

### CONTEXT

LIFT's Financial Inclusion Programme (2019-2023) is based on the rationale that:

- » Despite substantial expansion of the financial sector since 2012 when Myanmar's economy started opening up, large sections of the population remain unserved or underserved, including the most vulnerable.
- » Microfinance institutions (MFI) in Myanmar require access to more capital to expand their credit services.
- » Progress in expanding access to deposit-taking services has been slow amongst Myanmar MFIs, limiting their development into full-fledged financial intermediaries.
- » Most MFIs offer only credit; savings mobilisation remains the forgotten part of microfinance in Myanmar.
- » The rapid rise of mobile phone ownership<sup>36</sup> opened considerable opportunities for scaling up financial services to extend the reach of savings, credit and money transfer services to the poor.
- » Socially responsible and inclusive financial services provide a range of benefits to individuals and the economy.<sup>37</sup>

In recent times, the financial sector has grown and diversified. Commercial banks, MFIs and cooperatives have expanded quite dramatically. MFIs and cooperatives now serve similar numbers of clients in the rural sector as the once dominant Myanmar Agricultural Development Bank (MADB). Informal financial service providers remain but have declined in importance, and fewer people are dependent solely on informal service providers. Formal financial inclusion of adults increased from 30 per cent to 48 per cent, and the use of more than one type of product category

<sup>36</sup> Mobile phone ownership rose from 23 per cent in 2013 to 78 per cent in 2018: FinScope Study, 2018

<sup>37</sup> LIFT Strategy 2019-2023

from 6 per cent to 17 per cent of adults, according to the Myanmar Financial Inclusion Roadmap 2019-2023 report. Both achievements are above respective targets of 40 per cent and 15 per cent.<sup>38</sup>

Myanmar continues, however, to experience challenges and opportunities around financial inclusion.

Myanmar's domestic savings rate remains very low, at 18 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP). Increasing the rate of domestic savings in a form that can flow through to investment is an economic priority.

Agriculture now accounts for 27 per cent of GDP and the need to support agriculture finance continues to be critical since it provides the bulk of employment opportunities in rural areas, where 65 per cent of people live. Myanmar's Agriculture Development Strategy<sup>39</sup> identifies smallholder farmers' limited access to financial services as one of the key challenges to improving agriculture productivity and competitiveness.

Myanmar's Government set a new financial inclusion goal for 2019 – 2023: "Increase formal Financial Inclusion in Myanmar from 48 per cent in 2018 to 60 per cent by 2023, and adults with more than one product category from 17 per cent to 25 per cent, with a full range of affordable, quality and effective financial services that comply to internationally recognised standards on responsible finance, by getting all stakeholders to work together in an integrated manner, to support job creation (especially by small enterprises), poverty alleviation and household resilience."<sup>40</sup>

In order to achieve this goal, the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Industry (MoPFI) established focus areas for financial inclusion: agriculture sector financing, micro- small- and medium-sized enterprises (MSME) financing, and low-income segment financing. LIFT's Financial Inclusion Programme aims to contribute to these goals and focus areas.

The thrust of LIFT's work is to expand access to inclusive financial services that can serve as a catalyst for inclusive economic development.

The key components of LIFT's Financial Inclusion and Private Sector Partnerships Programme are:

**Microfinance:** Supporting MFIs to increase supply of a broad range of demand-driven financial services tailored to diverse market segments and increase MFI presence in remote and conflict-affected areas to support poverty and vulnerability reduction.

**Microfinance capital market development:** Supporting the hedging of foreign currency exchange risk to attract international investors to Myanmar's microfinance market and contribute to growth in access to inclusive financial services across the country.

**Digital financial services:** Building digital financial channels, primarily targeting women.

**Agribusiness finance:** Incentivising provision of financial services tailored to the agriculture sector.

**Climate disaster recovery:** Development of a finance vehicle to channel funds to MFIs and cooperatives to cover liquidity gaps and manage cash flows in the event of a major climate disaster.

**Women's inclusion and empowerment:** Targeting and empowering women is a priority of the programme.

The COVID-19 outbreak in Myanmar in March 2020 had an immediate impact on LIFT's Financial Inclusion Programme partners and their clients.

### COVID-19

COVID-19 restrictions at the beginning of the pandemic stopped financial service providers meeting with clients. As a result microfinance customers across the country faced a sharp decline in access to loans and savings withdrawals were high. The most significant impact on the sector was a decrease in the liquidity, or available loan capital, to MFIs. Several factors led to this.

The first wave of COVID-19 struck MFI clients directly as control measures shut down local markets, transportation, and factories in April/May 2020. Stay-at-home measures meant that microfinance clients operating small businesses lost income. Factories closed and remittances to rural areas declined sharply.

A rapid needs assessment conducted in June by World Vision Myanmar and VisionFund Myanmar across its operational areas in Myanmar revealed that:

- » 33 per cent of households' reported that their livelihoods had been fully or severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic; 27 per cent in urban areas, 6 per cent in rural areas;
- » 60 per cent of households reported experiencing livelihood losses, reduced incomes and overall revenue;
- » 25 per cent attributed reduced demand for goods/services as the main reason for livelihood disruptions, and
- » Eight per cent of households were relying on secondary income sources.

Clients faced difficulties meeting their regular loan repayments as a result of business stress. The Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry's (MoPFI) Financial Regulatory Department (FRD) directed MFIs and financial institutions to stop loan collections until mid-May. LIFT estimates that MFI partners missed approximately USD 115 million in loan repayments during this lockdown period, which affected their cash flow management and consequently their ability to lend to clients.

In March, the Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) also issued a series of directives adjusting its bank rate, deposit rate and lending rate. While LIFT agreed with the intent of these CBM actions they had an unintended consequence of reducing foreign investment in the MFI sector, mobilised through LIFT's Capital Markets Programme, further impacting MFIs' ability to provide credit to clients.

The consequence was a decrease in the quality of financial services to vulnerable clients. MFIs are the second largest financial service providers for the monsoon crop cultivation season and the largest provider of finance to the rural economy post-monsoon. If the MFI liquidity issues were not addressed the rural economy faced major negative income effects post-monsoon.

<sup>38</sup> UNCDF, Making Access Possible (MAP), Myanmar Financial Inclusion Roadmap 2019-2023, 2019.

<sup>39</sup> Myanmar Agriculture Development Strategy and Investment Plan (2018-19 ~ 2022-23)

<sup>40</sup> UNCDF, Making Access Possible (MAP), Myanmar Financial Inclusion Roadmap 2019-2023, 2019.

LIFT's Financial Inclusion Programme reacted quickly at multiple levels to engage with policy makers and provide loan capital to the microfinance sector. LIFT's financial inclusion partners also reacted quickly and developed response plans for crisis management with the support of the Myanmar Microfinance Association.

#### Injection of additional credit for resilience, recovery and economic growth

Injection of additional credit into the rural economy, for resilience, recovery and economic growth was vital in response to the pandemic. LIFT mobilised USD 5.5 million as an early response to mitigate the pandemic's impact on the microfinance sector. This USD 5.5 million leveraged USD 67.13 in international capital investment in the sector through LIFT's Capital Markets Programme with partner The Currency Exchange Fund (TCX). By December, nine of LIFT's partner MFIs had accessed loans from this new funding for immediate COVID-19 responses.

#### LIFT's financial inclusion partners respond

Since COVID-19 first impacted Myanmar in mid-March, all LIFT's financial inclusion partners took a responsible lender role to support clients during the crisis, preserve their financial stability and to provide additional liquidity for clients' livelihood recovery. LIFT MFIs suspended collection of loan principals and interest and modified procedures for loan disbursements and deposit taking. MFIs rescheduled loans based on a sound understanding of clients' repayment capacity in July. By the end of December, 20 of LIFT's 22 supported MFIs reported that almost 383,188 loans amounting to USD 47.6 million were rescheduled.

**LIFT's partners provided USD 305.7 million to 2.49 million households up to October 2020.** Ten of LIFT's MFI partners supported the Ngwe Bike programme, one of the Government's cash transfer programmes, in their intervention areas.

LIFT MFIs developed different mitigation strategies that suited their clients and the sustainability of their operations.

- » **Yoma Bank** granted a three-month grace period on repayment of principal to its clients and only collected Interest payments.
- » **Thitsar Ooyin** rescheduled 1,131 loans of MMK 360 million (USD 260,000). There were no loan write-offs.
- » **Proximity** focused on disbursing loans to existing clients within the COVID-19 period rather than expand the portfolio's branches and clients as planned.
- » **Yoma Bank** through the IDA project transferred an additional USD 50 to individual MCCT beneficiaries who already had IDA bank accounts, and USD 150 to all new MCCT beneficiaries.
- » **VisonFund Myanmar (VFM)** removed penalty fees for late loan payments. Additionally, clients were permitted to make partial payments of their due amount. VFM also removed the one-month notice to withdraw savings so clients could easily access their funds.
- » **VFM** provided recovery loans for clients whose businesses were impacted by COVID-19 and developed a new offset loan for clients in crisis situations (natural disaster, pandemic, etc.), which is scheduled to be rolled out in 2021.
- » **PGMF** suspended collection of repayments based on negotiations with clients, offered savings withdrawals, provided Beneficiary Welfare Program (BWP) assistance, rescheduled loans and offered loan refinancing.

#### Regulators response to COVID-19

When the pandemic began the Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry (MoPFI)'s Financial Regulatory Department (FRD) suspended MFI operations to mitigate loan repayment risk for clients. MFIs were directed to:

- » Remain operational with reduced staffing to a maximum of five people,
- » Not collect loan principal nor interest payments from clients,
- » Not to disburse loans nor to conduct deposit transactions, and
- » Suspend regular activities such as licensing, expansions, client group meetings and development of new financial products.

Portfolio Indicators	Status end of December 2020 (Cumulative)
Number of clients reached	2,912,271
Number of women clients	2,628,452
Total loan portfolio	USD 1,366 million (Disbursed) USD 1,093 million (Outstanding)
Total savings portfolio	USD 147 million
Total loan capital invested in MFIs through Yoma Bank and TCX hedging facility	USD 89 million (Yoma) USD 135.96 (TCX)

Table 4.2: LIFT's Financial Inclusion portfolio 2020

Loan Category	Delta	Dry Zone	Rakhine	Uplands	Average
Agriculture	26	38	9	35	32
Business (Less than 500,000 MMK)	2	1	3	4	2
Business (More than 500,000 MMK)	2	1	3	4	2
Livestock	12	18	27	4	14
Production	1	2	0.3	2	1
Production (Less than 500,000 MMK)	0.1	0.4	0.1	0.1	0.2
Production (More than 500,000 MMK)	1.3	2	0.5	1	1
Services	4	3	3	6	4
Services (Less than 500,000 MMK)	3	1	1	2	2
Services (More than 500,000 MMK)	3	3	4	2	3
Social	2	6	3	4	4
Trading	43	26	48	37	35
Unspecified	0.5	0.2	-	-	0.2

Table 4.3: Distribution of LIFT's rural finance portfolio by loan category and region (in percentage)

These directives were lifted in May after stakeholders, including LIFT, the Myanmar Microfinance Association and the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) worked with regulators and lobbied for uniform directions and guidance on the COVID-19 crisis and its impact on the microfinance sector. Stakeholders requested:

- » Declare MFIs an essential service (similar to the Central Bank's declared status for banks). This allowed MFIs to resume operations on 1 May.
- » Allow the microfinance sector to rapidly contribute to economic resilience.
- » Consider fast approvals of external loans from the Central Bank, and MoPFI to enable MFIs to access capital injections, working on realistic timelines.
- » Identify and leverage key convening forums to coordinate and disseminate information effectively.
- » Consider the approval of loan products adapted to changing circumstances following the COVID-19 pandemic.
- » Consider monsoon season financing for agriculture demand during the key month of May.

As a result, the COVID-19 Economic Relief Plan (CERP), released by Myanmar's Government on 27 April 2020 included actions for the microfinance sector to access low cost funds incentivised by government spending for microfinance institutions. It is included in the CERP under 2.3.1(a): "Approve and disclose of large private pipeline investments proposed and committed by reputable firms (currently experiencing delays) through fast-track procedures." This was important for MFIs to inject credit into the rural economy in time for the monsoon season. Included in the CERP under 1.1.1(a), "Lower banks' deposit and lending rate ceilings by 3 per cent". The CERP also included an action plan: "Cash or lending support to smallholder farmers who have lost sales revenue or remittance income to support input purchases in time for monsoon planting", and under 2.1.7 (b) the Myanmar Agricultural Development Bank (MADB) provided a special COVID-19 recovery loan of MMK 50,000 (USD 36) per acre in addition to the bank's regular monsoon seasonal loan of MMK 150,000 (USD 108) per acre.

In October, as a result of the second COVID-19 wave, FRD made directives similar to those in March and stopped financial service providers from operating in Rakhine State, Yangon and Bago Regions where infection rates were highest.

LIFT, through the Financial Sector Working Group, discussed and submitted to FRD a paper in response to the October restrictions outlining the MFIs' operational challenges and the effects of COVID-19 on MFIs' liquidity. FRD implemented a quick approval process of MFI loan applications.

FRD's focus on extending additional liquidity to the microfinance sector through a new government loan facility delayed its usual semi-annual approvals for new township expansion and license approvals, delaying MIFIDA's Kachin expansion plans and microfinance company activation initiatives of EdM SOO, AMDA, and ECLOF.

Several MFI partners, however, applied for loan facility financing and received approval by the end of 2020.

## HIGHLIGHTS

### Microfinance

At the end of December 2020, LIFT supported 23 financial inclusion partners (10 local MFIs, 10 international MFIs, one joint venture company, and two cooperatives). All MFIs except PGMF have registered as a company and have full microfinance licences for loan provision and savings mobilisation. PGMF started the transformation from a non-government organisation to a company in 2018 but the process is not complete. The performance of LIFT's MFI partners is shown in Annex 5.

### Targeting the poorest and most vulnerable

LIFT's 2,912,271 MFI clients (90 per cent women) are among the poorest and most vulnerable in Myanmar including 28,973 migrants, women and landless people, and 12,275 people who are internally displaced or live in conflict-affected areas. In 2020, 70 per cent of the financial inclusion MFI portfolio was rural-based with loans primarily invested in agriculture enterprises. The MFI loan categories distributed across regions at the end of 2020 is shown in the following table.

LIFT's MFI partners make every effort to reach the poor. One of LIFT's MFI partners, Thitsar Ooyin, for example, reported that 62 per cent of their client households live on less than USD 2.50 per day and 29.4 per cent live below the national poverty line.

In 2020, LIFT-funded MFIs conducted a welfare assessment survey with households they reach using the Poverty Probability Index (PPI) tool, which is a lean poverty measurement tool of 10 questions asking households about their household characteristics and asset ownership. Innovations for Poverty Action trained LIFT and MFI staff on how to administer the PPI survey. Fifteen of LIFT's MFIs conducted the survey with 433,847 MFI client households. The confidence level is 95 per cent and the margin of error is 0.15 per cent. Poverty data collected is calibrated to recognised poverty lines. The data shows that between 14.65 per cent and 14.95 per cent of LIFT beneficiaries are living below the national poverty line.<sup>41</sup> Benchmarking against the international lower middle-income poverty line reveals that between 13.25 per cent and 13.55 per cent of LIFT beneficiaries are living below the USD 3.2/day 2011 poverty line (PPP); and for the international extreme poverty line, between 1.25 per cent and 1.55 per cent of LIFT beneficiaries are living below the USD 1.90/day 2011 poverty (PPP) line. The 2020 PPI survey was the first conducted by LIFT on funded MFIs and the results will be used as benchmarks.

End-term and mid-term evaluation reports conducted in 2020<sup>42</sup>, revealed that access to financial services had strengthened household resilience, provided reliable sources of credit and mobilised savings. This had positive impacts on households' access to food and nutrition, led to increased and diversified income sources, increased food production and sale of produce. Farming households could protect and build assets, invest in crop production with inputs of their choice and apply new technologies and practices leading to expansion of acreage under production.

<sup>41</sup> The World Bank's Myanmar Living Conditions Survey 2017 established that 26.4 per cent of Myanmar's population was living below the national poverty line.

<sup>42</sup> In 2020, end-term and mid-term evaluations were conducted on projects implemented in the Financial Inclusion Programme by Cordaid Foundation, GRET, International Finance Corporation, PGMF, TCX, UNCDF and CDF.

### Microfinance in conflict-affected areas

LIFT supported five MFIs, one NGO and one local bank operating in conflict-affected areas, with total funding of USD 18.8 million since 2015. Three of the projects have closed and six are ongoing. By the end of 2020, the portfolio outstanding was USD 89.8 million and partners in conflict-affected areas had reached 199,463 clients.

Four partners in conflict-affected areas including VisionFund, PGMF, MIFIDA and Proximity received capital investments through LIFT's Capital Markets Programme, implemented by TCX.

Demand for financial services in conflict-affected areas is high however, for financial service providers there are added risks and challenges of delivering financial services in these areas, and each area comes with its own unique challenges. LIFT-supported MFIs operating in conflict-affected areas develop different strategies to mitigate risks and overcome challenges.

In Rakhine State, the main challenges faced by financial service providers in 2020 related to security issues, armed conflict and COVID-19 restrictions.

In March, the conflict in northern Rakhine between the Tatmadaw and the Arakan Army widened to include Ponnagyun Township where UNCDF's partner Wan Lark operates. Wan Lark's clients in three villages were forcibly evacuated and this disrupted their livelihoods and ability to meet their loan repayment schedules. For example, in two villages farmers lost 20 per cent of their crops when they could not access

their plots, and livestock died when people were forced to relocate. Approximately MMK 111 million (USD 80,000) of overdue payments are 'at risk' until security conditions improve, and meaningful contact can occur between Wan Lark and its clients to restructure loan repayments.

In Rakhine, VisionFund Myanmar (VFM) aims to reach people who are excluded from existing financial services. In 2020, VFM provided loans to 86 clients in camps for internally displaced people (73 per cent women) and disbursed 456 loans to Muslim and Kaman clients totalling USD 205,898 in nine nearby villages. VFM reported 82 security incidents in their operating area in Rakhine in 2020 and some of these incidents triggered temporary suspension of operations. VFM developed a risk matrix to assess their expansion plans for when the situation stabilises. Operations were scaled down around Mrauk-U and Kyauktaw due to conflict, which led to an overconcentration of services in the Sittwe branch. A strategic shift was made to establish new branch locations in Kyaukphyu District. VFM also operationalised digital field applications linked to VFM's cloud-based core banking system to increase loan officer efficiency and ability to reach hard-to-reach clients.

In 2020, BRAC Microfinance delivered financial services to people living in conflict-affected areas of Kayin State as well as to migrant women in peri-urban areas of Yangon. In total, MMK 795,550,000 (USD 572,000) in loans were disbursed to 2,179 vulnerable women. The project also targets people with disabilities and provides skills training designed to assist clients to confidently develop sustainable livelihoods. In 2020, to ensure that the financial services BRAC provides in Kayin State align with the local context and needs of clients, the project developed financial literacy and basic livelihood training modules that were delivered to all project staff who then cascade the training to clients. The modules were translated into local languages and tested with the community.

Project activities of all MFI partners in 2020 are presented in Annex 4.

### Microfinance Capital Markets Programme

#### Attracting investment to Myanmar's microfinance market

LIFT initiated the capital market development platform for Myanmar's microfinance sector in late-2016 because there was high demand for loan capital, coupled with lack of access to local bank loans to meet this demand, and high foreign exchange risk for international investors. Due to the Central Bank's interest rate cap of 13 per cent on commercial lending and exchange rate volatility, there was little interest from foreign investors for local currency loans to Myanmar's microfinance sector. To meet these challenges, LIFT collaborated with The Currency Exchange Fund (TCX) to establish a swap market to hedge foreign exchange risk. LIFT is the donor of the subsidy and TCX is the provider of the hedging product, which is necessary to offset the currency risk for investors. The project was intended to be transitional over two years, based on the assumption that MFIs would progressively find alternatives to meet their loan capital needs to build their capital structure without LIFT's catalytic investment; and most importantly, that the Myanmar interest rate structure would become market driven. Two rounds of currency exchange hedging occurred with LIFT funding before 2020.

In 2020, COVID-19 changed the operating environment and flexibility was required to meet MFI capital needs. LIFT's Fund Board approved an additional USD 3 million for the second TCX phase. The USD 3 million subsidy was allocated in a record time as TCX matched interested investors with MFIs.

Partner	Location	Loans disbursed (USD)	Cumulative Loans (USD)	Savings mobilised (USD)	# clients	Cumulative # clients
VisionFund Myanmar	Central Rakhine Kachin Northern Shan	23,235,252	14,238,322	1,141,727	37,723 (86% F)	50,894 (83% F)
Pact Global Microfinance Fund (PGMF)	Northern Shan Rakhine	57,765,558	48,423,280	6,609,578	118,010 (99% F)	125,157 (99% F)
UNCDF Partners Wanlark, MIFIDA	Rakhine and Kachin	6,139,286	4,175,433	670,420	19,355 (97% F)	19,035 (97% F)
Proximity Finance	Northern Shan	517,986	516,439	27,642	1,675 (69% F)	1,675 (69% F)
Yoma Bank	Kachin, Kayin, Rakhine and Shan	2,103,079	10,942,707	33,960	252	523
BRAC	Kayin	572,338	572,338	29,273	2,179	2,179
<b>Total</b>		<b>90,333,499</b>	<b>78,868,519</b>	<b>8,512,600</b>	<b>179,194</b>	<b>199,463</b>

**Table 4.4:** LIFT-supported microfinance in conflict-affected areas in 2020 <sup>43</sup>

<sup>43</sup> All conflict-affected area clients and loan figures are included in LIFT's total MFI figures reported above.



Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the TCX programme was implemented smoothly in 2020, facilitating a large inflow of medium-term funding into the microfinance sector and expanding the amounts available to MFIs. LIFT's investment continued to achieve strong leverage (portfolio performance is presented below).

Several factors contributed to the achievement of satisfactory results in 2020:

- » Despite the pandemic, Myanmar maintained macroeconomic stability and the pricing for hedging the foreign exchange risk of the Myanmar Kyat against the US Dollar only increased slightly over the year from 11 per cent per annum to 13 per cent.
- » There was high demand for loan capital from microfinance institutions
- » International investors were willing to continuously provide loans to support the MFIs, despite the pandemic.

The consumption of the subsidy provided by LIFT to TCX has remained moderate. As a result, TCX and LIFT will continue to facilitate new loans throughout 2021 given the available subsidy. The project received a six-month extension to 20 June, 2021, and in early 2021, the programme was further extended to 31 December, 2021.

#### Portfolio Performance

By the end of 2020, USD 112.7 million in new loans was provided by 22 international investors to nine MFIs. The total planned notional amount provided for disbursement during the second phase of the programme totals USD 135.9 million.

MFIs have consistently received loans at 16 per cent per annum in Myanmar Kyat, which is compliant with the limit set by Myanmar's regulators. When the Central Bank of Myanmar decided to lower the interest rate limit from 16 per cent to 14.5 per cent, TCX and LIFT were able to engage with Central Bank of Myanmar officials to secure permission to continue facilitating loans at a 16 per cent interest rate. This allowed TCX to continue maximising the subsidy amount available.

TCX had a balance of USD 5.88 million at the end of 2020 available as a subsidy, and USD 75 million for new loans to microfinance institutions.

In June 2020, LIFT conducted a mid-term evaluation of the TCX project and found that MFI management practices had improved since being required to meet the TCX criteria to access the loan facility. The evaluation also found that overseas investors were now considering alternative funding schemes for Myanmar, anticipating that LIFT cannot continue to subsidise a hedging mechanism beyond the current round of TCX.

#### MFI lending: back-to-back loan funds from Yoma Bank

Yoma Bank promotes back-to-back lending as part of its semi-secured funding product to MFIs. This allows overseas funding to be hedged and extended to MFIs who then provide micro-loans to farmers.

A change in legislature in the second half of 2016 made it possible for commercial banks to start lending to microfinance institutions. In response to client demand for financing, Yoma Bank developed a wholesale funding product with a tenor up to three years, and USD cash collateral as low as 40 per cent. LIFT shares the risk by offering a first loss buffer for un(der) secured lending up to 10 per cent of principal exposure on each wholesale loan.

This product has met the financial needs of 15 MFIs that hedge their

exposure to fluctuations in the MMK/USD exchange rate by pledging their dollar-denominated debt and/or equity to Yoma Bank. By the end of September 2020, Yoma Bank had financed USD 91 million to the 15 MFIs, indirectly reaching around 300,000 people.

The main challenge the project has faced is a lengthy regulatory approvals process.

#### Support for MFIs' transformation to regulated financial institutions

The United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) supports 11 local MFIs and one international MFI to transform from being NGO-based MFIs to becoming regulated financially-sustainable microfinance companies and build MFIs' capacity to increase client outreach and effectively manage operations as regulated entities.

In 2020, two MFIs completed company microfinance license applications for regulatory review, gained approval and were transferred to company status. Assets of six MFIs were transferred to new regulated companies.

UNCDF provided technical assistance to five MFIs on formal loan agreement terms and conditions and the regulatory processes for regional and central government loan approval. Three MFIs accessed debt financing from Myanmar Economic Bank (MEB) with a total loan facility of MMK 100 million (USD 72,000) per MFI. Three MFIs are waiting for FRD loan approvals.

MFI	Sum of Notional (USD million)
PGMF	33
Dawn	28.5
Proximity Finance	25
VisionFund	14.2
MIFIDA	5
Thitsar Ooyin	2
MAHA	2
Advans	1.5
LOLC	1.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>112.7</b>

**Table 4.5:** Investment through TCX's hedging facility to Myanmar MFIs

Cumulative Figures 2019-2020	
Disbursed Notional in USD	135,945,001
Notional to be disbursed in USD	75,480,000
Total Subsidy Assigned by LIFT (A)	15,000,000
Available Subsidy at December 2020	5,883,795
Leverage of LIFT's investment	15%

**Table 4.6:** Performance of the TCX facility since 2019

Audit services to all 11 MFIs were completed during the year. MFIs' internal control weaknesses were identified and UNCDF, with audit firm WTA, are providing technical support to address these gaps.

One MFI partner, Social Vision Services (SVS), was on-track and met all the criteria for transformation in 2020, but voluntarily withdrew from UNCDF's technical assistance partnership following audit findings.

In the second and third quarters of 2020, LIFT issued asset disposition approvals to seven MFIs from the PGMF partnership. Only one MFI, Sun Microfinance, remains ineligible due to an inability to maintain financial sustainability (i.e. profit or break even financial position) on an annual basis.

### **The pandemic and conflict led to delays**

Planned microfinance service expansion in Kachin and Rakhine States was not realised due to military conflict and delays in government approval. The expansions were deferred to 2021. Support to the cooperative sector was delayed by extended pandemic restrictions. Wanlark's planned microfinance expansion to northern Rakhine was voluntarily deferred based on UNCDF's assessment of deteriorating security conditions. FRD delays in authorising expansion approvals for the Kachin townships of Bhamo and Mogaung also complicated the formation of partnerships.

After supporting 11 MFIs for 12 months UNCDF has learned that different MFIs have different ambitions and capacity, and technical assistance needs to be appropriately tailored to suit each MFI.

### **Promotion of financial literacy**

The promotion of financial literacy is critical to improving MFIs' clients' financial management of loans, savings and small businesses. Financial literacy is particularly valuable in the pandemic when clients face disruption to livelihoods, limited access to loans and high use of savings. LIFT supports several initiatives that promote financial literacy.

### **Partnership with Myanmar Microfinance Association (MMFA)**

In March 2020, LIFT, in collaboration with the MMFA, launched a cartoon-style Financial Literacy Booklet. LIFT distributed 150,000 booklets to 86 MFIs.

PGMF, Thitsar Oo Yin, Proximity Finance and two township credit cooperatives supported by LIFT have a requirement that before receiving loans all clients must attend non-formal business education training, which consists of five modules on microfinance and its rules and regulations, financial literacy training and information on developing microenterprises.

VisionFund Myanmar's financial literacy is embedded into the credit process. In 2020, financial training was provided to all 11,777 clients for each cycle of loan contracted. VFM engaged with a local financial education service provider to develop a revised embedded financial education strategy. A key focus of this strategy is to build the skills and confidence of VFM clients to use and adopt digital financial services and financial management. The strategy will be completed in February 2021 and implementation will follow.

## **Financial Cooperatives**

### **Myanmar: Financial Inclusion Expansion through Co-operatives (MyFINANCE) project**

CDF Canada (formerly Canadian Cooperative Association) established savings and credit cooperatives in two Dry Zone townships with USD 3.2 million of LIFT funding to extend deposit services and affordable credit services to unbanked groups, with a focus on rural markets and women. By the end of 2020, the cooperatives had 65,077 clients and had disbursed 27,572 loans with a total loan portfolio of MMK 5 billion (USD 3.6 million). The cooperatives' total mobilised deposits stood at MMK 709 million (USD 510,000). Members are attracted by the low interest rates, low transaction costs and agricultural loans tailored to their needs for finance for farm inputs.

In 2020, financial literacy training was conducted by local women, member relationship development officers and mobile banking officers trained by CDF Canada. The training covered financial literacy, gender and financial management. Capacity building focussed on strengthening the cooperatives' governance and management of credit and savings portfolios.

Due to high demand for loans the cooperatives designed loan products with smaller loan sizes and set a requirement that members contributed 10 per cent of each loan amount as a fixed deposit. These changes proved unpopular with members who wanted larger loans without a deposit being required for every loan.

CDF has identified the need for cooperative laws, regulations, policies and strategic planning for the sector to be reviewed, and plans to advocate for these reviews. CDF will also investigate the potential for financial cooperatives in remote, conflict-affected areas where members would likely benefit from the cooperative approach in building social capital.

### **Supporting the microfinance operating environment through policy engagement**

In 2020, LIFT supported several initiatives to foster an enabling environment for the development of rural financial services.

In partnership with the Myanmar Microfinance Association (MMFA), LIFT advocated for changes in the policy environment to reduce interest rates and loan loss reserves in order to increase loan funds for MFIs and their clients. The Central Bank of Myanmar reduced the maximum interest rates on unsecured loans from 16 per cent to 14.5 per cent in April 2020. However, uniform directions and guidance for the sector were lacking and resulted in different interpretations and implementation of the Central Bank directive. For example, the Mandalay Regional Government required all MFIs to waive interest on loans, a move that could threaten the survival of financial service providers.

### **Participation in policy discussions**

In the first six months of 2020, LIFT was involved in a series of policy engagements with the microfinance sector and policy makers including Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) and Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry (MoPFI) regarding the COVID-19 response. The following recommendations and changes to Central Bank directives were made:

- » Create a fast-track process for international loans to microfinance institutions, from the current three months or more to two weeks,
- » Increase the MFI debt to equity ratio from 4:1 to 5:1 to allow MFIs to increase their lending,

- » Relax required liquidity ratio from 25 per cent to 20 per cent to increase ongoing lending, and
- » Clarification of loan classifications.

The pandemic made it apparent that local authorities have limited knowledge of the role financial services play in developing livelihoods of poor communities. More advocacy and knowledge sharing is required in villages, townships, states and regions with local authorities, parliamentarians and CSOs.

#### **Technical support to FRD**

FRD regulates MFIs by supervising their functions and operations through conducting regular on-site and off-site examinations. For off-site examination, MFIs are required to submit monthly progress reports, including financial statements. On-site examination is conducted by FRD teams who visit MFIs twice a year to conduct an audit. FRD also performs a special investigation of MFIs before issuing deposit-taking licenses.

LIFT supports FRD with technical support that has included developing reporting formats and training regulators on the use and purpose of the reporting formats, and capacity development in policy and regulatory guidelines development, supervision, and information management.

In 2020, 211 people were trained (88 per cent women). LIFT delivered four five-day trainings on on-site examination and due diligence for the deposit-taking licensing process that were attended by 74 participants from 10 regional FRD offices. Four seven-day trainings on accounting were delivered to 97 participants from 15 regional FRD offices. Two seven-day online trainings on financial analysis were attended by 40 participants from seven regional FRD offices.

Although online training was necessary during the pandemic, it was found to be less effective than face-to-face training due to participant engagement and internet connection issues. Learning exercises were adjusted to be more effective and planned targets were achieved. By the end of December 2020, 27 trainings had been conducted by LIFT reaching 583 people within FRD.

In response to the increase in use of digital financial services by MFIs and their clients LIFT developed guidelines for FRD titled Instructions for MFIs who are taking services of Digital Financial Services (DFS) providers.

LIFT recommended to FRD that MFIs needed further support to understand the FRD compliance requirements.

#### **Promotion of digital financial services**

Digital platforms increase the reach of financial services, particularly to people living in rural and remote areas. LIFT works with partners to promote increased adoption and reach of digital financial services, targeting people with low incomes in rural areas, particularly women.

#### **The Individual Deposit Account (IDA) programme**

Yoma Bank's IDA programme targets women and rural households to promote access to credit and mobilise savings using Yoma Bank's SMART App and connecting accounts to WAVE mobile money accounts.

Two approaches are used: (1) The Double Deposit: Yoma Bank matches IDA funds deposited by customers into SMART accounts. Eligible customers have the choice to deposit either MMK 75,000 (USD 54) or MMK 150,000 (USD 108) into an IDA savings account. If these funds are not withdrawn for 12 months, clients are eligible for a matching grant

based on the original deposit amount, and (2) Maternal and child cash transfer (MCCT) recipients open SMART accounts where MCCT payments are received. MCCT recipients are also offered an amount matched to a deposit. Funds that remain in the accounts for 12 months earn 8 per cent interest.

Customers can take out loans with a tenor of one to three months at 12 per cent annual interest against the cash collateral they deposit. Funds are available to support any emergency needs.

To support clients during COVID-19, Yoma Bank provided an additional USD 50 to all MCCT clients, which could be spent or used as cash collateral to borrow from Yoma Bank. LIFT's funding supports one-year term deposits. The more money clients contribute in savings the more they can subsequently borrow. The IDA project mainly targets women in rural areas and the project has reached 18,824 people (81 per cent women).

A key achievement in 2020 was enabling customers to link their Yoma Bank and WAVE money accounts without needing to go to a bank branch. Yoma Bank was able to overcome some of the restrictive regulations requiring face-to-face contact for digital on-boarding of new clients in the first half of 2020. Yoma Bank received approval from the Central Bank of Myanmar for assisted on-boarding through third-party partners and partnered with L-ift and Opportunity Now for on-boarding of customers and digital coaching. By the end of 2020, 18,824 clients had been reached/on-boarded for the product. Now rural customers who do not live near a Yoma Bank branch can use the WAVE money agent network in their villages to digitally move funds to their formal Yoma Bank accounts. This saves customers time and resources, and provides greater accessibility and scalability of the financial services provided by Yoma Bank in rural areas.

Yoma Bank opened 18,824 bank accounts. The total accumulative short-term deposits made is MMK 4.68 billion (USD 3.4 million) of which MMK 3.38 billion (USD 2.4 million) is LIFT-funded. The average saving amount per account is MMK 148,949 (USD 107).

#### **Digital finance challenges**

Low levels of digital and financial literacy remains a roadblock to scalability of digital financial services. Digital financial services require clients to be comfortable with digital technology and their smartphones to easily access and use the services. Customers without those skills require support in downloading the WavePay and Yoma Apps and need support to go through the linking process and to use key features of these mobile channels including viewing balances and making transfers. This required significant effort from field staff to provide the digital training and it is unclear how comfortable the beneficiaries were using the technology after initial on-boarding and support were completed.

Similarly, financial literacy can be a challenge and more complex products such as digital credit can be intimidating for those who are interacting with formal financial or digital financial services for the first time. Digital and financial literacy is critical for the scale-up of digital financial services.

Unstable internet connectivity in rural and urban settings also poses challenges for digital finance on-boarding. Another challenge is that rural households often have one smartphone for family members to use and people frequently change their phone numbers, making it difficult for Yoma Bank staff or their local partners to communicate reliably with clients.

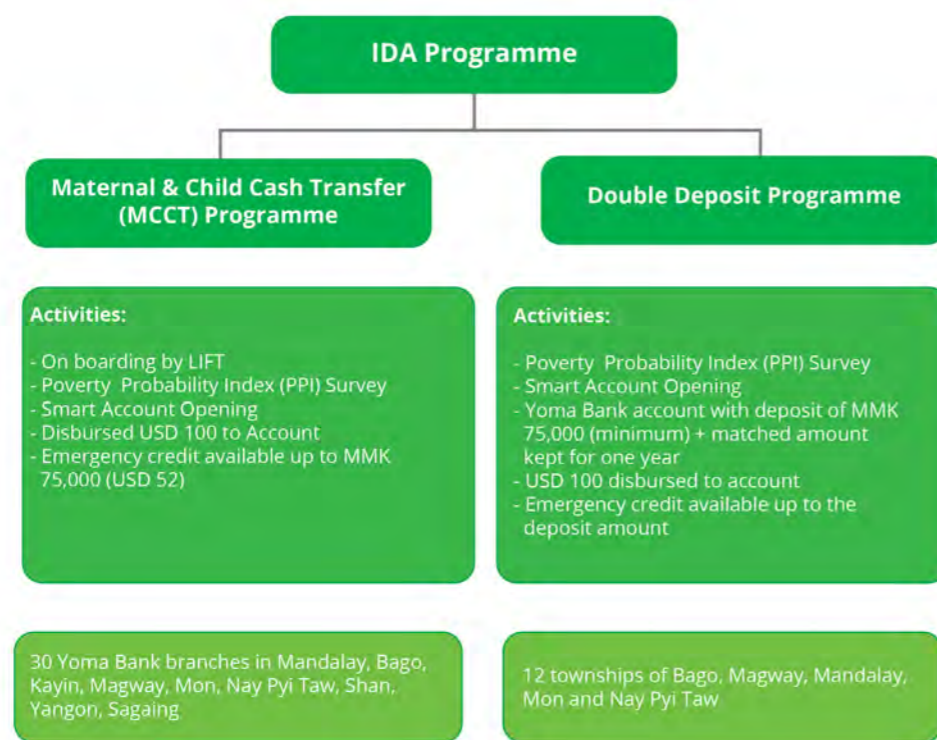


Figure 4.1: Overview of Individual Deposit Account (IDA) Programme

Products	SMART Accounts	Amount disbursed (billion MMK)	Amount Saved (billion MMK)
Double Deposit Programme	8,709	1.3	1.3
MCCT	10,115	2	n.a
<b>Total</b>	<b>18,824</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>1.3</b>

Table 4.7: IDA performance in 2020

### Rural Women’s Digital Finance Programme

LIFT collaborated with Yoma Bank to launch the Rural Women’s Digital Finance Programme to cover northern and southern Shan State, the Dry Zone, Mon, Kachin and Kayin States. The programme provides low-income rural women with digital access to financial services and training to improve their financial management. A deposit from the client is not required. The digital services are intended to reduce the high transaction costs and the need for customers to be physically present at the bank branch to use services, which has prevented many poorer, rural-based people from becoming part of the formal financial system.

The beneficiaries of the Rural Women Digital Finance Programme access Yoma SMART and WAVE Pay accounts on their phones, enabling them to transfer funds digitally between accounts without visiting a branch.

Clients who borrow through SMART Credit receive up to USD 300 over three credit cycles over 12 months with equal monthly instalments earn 14.5 per cent in annual interest, and they can withdraw money

from the nearby WAVE agents after digitally transferring to a WAVE Pay account. Eligible rural women receive a USD 100 term deposit into their SMART deposit account with 2 per cent interest per annum fixed for two years, which is leveraged to give SMART Credit in addition to the SMART account and WAVE account.

In the first half of 2020, Yoma Bank revised the project approach to reflect learnings from IDA challenges during implementation and the impact of COVID-19. The learnings included:

- » Project teams ensured that clients had smartphones compatible with Yoma Bank’s WAVE Apps.
- » Clients received customised financial literacy training (on-site and digital), digital training and nutrition literacy.
- » Yoma Bank continued to work with L-ift for on-boarding clients in the field and Opportunity Now for nutrition and financial digital literacy training.

By the end of December 2020, the programme had provided online training materials using existing social media platforms such as Facebook to reach 1,528 clients.

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted this assisted on-boarding of clients in 2020, which affected the programme’s targeted reach.

Yoma Bank also faced technical challenges with its systems. This obstacle was largely overcome for existing customers who had both a Wave Pay and Yoma Bank SMART account, since they could now easily link these accounts digitally and transfer cash between them.

### MFI partners promoting digital finance innovations

LIFT’s MFI partners have recognised the importance of promoting the use of digital financial services to improve their operational efficiency and mitigate risks involved in operating in conflict-affected areas, and increase client outreach and access to financial services.

### Proximity Microfinance

Proximity started piloting its Mobile Money project in October 2020 and made over 3,500 digital transactions of loan interest collection with Ongo Mobile financial service provider. Given the successful implementation of the mobile transactions, Proximity plans to roll-out this initiative to other branches, including in Taunggyi in Shan State.

### VisionFund Myanmar microfinance

VMF operationalised the use of digital field applications using the Musoni cloud system linked to VFM’s core banking system. The aim is to support the continuity of VFM operations for loan applications, disbursements and repayments in conflict-affected areas and remote areas where it can be difficult for MFI staff to meet with clients.

VMF also successfully piloted loan repayments through MPT Money and started rolling this out across all its branches. By December, 13 per cent (or 17,711) of all loan repayments were made through mobile money, showing a steady month-on-month increase from the 2 per cent recorded at the end of December 2019.

The VFM digital loan repayment system met some challenges including: limited capacity and e-money liquidity among the mobile money agents, a limited number of agents in some townships, limited understanding and use of the digitisation process by clients.

Despite the acquisition of a license for the collection of repayment of loans via a mobile application for all areas where VFM operates currently, the FRD approval process for conducting loan disbursements through mobile channels is still ongoing.

#### Agribusiness Finance Programme (AFP)

LIFT launched the Agribusiness Finance Programme (AFP) with Yoma Bank in 2016 to provide hire purchase finance for farm machinery to rural entrepreneurs. LIFT's USD 9 million investment in a partial risk guarantee incentivised Yoma Bank to embark on this type of lending in rural areas, and in 2017, the AFP expanded to deliver more rural financial services.

#### AFP farm machinery hire purchase

As well as providing the partial risk guarantee, LIFT worked with Yoma Bank to design loan terms that were more manageable for farmers and rural entrepreneurs seeking to purchase farm machinery. The deposit required was reduced from 30 per cent to 10 per cent and the loan tenor was increased from one year to three years.

The results over the lifetime of the programme have strongly outperformed targets. At the end of December 2020, MMK 252 billion (USD 181 million) worth of agricultural equipment was financed. The 8,548 assets financed include 5,523 tractors, 1,284 combine harvesters, 416 tillers and 1,325 transport vehicles.

In the first year of the AFP no repayments were due and the portfolio at risk (PAR) was low. Yoma Bank did not draw on the partial risk guarantee (loan loss reserve) provided by LIFT. As the hire purchase loans matured the PAR increased. By the end of September 2020, USD 1.4 million (MMK 2 billion) was written off from the AFP Hire Purchase Special Reserve Account (16 per cent of the total partial risk guarantee fund). LIFT's investment of USD 9 million has leveraged USD 152 million of private sector capital from Yoma Bank for agricultural machinery hire purchase loans.

#### Promotion of unsecured lending

The AFP also promotes semi-secured financial products for agriculture value chain actors.

Yoma Bank has reached 375 agricultural commodity traders, input suppliers and sub-dealers for livestock and crop production with unsecured lending that supports different value chains. An example is the value chain for farm inputs. Large suppliers typically operate through a network of dealers who act as distributors to farmers. Seeds, fertilisers and pesticides are sold on credit to these distributors, who in turn sell them on credit to farmers. Without access to finance, the structure limits the growth potential of the entire chain, excluding otherwise eligible farmers from obtaining access to quality inputs. To address these shortcomings, Yoma Bank injects liquidity into the system by discounting the sales receipts of the input suppliers' top dealers. Correspondingly, this credit enables the input supplier to increase sales, resulting in larger volumes flowing to the farmers/producers. For each supplier, Yoma Bank approves a select number of dealers whose receivables can be discounted for credit. Through the product, the payment obligation of the dealer to the input supplier is essentially financed by the bank. This allows the supplier to sell more on credit to the dealer, who in turn can sell more to their farmer base.

By discounting receivables and inventory at the top of the value chain, it is estimated that a total of 35,475 farmers have benefited indirectly by increasing their access to farm inputs on credit.

Year	# of clients	Equipment price (USD million)	HP loan amount (USD million)	# of fully paid clients	Loan re-payment amount (USD million)	Loan outstanding amount (USD million)
2016	2,974	56	44	0	4	40
2017	2,153	50	43	257	24	59
2018	1,403	33	28	2,380	34	49
2019	1,205	26	22	1,426	26	42
2020	813	21	17	1,092	20	43
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,548</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>5,155</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>43</b>

**Table 4.8:** AFP hire purchase portfolio January 2016 to September 2020

The outstanding loan balance by the end of September 2020 was MMK 11.1 billion (USD 8 million). As this is a revolving figure, the total funding lent out (and repaid) is much higher.

#### Under-secured lending – Payable Finance

Yoma Bank's Payable Finance product attempts to go one step further by financing the dealers who distribute the supplier's products to the farmers.

The input dealers are the target clients for this product. This is because dealers buy farm inputs on credit from the supplier, and subsequently retail this to sub-dealers and/or farmers. By providing finance to the dealers, they can pay back the supplier in cash upon delivery of the goods and sell these goods on credit to farmers. The challenges for the bank are: 1) to determine the creditworthiness of individual dealers, and 2) to find a distribution network that is practical and not too labour intensive so as to reduce the operational costs of managing this product. To mitigate this risk, Yoma Bank uses the suppliers as part of the guarantee to the dealer.

Once an acceptable track record has been built with individual dealers, the supplier guarantee requirements are removed and the dealers can borrow in their own capacity to meet the Yoma Bank loan requirements. This is referred to as Phase II. The portfolio status of this product is shown on the table 4.10.

#### Seasonal overdraft for corn and rice

Corn is an important crop, third in terms of volumes after rice paddy, and beans and pulses. The bulk of corn produced in Myanmar is exported to China, where it is primarily used for animal feed. As the country develops however, domestic demand for protein rich food such as poultry will increase, providing a greater domestic market for corn.

Yoma Bank's intervention is aimed at providing working capital to the small- and medium-sized traders who currently link farmers and markets. The availability of credit means that traders can pay farmers on the day they collect the maize, rather than after they have been paid by their own clients, which improves farmers' cash flow management, generates trust along the value chain and stimulates production.

In March 2019, a seasonal overdraft for the rice sector was added to

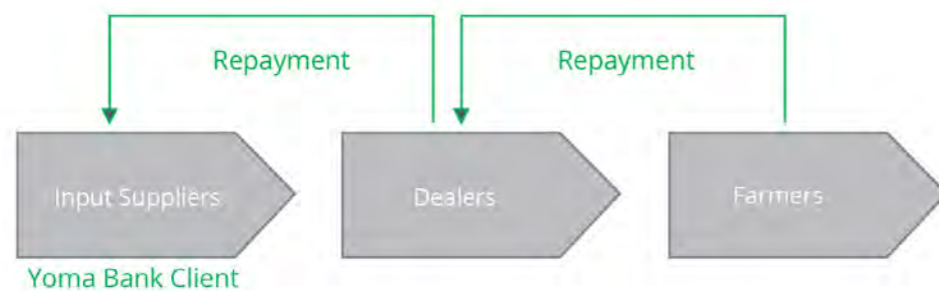


Figure 4.2: Credit flow in discounted accounts receivable financing

Year	Borrower facility limit (MMK mln)	Inventory/receivable value (MMK mln)	Total Outstanding (MMK mln)	Estimated # farmers reached
2017	1,500	1,264	1,210	1,130
2018	9,500	19,443	9,107	20,330
2019	20,643	32,297	18,344	35,000
2020	11,556	15,958	11,130	35,475

Table 4.9: AFP unsecured lending 2017-2020

Yoma Bank products.

**Contingent Disaster Liquidity Facility (MFI CDLF)**

In December 2019, The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and LIFT/UNOPS partnered to design a Microfinance Contingent Disaster Liquidity Facility (MFI CDLF) in close consultation with the Government of Myanmar. The MFI CDLF is designed to provide financing for immediate losses and recovery during a climate disaster as well as access to capital to stimulate growth out of a disaster.

The CDLF is a special-purpose, blended finance vehicle that will channel funds to MFIs and credit cooperatives to cover liquidity gaps and better manage cash flow in the event of a major climate disaster. The CDLF will catalyse and coordinate access to short- and medium-term loans from the private and public sectors, and has the potential to serve as a vehicle to provide cash transfers through Individual Development Accounts (IDA) from donors. In addition, the CDLF will provide due diligence on behalf of donors/investors in support of MFIs/cooperatives and evaluate whether additional measures are needed to support the flow of liquidity to MFIs/cooperatives.

The rationale for this project relies on growing global evidence that shows that providing emergency liquidity to MFIs for on-lending to clients is a cost-effective way of accelerating households' recovery from natural disasters. Additionally, repayment performance of restructured loans in the wake of natural disasters in Myanmar (and elsewhere) has generally been strong. This is because MFIs have a critical role to play in post-disaster recovery. MFIs can assist clients with repayment holidays, access to mandatory savings and by providing loans to support people

to rebuild their livelihoods.

The Ayeyarwady Delta was chosen to pilot the facility because of its vulnerability to climate disasters and the strong MFI coverage in the region. There are approximately 193 MFIs in Myanmar and 34 have operations in Ayeyarwady Region where there are more than 725,000 MFI clients and an outstanding loan portfolio of USD 175 million. The loans outstanding represent approximately 14 per cent of MFIs' total loans outstanding. There are approximately 500,000 co-operative group members.

There are four entry points for the financing of MFIs after a climate event. In designing the CDLF response, each entry point will contribute to financing options.

- » MFIs internal resources through parent companies (who provide both capital and debt), own capital and loan loss reserves.
- » International investors and national commercial banks facilitated by LIFT's Capital Market Programme.
- » Government of Myanmar through a proposed MFI Deposit Insurance Scheme that will guarantee deposits lost.
- » Donors who have contributed to the development of the financial sector. For example, during the 2016 floods in the upper Delta and lower Dry Zone, donors provided grant funds that were utilised to restore balance sheets and provide recovery client loans.

At the end of 2020, the CDLF project had:

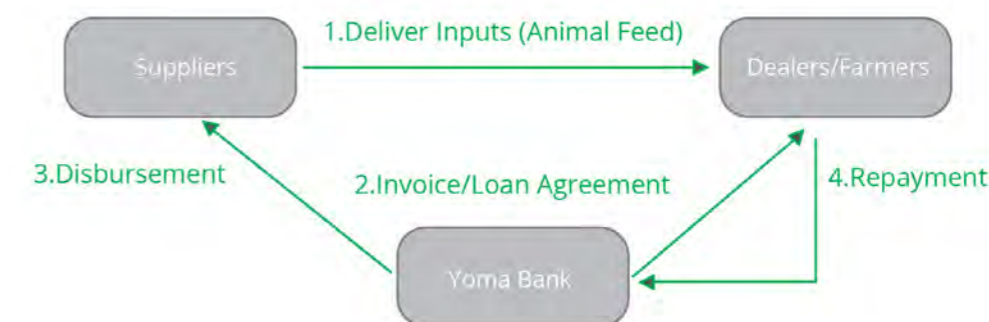


Figure 4.3: Credit flow in dealer payable financing

Year	Total approved limit (MMK mln)	# of outstanding loans	Total outstanding (MMK mln)	Estimated # farmers reached
2017	150	2	96	200
2018	6,996	271	4,376	15,733
2019	10,512	414	8,772	35,000
2020	11,327	65	6,661	36,503

Table 4.10: Payable Finance performance 2017-2020

- » Developed the business case for the fund,
- » Engaged with stakeholders resulting in design of the disaster preparedness tool,
- » Created a software tool for MFIs to perform disaster-related stress-testing,
- » Designed an Emergency Liquidity Facility and Deposit Insurance Framework,
- » Conducted preliminary work on the stress test, and
- » Consulted 29 MFIs in the target area; 14 agreed to participate in the project and were trained in 2020.

#### Gender mainstreaming in microfinance

LIFT has 23 microfinance service providers and women make up 91 per cent of their clients.

LIFT continues to support gender mainstreaming at the management level. In partnership with the Township Saving and Credit Cooperative the Board of Directors approved that women should be given priority in accessing financial services. However, although the majority of members are women, there are very few women in leadership positions at the primary cooperative level and no women leaders at the federation level. The analysis of the situation showed that the by-laws and policies of cooperatives are historically gender biased since its membership rules require that only the head of the household can become a member of the cooperative, yet the head of households are generally men.

In future programming LIFT will need to deliberately support increased women's representation in senior management and on the Board as well as include deliberate outreach to women as part of the funding requirements. In addition, technical support will be provided to women who are managers/leaders with IPs to build their capacity to perform their tasks and roles.

Key evaluation findings from different projects revealed the following:

Seasonal Overdraft Corn	Number of loans	Total Disbursed (MMK mln)	Total Outstanding (MMK mln)	Estimated # farmers reached
2017	34	3,984	3,730	6,800
2018	72	8,568	7,685	14,400
2019	74	9,673	4,821	14,800
2020	11	1,275	982	2,200

The decrease in the portfolio in 2020 is as a result of COVID-19 restrictions that affected traders' activity.

**Table 4.11:** Status of Yoma Bank corn value chain finance

Seasonal Overdraft Corn	Number of loans	Total Disbursed (MMK mln)	Total Outstanding (MMK mln)	Estimated # farmers reached
2019	111	14,240	8,055	22,200
2020	82	8,641	7,161	16,400

**Table 4.12:** Showing status of Yoma Bank rice value chain finance

- » MFIs loans products were designed to serve any clients regardless of gender. In the future, consideration should be given at the loan design stage to address women-specific needs and the variety of roles women play in their families and communities that may inhibit them from full participation in financial institutions.
- » Women are good clients just like men.
- » Most women utilise their loans in partnership with their husbands.
- » In order to meet regular loan repayments, women save money before the repayment date.
- » Husbands support women to meet their loan repayments in case the women do not have enough money to meet their loan obligations.
- » Women do play a role in influencing borrowing decisions through their positions as managers of household finances, as well as through control of land titles required for collateralisation.

## LOOKING AHEAD

The military coup in February 2021 and the consequent social and economic disruptions are impacting on the financial inclusion sector. MFIs are again facing liquidity shortages. Non-performing loans and savings withdrawals are increasing. MFIs were operating at between 20 and 30 per cent capacity in February/March, 2021. In April, operations began to resume and some MFIs were operating at 50 to 80 per cent of capacity by May.

LIFT and TCX aim to continue to facilitate international financing for Myanmar MFIs in 2021, using LIFT funding already committed to the Capital Markets Programme.

Myanmar is also at risk of rising food insecurity. LIFT promotes innovative solutions to support increased access and use of agricultural financial services by working with partners to promote input credit, production credit, trade credit, primary processing equipment purchase, capital investments, savings and agricultural insurance. Key intervention areas planned are value chain finance and risk management options that include lines of credit to financial institutions to increase their liquidity for agribusiness asset portfolios. LIFT-supported MFIs operating in conflict-affected areas are facing increased challenges. To increase access to financial services and address challenges in these areas LIFT would explore promoting linkages between Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA) and formal financial institutions. LIFT would also explore whether partial risk guarantees, like the USD 9 million partial risk guarantee offered to Yoma Bank for the Agribusiness Finance Programme, could be used to incentivise wholesale lending between commercial banks and MFIs to help MFIs access local currency funds.

Given the risk exposure that MFIs have faced during COVID-19 and the coup, LIFT plans to engage with the Myanmar Microfinance Association (MMFA) to formulate and promote policies and processes related to disaster risk management for the MFI sector to ensure continuity of operations. Also in collaboration with the MMFA, LIFT will promote efficient risk management, consumer protection and financial literacy practices in the sector.

LIFT plans to support financial service partners to operationalise their digital finance services including mobile money transfer, clients' onboarding process, loan disbursement and repayment processes, and digital finance product development to promote financial and digital

literacy. LIFT plans to support the strengthening of e-payment systems or e-payment preparedness to achieve last-mile connectivity to promote the use of digital financial services as a tool for providing humanitarian and development support.

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*Since COVID-19 first impacted Myanmar in mid-March, all LIFT's financial inclusion partners took a responsible lender role to support clients during the crisis.*

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# AGRICULTURE, MARKETS & FOOD SYSTEMS

## THEMATIC PROGRAMMES

# 4.3

## AGRICULTURE, MARKETS AND FOOD SYSTEMS

### CONTEXT

The agriculture sector in Myanmar contributes approximately 30 per cent to gross domestic product (GDP) and is second only to the services sector in its contribution to economic growth. Nonetheless, approximately 85 per cent of poverty is concentrated in rural areas where around 70 per cent of the population lives. The agriculture sector employs 56 per cent of the nation's labour market; it is Myanmar's largest employer. Agriculture will be critical in Myanmar's post-COVID-19 recovery.

Over the past several decades, the agricultural sector has languished compared to other sectors of the economy<sup>44</sup> due to a lack of investment in infrastructure, limited financial services to support farmer investments, weak extension delivery and limited investments and capacity in research. While there is considerable potential for production and productivity gains in Myanmar's agriculture, livestock, fisheries and forestry, the sector faces numerous challenges. These include weak rural and border infrastructure; a set of complex, mostly unresolved land tenure issues; low agricultural productivity and competitiveness of agri-food products; an underfunded and poorly organised agricultural research, education and extension system; limited access to timely and quality inputs (i.e. seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, animal health drugs, etc.); insufficient access to affordable financial services; poor quality and safety of agriculture products; weak coordination within line agencies and other stakeholders, including the private sector; and vulnerability to natural disasters (floods, droughts, cyclones, sea level rise) and climate change.

<sup>44</sup> ADS 2018. Myanmar Agriculture Development Strategy and Investment Plan (2018-19 – 2022-23)

There is also evidence of an agrarian transformation occurring across the sector, in part as a response to the improved economic performance and opportunities that have emerged in the labour market.<sup>45</sup> Labour costs have risen along with a reluctance of young people to engage in the agricultural sector. Changes in the labour market and farmers striving for efficiencies have driven a shift toward mechanisation and a reduction in labour intensive farming systems.

Within the context of this transformation, there is a need to acknowledge potential unintended consequences associated with unsustainable natural resource use and degradation of ecosystem services along with unequal access to these resources by smallholder farmers. Foreign direct investment and the expropriation of resources place smallholder farmers at a significant disadvantage as their bargaining capacity to protect their rights to access resources is weak. Achieving sustainable development and equal access to these resources will be critical to ensuring equitable and inclusive economic growth that will contribute to poverty alleviation and meet people's aspirations and the country's commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals. This would best be achieved through the promotion and uptake of sustainable agricultural intensification practices and principles that address the shortcomings in current food production systems in Myanmar and align with the Government's roadmap to modernising the agricultural sector. It would also help ensure food and nutrition security, the integrity and functionality of agroecosystems, and build resilience to future climates.<sup>46</sup> This is particularly pertinent during the recovery from COVID-19 and would provide the basis for the much needed transformation of the sector.

LIFT aims to support sustainable agriculture development as a strategy of ensuring equitable and inclusive economic growth that will contribute to poverty alleviation.

#### COVID-19 impacts on Myanmar's agriculture markets

COVID-19 has had the following impacts on the agricultural sector:

- » Farmers' incomes as well as job opportunities declined in rural areas, limiting farmers' capacity to invest in labour and production of inputs for the 2020 monsoon season's cultivation.
- » Input traders reported widespread disruption to input supply and demand. Sales were lower and there were fewer clients than usual leading to lower revenues in 2020 and difficulties collecting credit repayments.<sup>47</sup>
- » With lockdown measures in place across Myanmar and neighbouring countries in April/May and from late August, migrant workers lost employment and income.
- » Remittances fell and are expected to remain low for a prolonged period, at least until economies restart and migrants can access employment again. Studies suggest that a decline of 50 per cent in international remittances and 30 per cent in national remittances would result in a 7.5 per cent rise in the national poverty rate.
- » Microfinance institutions' (MFI) operations in Myanmar were suspended during the lockdown periods and were unable to collect payments resulting in less capital available for lending to clients,

including farmers, who had high demand for monsoon season loans. This impacted on monsoon season production and smallholder farmers' incomes.

- » Mechanisation service providers experienced lower demand for their services and skilled labour shortages. Consequently their revenues fell.
- » There is a risk that food and nutrition security will deteriorate across the country due to the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on rural production systems, value chains and rural household income.

In response to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation (MoALI), in implementing the Government's COVID-19 Economic Relief Plan (CERP), focused on support to farmers, small agri-processors, seed farmers, and agribusiness for planting and income retention.

#### LIFT's COVID-19 response to support market development

LIFT utilised existing resources through LIFT's Agriculture, Markets and Food Systems Programme and its partners to deliver immediate actions related to COVID-19. The response to COVID-19 from agriculture partners reached approximately 152,200 individuals (50 per cent women). IPs distributed hygiene kits, hand sanitisers, hand soaps, gloves, antivirus spray, disposal masks, small medical equipment items like thermometers and personal protective equipment (PPE), food and water, and information, education and communication materials. In some townships in the Ayeyarwady Delta, USD 100 cash was distributed to 40 seed grower farmers and 32 contract farmers as quick recovery support. Billboards promoting COVID-19 protection measures were erected in 12 townships. Clean water facilities and support to health services were provided in the Delta, Dry Zone, Kayah, Kayin and Chin States.

Further funds were approved for a Rapid Market Assessment in the Delta to explore the impact on agribusiness and rural livelihoods.

## HIGHLIGHTS

Funding was reduced to LIFT's Agriculture, Markets and Food Systems (AMFS) Programme in 2020 due to the reallocation of funds to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic in Myanmar. Under the Kachin and Northern Shan State Programme and the South-East Programme, only four new AMFS projects were approved and contracted. These focused mainly on land and natural resources management in conflict-affected areas and are reported in Chapter 5: Conflict-Affected Areas. Nutrition-sensitive agriculture work is reported in 4.1 Nutrition chapter of this report.

#### Seed sector development

Increasing access to improved seeds contributes to improved yields and prices for farmers' produce. There is evidence that certified seeds can increase production by up to 20 per cent when compared to yields produced using low quality seed.<sup>48</sup> Farmers can sell better quality crops for higher prices, improving small farmers' competitiveness and

<sup>45</sup> ADB 2015. Myanmar: Unlocking the potential. A strategy for high, sustained, and inclusive growth. ADB Economics Working Paper Series No. 437

<sup>46</sup> 2019. Myanmar Climate Change Master Plan. <https://myanmar.un.org/en/25466-myanmar-climate-change-master-plan-2018-2030>.

<sup>47</sup> International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) survey, May 2020

<sup>48</sup> International Research Rice Institute (IRRI) data

profitability. Current seed production from rice growers nationwide meets less than 10 per cent of the demand for certified rice seed. The production of early generation seeds, which are essential for certified quality seed production, is limited to the size and capacity of the state-owned seed farms. LIFT supports projects in the Delta and Dry Zone that develop the seed sector for rice, beans and pulses.

### **Rice seed sector development**

The Rice Seed Sector Development (RSSD) project implemented by Welthungerhilfe (WHH) began in 2017 with LIFT funding. The project improves smallholder farmers' uptake of well adapted quality rice by strengthening the rice seed value chain. The project works to improve the performance of operators and service providers and to increase demand and improve coordination among seed value chain actors.

Project implementation was affected by the outbreak of COVID-19 so the project deployed resources to assist with the COVID-19 response and delivered 107 sanitation kits to seed growers in April and installed 18 billboards with COVID-19 prevention messaging in 16 townships in the Delta in close collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Sports (MoHS).

During April/May, the project conducted a rapid market assessment in partnership with Mercy Corps and the findings were used to design a quick recovery response for targeted seed growers and contract farmers to foster resilience and ensure a continuing steady supply of quality rice seeds.

### **Apps assist in forecasting demand for early generation seed**

The RSSD project developed two Apps and a web portal to assist the Department of Agriculture (DoA) and the Department of Agriculture Research (DAR) in forecasting demand for early generation seeds. At the end of 2020, 6,019 users had downloaded the Quality Seeds App. There are 680 seeds growers, 37 seed farms and 14 crops registered in the system. In 2020, refresher training on the Quality Seeds App was provided to 69 seed growers. WHH also provided training on the Early Generation Seed App for 202 fourth year students at Yezin Agricultural University, 366 DoA staff and 72 government staff in nine townships.

The Early Generation Seed App was modified for nationwide scale-up in 2020.

### **Increasing capacity for seed production**

The RSSD project co-invested in private seed companies and entrepreneurial seed producers to increase capacity in certified seed production. In 2020, three companies completed construction of warehouses and increased their seed storage capacity, which resulted in the expansion of contract farming activities in the monsoon season. Around 390 acres of land were prepared for seed production during the monsoon season, involving 118 contract farmer seed growers. Seed producers operating within the network were able to sell 470 baskets (Paw San Yin variety) to Kyeik Latt Co. Ltd and received MMK 17,500 (USD 13)/basket; which is MMK 3,500 higher than prices for seed in the local market.

The project has identified a need for legislation to support contract farming in Myanmar.

### **Improving seed quality assurance**

The RSSD project has made strategic investments in government seed farms to improve infrastructure and upgrade seed testing facilities in Pathein. The ISO certified seed testing facility in Pathein was opened in

May 2019 by the Ayeyarwady Regional Chief Minister. In 2020, the lab received 1,438 seed samples; 413 were tested and 335 seed samples were certified.

Township quality assurance systems were partially set up in Bogale and Labutta in 2020. Seed lab equipment was procured and imported from India but installation was delayed due to the pandemic.

### **Seed sector coordination**

In conjunction with the Myanmar Rice Federation, the RSSD project developed a business-to-business (B2B) portal and seed inventory system to increase efficiency. By the end of 2020, 10 companies were participating in the portal. The Myanmar Rice Federation has committed to continuing the B2B portal after the LIFT-funded project ends.

At the community level, the project collaborated with local women's rights organisations to identify opportunities for women to start seed businesses and to support the development of Female Farmers Associations. USD 50,000 was reallocated as a co-incentive grant to support women-led seed enterprises and 10 women were selected to participate.

### **Private sector engagement to increase supply of quality beans and pulses seeds**

LIFT developed a private-public sector partnership to increase supply of quality beans and pulses seeds by leveraging private sector investment and government contributions. Pahtama Seeds Co Ltd was formed as a locally-owned company that is jointly owned by Awba and Myo Thant Myanmar (MTM) as a company limited by guarantee with farmer membership and shareholdings. The Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation (MoALI)'s Department of Research's Seed Production Unit contributes foundation and registered seed. Dividends and benefits paid are linked to farmers providing their recurring commitment to seed production.

The farmer entity, Myo Thant Myanmar (MTM), was legally registered as a joint venture partner of the Pahtama Seed Co Ltd on 30 January 2020. LIFT injected USD 3 million in capital on behalf of MTM, and AWBA co-financed with USD 3.1 million, giving a total capitalisation of USD 6.1 million for Pahtama Seeds. LIFT extended a grant facility totalling USD 3.7 million to cover the operational set-up of the company and in addition extended USD 1.25 million to cover initial losses. The shareholding is: MTM 49 per cent and Awba 51 per cent. The project team signed a contract with Mercy Corps to support the recruitment of farmers for the MTM farmer entity and to lead on establishing the governance and operations of the company.

In 2020, 89 tons of seeds were produced, sufficient to plant 12,700 acres of land, using a conservative estimation for seeding rates. This means a multiplier effect of 1:35; one acre of seeds produced by Pahtama Seeds can be used to plant 35 acres of the grain crop. The total income effect of certified seed produced in 2020, is around USD 169,290. Growers received a total gross profit of around USD 111,742. The estimated impact on gross profit is an additional USD 141 per acre.

The project has used 876 acres and produced 248 tons of certified seeds (green gram, black gram, chickpea, sesame, and soybean) and the total income from certified seed produced so far is around USD 838,318.

Pahtama Seeds has contracted 275 farmers including 25 women and produced 248,467 kg of certified seed. The total number of growers in

the production cycle from October 2019 to December 2020 was 214, including 25 women. The total production area is 716.4 acres with a production of 101,117 kg of certified seeds in 2020.

The Mercy Corps team prepared guidelines for the MTM operations and started signing up new members in the fourth quarter of 2020; 156 more farmers were signed up by December. A mentoring approach is applied for training new recruits. New staff are coupled with existing staff for at least one crop cycle. After this, new growers manage their own farmer groups for seed production. Yields of most crops have been extremely variable, from excellent to quite poor. The project team is responding with more stringent farmer and geographical selection processes.

#### Cash for work pilot

In 2020, LIFT supported the Government of Myanmar in the implementation of the COVID-19 Economic Relief Plan (CERP). LIFT and MoALI agreed to collaborate and implement a rapid pilot project to test cash transfer modalities in the agricultural and rural sector as a mitigation and recovery measure to the COVID-19 impact.

Welthungerhilfe (WHH) in collaboration with LIFT and MoALI developed cash-for-work pilot interventions targeting six seed farms of the Departments of Agriculture and Agricultural Research and two selected seed businesses. The overall project objective is to ensure a steady supply of high quality early generation seed to mitigate potential adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Delta. The pilot offers the most vulnerable people employment opportunities, with work proposed for the scheme including building access roads, brick drainage channels and seed storage facilities. Lessons learned from the pilot are intended to inform a nationwide scale-up of the cash-for-work initiative.

It was determined that people recruited for the cash-for-work pilot would construct a brick drainage channel. Once the site and design of the construction were finalised, community meetings were held to establish the work modalities and the selection process for workers who were recruited from five villages near the seed farm in Myaungmya Township. By the end of 2020, 82 workers (27 per cent women) had built a 154 metre drainage channel up to the plastering stage. Workers were paid between MMK 6,000 (USD 4) per day up to MMK 120,000 (USD 86) per month depending on their role.

#### Rice value chain development

Mercy Corps and its partners have implemented the Linking Labutta to Markets (LLM) project to support farmers to adopt practices to improve productivity and resilience. This has resulted in:

- » 1,342 farmers increased their use of high-quality seeds (29 per cent increase)
- » 516 farmers practiced use of alternating wetting and drying associated with irrigation during the summer season (43 per cent increase).
- » Farmer groups adopted good storage practices through the group storage model, which increased quality and prices as farmers were able to wait for better market conditions to sell their produce.
- » 2,987 farmers (31 per cent women) have been reached by the project.

In total, the rice value chain component of the project created a net income benefit of USD 3.9 million, yielding an economic rate of return of 8.3 per cent from LIFT's investment of USD 2.9 million. The total increase in farmer income due to programmatic activities was USD 2.3 million

and the income of market actors grew by USD 1.6 million.

The project closed in 2020 and the endline survey indicated that as a consequence of the project farmers on average earned an additional USD 699 in the summer season (122 per cent increase) and USD 300 in the monsoon season (33 per cent increase) through project-based interventions.

Average yields increased by 649 kg per acre during the summer season (60 per cent increase) and 146 kg per acre during the monsoon season (17 per cent increase). Productivity is limited during the monsoon season due to the larger area under production and the presence of salinity. Practices such as alternate wetting and drying and the application of balanced fertilisers cannot be easily applied due to flooding. All farmers grow rice during the monsoon season, however only 35 per cent grow rice in the summer season due to a range of constraints including marginal water quality and lack of irrigation infrastructure.

#### Developing markets in the rice value chain

As part of the same project, Mercy Corps aimed to create win-win market changes for all actors: farmers, rice millers, traders, brokers and input service providers. Approaches taken include contract farming, seeds-on-credit and crop insurance. The project enabled value chain actors to adopt changes sustainably and scale up their operations to achieve better profitability and competitiveness. For example, the project secured a market for the farmers with a set market price. Millers gained a guaranteed supply of uniform quality rice.

The project assisted Golden Sunland from Singapore to establish operations in Labutta Township by connecting the company with farmers and local government authorities. In 2018, the company conducted field trials using its hybrid rice variety. Given the success of the trials, Golden Sunland scaled up operations to include 48 contracted farmers in 2019 and 75 farmers in 2020.

Golden Sunland's variety increases farmer yields by approximately 10 per cent. However, there was limited demand from local consumers, so Golden Sunland bought the entire harvest and sold it in Singapore and Yangon.

Golden Sunland introduced a new innovation of purchasing wet paddy from farmers within 24 hours of the harvest. Farmers take their paddy to Taing Win, a rice mill contracted by Golden Sunland, for drying. Farmers save on labour costs by not having to dry their paddy. The yields and quality of the rice is improved because the paddy is dried rapidly with quality assured by the rice miller.

Golden Sunland and Mercy Corps introduced other companies to complement the contract farming arrangement and this strengthened Golden Sunland's relationship with farmers and coordination along the value chain.

Other achievements from this partnership include:-

- » Golden Sunland purchased fertilisers and pesticides from Myanmar Awba and provided these inputs to farmers on credit at an interest rate of around 2.5 per cent per month.
- » Daung Capital, a registered microfinance institution, provided working capital loans of around USD 100 per acre at an interest rate of 2.5 per cent per month, channelled through Golden Sunland.
- » Farmers repaid all outstanding credit at the time of harvest, which matched their production cycle and cash flow.

- » Village Link provided weather and agronomy advice to farmers through its Htwet Toe mobile App on Android smartphones.
- » Farmers contracted with Golden Sunland earned an average of USD 150 more, an increase of approximately 40 per cent, than they did when selling into local markets. This increase is due to the increased yield from improved hybrid seed variety and a higher market price, which Golden Sunland can offer because it has access to premium markets. Farmers enjoy a secure market as Golden Sunland guarantees purchase of the entire harvest.
- » In addition to Golden Sunland, Mercy Corps introduced the fixed-price contract farming model to four local millers, contracting with 258 farmers.

Golden's Sunland's contract farming scheme is highly sustainable given the expansion of this project in Labutta using the LLM-created farmer groups as the foundation for adding more contract farmers with a goal of reaching 5,000 farmers by 2024.

Based on the success of the project key lessons for the different actors include:

- » Creating an inclusive platform for launching market interventions is key to successful implementation of market-based interventions
- » Access to high quality seeds is catalytic for farmers to increase their productivity and income
- » Appropriate partnerships lead to larger partnerships and consequently create opportunities for all market actors in the rice value chain.
- » There is a need for financial services to de-risk agriculture in order for it to be a win-win proposition for the different actors along the value chain.

#### Improving farm advisory services in Upland areas

The International Fertilizer Development Center (IFDC) successfully implemented a project in six townships in the Dry Zone's Magway and Mandalay Regions from December 2015 to October 2020. The project improved farm advisory services by establishing and strengthening a network of agriculture input and service providers who provided farmers with technical advice and information about correct use of quality inputs. The result was reduced vulnerability to crop stress and improved incomes for farmers. Improving relationships between farmers, government extension workers and the private sector were key to the approach's success.

The project concluded in the Dry Zone and IFDC received LIFT funding to replicate the initiatives in five townships in Kayah State (Loikaw and Demoso) and Kayin State (Hpa-An, Kawkareik and Kyain Seik Gyi).

In the upland areas of Kayah and Kayin the project also focussed on increasing productivity for crops that can contribute to a diversified diet, including cash crops that can generate income to support access to a diversified diet and food crops. The crops selected included papaya, okra, chinese kale, watercress, roselle, yard long bean, lettuce and pumpkin.

In 2020, IFDC reached almost 13,000 farmers (62 per cent women), bringing the total number of farmers reached in Kayah and Kayin to date to 31,000.

Farmers observed that applying information learned in training saved them 20-25 per cent on production costs because of appropriate use of fertilisers and pesticides, as well as reduced seed costs due to changes

in plant spacing. The project has taught farmers how to use crop budgets and they use them before planting.

The project worked with 79 input service providers (ISP) on storing products correctly, diversifying their products and services and opening new sales points, either through their own shops or through sub-dealers. These measures have led to increased volume and number of sales.

ISPs were given a grant of USD 10,000 and were required to contribute at least USD 2,000 in the cost sharing arrangement. The composition of each grant was predefined: 25-30 per cent for farmer vouchers, 25 per cent for technology transfer; and 50 per cent for business development. Each ISP had to plan at least four training sessions targeting 50-70 farmers each, three demonstration plots targeting 50 farmers each and three field days targeting 70-100 farmers each.

ISPs conducted 112 training sessions attended by 9,799 farmers (40 per cent women), set up 80 demonstration plots (Kayin 51, Kayah 29) and organised 60 field days attended by 5,035 farmers (40 per cent women).

ISPs distributed 6,489 vouchers valued at around MMK 10,000 (USD 7) each, as a marketing tool to increase their interactions with farmers.

The demonstration plots were either under the direct responsibility of IFDC agronomists, or under responsibility of ISPs with the support of DoA extension staff. According to IFDC reports, 116 plots were established in 2019-2020: 50 dedicated to paddy rice, five to maize, 36 to field cash crops, and 25 to vegetable cash crops.

The good agricultural practice (GAP) training included nursery bed preparation, sowing, watering and demonstration of compost making, practical germination, and selection of soil types. The demonstration plots achieved an average profit increase of 35 per cent, ranging from MMK 1,100,000/acre (USD 790) for rice, to MMK 10,000,000/acre (USD 7,200/acre) for eggplant.

#### IFDC employed different training methods to improve farmers' learning.

**Farmer Extension Manual:** A manual was produced that brought together technologies and extension materials. Information was collated from a variety of sources, including MoALI, IFDC's past projects and input companies. Where possible, the information was presented with the results of the demonstrations conducted as a part of the project. Guidance on how to best use the materials in training delivered to different audiences was also included. The most recent information included in the manual was summarised from the World Bank's digital agriculture course that was completed by project staff during the COVID-19 period. The manual was reviewed and approved by MoALI, who endorsed the publication as being the most up-to-date summary of current agricultural technology in Myanmar.

**Farm Walks:** The project also introduced a new 'farm walks' extension model as a move towards more private sector/service-oriented information exchange with farmers. Farm walks are a low-cost method of agronomists linking with farmers as part of their usual movement around the farm and giving on-the-spot advice in the fields to farmers.

**Videos as training tools:** To diversify training methods, 19 videos were produced and disseminated to farmers in this period.

**Value chain specific workgroups:** Thematic workgroups on specific value chains were organised and coordinated by the Department of Agriculture

or the Agriculture Departments of ethnic armed organisations, ISPs, farmers, and local non-governmental organisations.

IFDC's projects in Kayah and Kayin faced challenges related to weather and COVID-19.

All the project's regions experienced below average rainfall in the previous wet season, and a dry season with no rainfall. As a result, production was low for pre-monsoon cash crops and revenues of input suppliers consequently declined. COVID-19 exacerbated this situation with border closures curtailing exports and decreasing market prices. In addition, government control measures interrupted the supply chain of agricultural inputs as transport and trading hours were limited.


The biggest challenge was the uncertainty these factors created for farmers who could not make investment decisions and maintain incomes. This led to economic knock-on effects for farmers. Households bought less fresh produce at markets, which led to oversupply of goods, falling prices, lower income for producers and high demand for loans to meet their consumption needs and supplement their lost incomes. Farmers who borrowed from informal sources with high interest rates face credit risks.

The project demonstrated that its approaches to support agriculture extension are suitable, replicable and can be scaled-up if technical capacity is given to the different value chain actors within the market system.


## LOOKING AHEAD

LIFT will continue to use its existing resources in the Agriculture Markets and Food Systems (AMFS) Programme to promote sustainability and build resilience. LIFT will maintain its current strategy but design new livelihood-strengthening intervention approaches in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the military coup. Linking with LIFT's Financial Inclusion Programme, the AMFS Programme will continue to support agricultural production in Myanmar with increased and facilitated access to loans for small farmers and business owners and continue to support seed sector development along with promoting commodity value chains and linking them to markets as a sustainable path to developing the agriculture sector and improving incomes of LIFT's target groups.

LIFT continues to support cash transfer modalities in the agricultural and rural sector as a mitigation and recovery measure to the COVID-19 impact and military coup. Beneficiaries will receive cash transfers in the form of cash-for-work to support employment opportunities in the seed production sector. Lessons learned from the pilots in 2020 implemented in the Delta will be applied in 2021, the scheme expanded to involve the most vulnerable (returned migrants, female-headed households and landless/agricultural labourers) for employment opportunities and generate lessons to inform a nationwide upscaling of the pilot cash-for-work initiative.



***LIFT's response  
to COVID-19 from  
agriculture partners  
reached approximately  
152,200 individuals (50  
per cent women).***



# DECENT WORK & LABOUR MOBILITY

## THEMATIC PROGRAMMES

# 4.4

## DECENT WORK AND LABOUR MOBILITY

### CONTEXT

Although Myanmar was one of the few countries not to fall into a full-blown recession during COVID-19 in 2020, it did experience a severe economic slowdown and a dramatic increase in poverty.<sup>49</sup> To address the socio-economic fallout, the Government of Myanmar developed an ambitious COVID-19 Economic Relief Plan (CERP) that provided immediate response measures and laid out a path for financial recovery. As part of the actions outlined, the CERP sought to ease the impact on workers through extending the benefits provided by the Social Security Board for its membership. It also promised cash-for-work initiatives for those who had lost their jobs to build community infrastructure. However, concerns were raised that the government's financial support for vulnerable workers was not adequate, particularly in terms of more substantive action to provide social protection for workers who had become unemployed, and to the informal sector.<sup>50</sup>

Internal migrants employed in the critically important garment industry were particularly affected. The USD 4.6 billion garment sector is the largest export industry in Myanmar and has faced a substantial slowdown as a result of supply chain disruptions with China and cancellation of orders from major markets. The Myanmar Garment Manufacturers Association

<sup>49</sup> Xinshen Diao, et al., *Assessing the impacts of COVID-19 on Myanmar's economy: A Social Accounting Matrix (SAM) multiplier approach*, Myanmar SSP Policy Note 5, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Washington, D.C., May 2020.

<sup>50</sup> Benjamin Harkins, 'Better Protection of Myanmar Workers' Rights Needed Amid COVID-19', *The Irrawaddy*, 5 September 2020.

reports that garment factories experienced a 75 per cent decline in orders and more factory closures are expected.<sup>51</sup> This shuttering of businesses disproportionately harms the livelihoods of women due to the highly feminised nature of employment in garment factories.

Before the pandemic, the peri-urban areas where internal migrants live were already some of Myanmar's most vulnerable communities. The loss of income coupled with a lack of savings, hygiene supplies, personal protective equipment and knowledge regarding COVID-19 threatens the welfare of these workers, as well as the families they support in communities of origin. It also raises concerns about harmful coping strategies. Rapid assessments suggest that many households in Yangon's informal settlements are taking on unsustainable levels of debt to support themselves and purchase food.<sup>52</sup> The loss of income may drive more migrants into precarious and exploitative forms of work and there have been reports of increases in gender-based violence by service providers.<sup>53</sup>

The COVID-19 pandemic also had a dramatic effect on Myanmar's 4.25 million international migrants, with nearly 187,000 returning through official border crossings and relief flights as of the end of October.<sup>54</sup> These returns, coupled with loss of employment in destination countries, substantially reduced the amount of remittances sent to Myanmar, the majority of which support women living in rural and ethnic minority areas.<sup>55</sup> It also exacerbated deeply entrenched problems with labour exploitation. Even under normal circumstances, charging of illegal recruitment fees, contract substitution, wage theft and other abuses against migrants are common. With severe restrictions on mobility in place during COVID-19, working conditions for migrant workers became even more precarious and abuses proliferated.<sup>56</sup>

Border areas with Thailand and China have been increasingly militarised on both sides to stop migrants from leaving or entering at border crossings in an effort to prevent the spread of COVID-19. This did not entirely stop migration from occurring, nor was it successful in ensuring containment of the virus, but it did result in making the process more dangerous and expensive for migrant workers. Huge fees were charged by brokers and many migrants were arrested, detained and deported. Given the continuing massive need for migrant workers in Thailand to fill labour shortages, plans were made for admission of a small number of migrant workers to Thailand, with quarantine arrangements to be paid by employers. However, with Myanmar experiencing a much larger second wave of COVID-19 in August, Thailand tightened its border security and no regular migration was allowed. A significant outbreak of COVID-19 occurred in December in the fishing and seafood processing hub of Samut Sakhon in Thailand. Although the source of infections was not clear, the outbreak was blamed on undocumented migrants from Myanmar, leading to widespread xenophobia and discrimination.

Implementing partners of LIFT's Decent Work and Labour Mobility Programme worked on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic response since it began in Myanmar, providing crucial humanitarian assistance, information and livelihood support to internal and international migrants. LIFT's Fund Management Office worked quickly with partners in March to restructure their programmes in response to this emerging threat. Existing budgets were reallocated to provide an immediate response to the crisis and 10 projects developed new project proposals for USD 3 million in additional funding to scale-up support for migrants affected by the pandemic.

This adaptive management strategy enabled LIFT and its partners to provide the largest programmatic response to the COVID-19 crisis for internal and international migrants in Myanmar, resulting in 1.4 million direct beneficiaries (60 per cent women) provided with support by mid-September. Interventions were implemented across 12 states and regions of Myanmar, including provision of preventative information, personal protective equipment, food assistance, cash transfers, shelter, transportation, legal assistance and psycho-social counselling for vulnerable migrants. Radio and social media were leveraged to disseminate information on COVID-19 prevention to a much larger audience, directly engaging millions of people across Myanmar and in destination countries.

Implementing partner	Project name	Geographic coverage	Budget (USD mln)	Duration
<b>International Labour Organization (ILO)</b>	Development of Internal and International Labour Migration Governance (DIILM)	Nationwide	4.3	2016-2020
<b>BBC Media Action</b>	Decent Work and Labour Migration for Media (Yay Kyi Yar)	Nationwide	3.2	2016-2020
<b>International Organization for Migration (IOM)</b>	Increasing the Developmental Impact of Labour Migration through Strengthened Governance and Partnerships (Twe Let)	Chin, Mandalay, Magway, Shan, Mon, Kayin, Tanintharyi	13.6	2017-2021
<b>CARE</b>	Industry Solutions for Safe Employment (Aung Myin Hmu)	Yangon	6.7	2017-2021
<b>Eden Ministry</b>	Eden Project to Rescue Myanmar Migrant Women and Girls who have been Trafficked for the Purposes of Sexual Exploitation or Forced Marriage (Eden)	Yangon, Shan	0.9	2017-2021
<b>International Organization for Migration (IOM)</b>	Migration as a Livelihood Diversification Strategy in the Delta (MILDAS)	Ayeyarwady	1.6	2015-2020
<b>World Vision</b>	See, Hear, Empower: Supporting inclusive and transformative livelihoods for IDP and host communities in Kachin (SHE)	Kachin	2.6	2019-2022
<b>Adventist Development and Relief Agency</b>	Vocational Education to Support IDPs and Host Communities in Kachin and Northern Shan State (VESI)	Kachin, Shan	2.2	2019-2022

**Table 4.13: LIFT-funded projects on Decent Work and Labour Mobility**

<sup>51</sup> Myo Pa Pa San, 'Myanmar Garment Factories Report 75% Fall in Orders Amid COVID-19', The Irrawaddy, Yangon, September 2020.

<sup>52</sup> UN-Habitat, Rapid Assessment of Informal Settlements in Yangon, Yangon, 2020.

<sup>53</sup> CARE, Rapid Gender Analysis of COVID-19 in Myanmar. Yangon, 2020.

<sup>54</sup> International Organization for Migration, COVID-19 Response: Situation Report 12, Yangon, 2020.

<sup>55</sup> Robin Gravestijn, Paul Luchtenberg, and Benjamin Harkins, Impact of COVID-19 on Myanmar's Migrants and Remittances, Bangkok, UNCDF and LIFT Fund, 2020.

<sup>56</sup> International Labour Organization, Experiences of ASEAN migrant workers during COVID-19: Rights at work, migration and quarantine during the pandemic, and re-migration plans, Bangkok, 2020. Bangkok, UNCDF and LIFT Fund, 2020.



Implementing partner	Project name	Geographic coverage	Budget (USD mln)	Duration
<b>International Organization for Migration (IOM)</b>	Strengthening the Resilience of Conflict-Affected Communities in Kachin and Northern Shan States through Increased Safe and Rewarding Migration (SAFE)	Kachin, Shan	1.3	2019-2022
<b>ActionAid</b>	Safe Migration for Decent Work in the Peri-Urban Areas of Yangon (SECURE)	Yangon	2.8	2019-2022
<b>People in Need (PIN)</b>	Empowering Labour Migrants in Shwe Pyi Thar (Aye Chan Thaw Ein)	Yangon	3.2	2019-2022
<b>Women's Organization Network</b>	Ending Vulnerability and Exploitation of Migrant Workers (EVE)	Yangon	1.1	2019-2022
<b>International Organization for Migration (IOM)</b>	New Infrastructure for Migration Opportunities and Empowerment of Migrants on the South-East Borderline	Mon, Kayin, Tanitharyi	2	2020-2023
<b>Gender Equality Network</b>	Access to rights and livelihood opportunities for deported migrant workers and returnees (ARRIVE)	Mon, Kayin, Tanitharyi	0.6	2020-2023

**Table 4.13: LIFT-funded projects on Decent Work and Labour Mobility**

## HIGHLIGHTS

### Strengthened policies and legislation on labour rights and social protection, migration governance, anti-trafficking and skills development

#### Overseas employment law

The Law Relating to Overseas Employment 1999 is the primary legislation regulating the recruitment and migration process for international labour migration in Myanmar and is urgently in need of revision to better protect migrant workers' rights. A draft of the amended law was completed by the Department of Labour more than two and a half years ago with extensive technical support from the ILO Developing Internal and International Labour Migration Governance (DIILM) project to align it with international labour standards. However, it was not adopted as the proposed reforms were not prioritised by the Government. With the outbreak of COVID-19, the major shortcomings of the current legal framework were vividly exposed, including the lack of social protection, the vulnerability of migrants to poor working and living conditions, and the dangers they are exposed to through lack of documentation. Responding to the severe problems faced by migrants during the pandemic, the Department of Labour had discussed with the ILO the need to organise a tripartite consultation as soon as possible and move to enact the amended bill. However, the Government's requirement that the consultation be held in-person and the subsequent retirement of the Director General meant it could not be organised during 2020.

#### Domestic workers bill

Due to the informal and isolated nature of their work, domestic workers in Myanmar and abroad are some of the least protected workers within the labour market and highly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse by

employers. After several years of building momentum for change among CSOs, labour organisations, government officials and parliamentarians, a draft bill was developed on labour protection for domestic workers in late 2019. In 2020, the ILO supported consultations on the draft bill with the Parliamentary Committee on Immigration, Local and Overseas Workers and the Women and Peace Parliamentarians group. Technical comments were also provided on the draft law by the ILO's legal specialists, Legal Clinic Myanmar and the Confederation of Trade Unions Myanmar. These highlighted the need for defined working hours, means for calculating overtime pay, opportunities for skills certification, clear procedures for handling complaints and other issues. Following the inputs, a revised version of the draft law was shared by the Amyotha Hluttaw Committee, and the ILO will provide another set of technical comments in early 2021. Once adopted, the Domestic Workers Bill will be a significant milestone in gender equality in Myanmar, providing legal recognition of domestic work as a form of work and challenging discriminatory social norms devaluing women's work.

To maintain public interest in the situation of domestic workers and to galvanise support for the adoption of the law on protection of domestic workers during COVID-19, the ILO organised a series of Facebook Live events to celebrate International Domestic Workers Day. The main theme of the online campaign was 'We care for you, please care for us'. The ILO typically organises a physical event with up to 800 workers to celebrate International Domestic Workers Day but due to the COVID-19 situation this was not possible. Instead, five videos were produced and live streamed with the technical assistance of BBC Media Action and a production company, featuring songs from popstar Chan Chan and messages from domestic workers. On the final day, member of parliament Daw Ei Ei Pyone told viewers about the bill her committee had drafted for the protection of domestic workers. The videos received over 42,700 views on the ILO's Myanmar Facebook page.

#### Labour migration governance

The ILO has been instrumental in supporting the engagement of civil society and labour organisations in strengthening labour migration governance, ensuring they play a central role at the annual Labour Migration Stakeholders meeting and in development and implementation of the 2nd National Plan of Action on the Management of International Labour Migration (NPA). A Technical Working Group for the design of annual work plans for the NPA was established in October 2019, which for the first time included these organisations.

To mark International Migrants Day on 18 December 2020, the ILO DIILM project organised an online event showcasing success stories of migrants who had worked abroad and returned to Myanmar. Nine stories with accompanying photos were uploaded on the ILO Facebook page in English and Myanmar languages. One of the stories was of Yamin Ei, a 33 year old single mother from the Ayeyarwady Delta Region: "I learned about sewing when I worked in the factory in Thailand. As I was planning for my family's future, I saved some of my income and when I returned I opened a clothing shop here in Ingapu Township. I sell pre-made clothes and am also a dressmaker. My experience in Thailand helped me a lot to set up this shop." The event contributed to greater awareness of migrant workers' contributions, which was particularly critical given increases in anti-migrant sentiment during COVID-19.

The IOM Increasing the Developmental Impact of Migration through Capacity Strengthening and Partnership (Twe Let) project achieved its long pursued policy objective of establishing a Working Group on Migration Mainstreaming with support of the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population. The Working Group was established as a

sub-group to the Inter-Ministerial Coordination Group responsible for the implementation of the 2nd National Plan of Action for the Management of International Labour Migration. It includes broad representation of nine government ministries, eight CSOs, three UN agencies and one employer association. The first quarterly meeting of the Working Group was held virtually in December 2020 with 48 attendees and included discussions and recommendations on prioritising support to innovative initiatives for international remittance transfers; strengthening efforts on anti-human trafficking, and the need for public private partnerships in effectively addressing workplace harassment and discrimination.

IOM played a leading role in coordinating the response to the migration dimensions of the COVID-19 pandemic in Myanmar, chairing the UN Core Group on Returning Migrants, publishing bi-weekly situation reports and acting as focal point for coordinating assistance to returning migrants in several states and regions. As the focus for this core group has shifted to socio-economic recovery, Twe Let continues to facilitate and explore collaboration with key stakeholders. In addition, IOM became the co-chair of the Human Trafficking Working Group in March 2020. In these key coordination roles, IOM has ensured that migration and human trafficking prevention and protection measures are effectively mainstreamed as part of the overall COVID-19 response in Myanmar. They have also provided a useful opportunity to advocate with some of the major stakeholders on the development of responsive policy and programming on these issues in the context of reduced opportunities for safe and regular labour migration.

The impact of COVID-19 on workers, employers and labour rights was discussed as part of a tripartite dialogue organised online by the People in Need Empowering Labour Migrants in Shwe Pyi Thar (Aye Chan Thaw Ein) project for government representatives, employers' representatives, workers' representatives and parliamentarians. People in Need also supported policy advocacy with two virtual public events on safe migration and labour conditions that were viewed by over 12,081 people. Two videos on evidence-based advocacy were also finalised.

The IOM New Infrastructure for Labour Migration Opportunities and Empowerment of Migrant Workers on the South-East Borderline project completed its inception at the end of December. Together with civil society partners Mon Women's Organization and the Committee for Internally Displaced Karen People, a range of preparatory activities were undertaken during this period for the project's policy interventions. Union-level consultations were held with the Department of Labour and the Myanmar Overseas Employment Agencies Federation on ethical recruitment and the streamlining of the MOU migration process to Thailand, which led to six recruitment agencies expressing interest in participating in the International Recruitment Integrity System. Consultations were organised with key non-state actors and communities in Mon, Kayin and Tanintharyi States, including the Karen National Union and the New Mon State Party, to discuss the activities on establishing Migrant Advice Centres in government- and non-government-controlled areas. A baseline survey was initiated and a scoping study was conducted on development of a digital information system for management of the MOU recruitment and deployment process. Although regular migration under the MOU has been paused since March 2020 due to COVID-19, key stakeholders strongly expected the process to resume in 2021 due to labour market demands for migrant workers in Thailand.

#### Eliminating sexual harassment

A substantial breakthrough in efforts to establish a national legal framework in Myanmar for eliminating sexual harassment was achieved through the collective advocacy of the CARE Industry Solutions for Safe

Employment (Aung Myin Hmu) project and partner organisations. After a seven-year drafting process, the Prevention of Violence Against Women (POVAW) Law was ready for adoption. CARE contributed to the overall inputs to the law provided by the Gender Equality Network and conducted targeted advocacy to strengthen its provisions on sexual harassment in the workplace. An advocacy paper providing recommendations for the POVAW Law, as well as advice on ratifying the ILO Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190), was submitted to 79 members of parliament and was the subject of two virtual meetings with 29 members of parliament. Adoption of the law would have built upon CARE's successful advocacy to integrate provisions on gender sensitivity and prevention of sexual harassment under the Occupational Safety and Health Law in 2019. Parliamentary sessions were postponed due to COVID-19 and the draft POVAW law was not submitted to Parliament before the November general election. The advocacy paper was, however, the subject of discussions with five members of parliament in a meeting relating to the ratification of Convention 190. This resulted in the members of parliament making a strong proposition as recorded at the Union Parliament session on 24 July 2020 in favour of ratification.

Prior to the outbreak of COVID-19 in Myanmar, the Women's Organization Network (WON) Ending Vulnerability and Exploitation of Migrant Workers (EVE) project organised a series of three campaign



**Figure 4.4:** Union Minister of Labour, Immigration and Population U Thein Swe provides remarks at the ILO's Labour Migration Stakeholders Meeting in Nay Pyi Taw

events to mark International Women's Day on 8 March. The largest of the events was organised in South Dagon and was attended by 487 participants (77 per cent women). It featured a lively agenda that included speeches by several members of parliament, a performance by indie rocker Thar Dee Lu, dance performances and awareness raising on the history of International Women's Day. The key advocacy messages of the event on women's and workers' rights issues included the need to end gender-based violence and sexual harassment in the workplace, expand maternity protection and reduce the gender pay gap in Myanmar. WON also organised a series of events for the 16 Days of Activism against gender-based violence in November and December 2020 to raise awareness, challenge discriminatory attitudes, and improve laws and services to end violence against women. Participants included migrant men and women.

### **Building a skills development fund**

Progress on the drafting of the Occupational Skills Development Law was made in February 2020. The law would establish the legislative basis for a skills development fund in Myanmar. CARE actively contributed to the development of the law but it was not able to be finalised during 2020 due to delays resulting from COVID-19 and the general elections. It was therefore concluded that it was unrealistic for the skills development fund to be considered as a potential source of finance for the Training Centre by the end of the project in June 2021. The financial sustainability of the Training Centre has been decoupled from the skills development fund. A Market Research and Sustainability Plan was developed in December reflecting the impacts of COVID-19 and recommended that it should still be possible to register the Training Centre as an 'association/non-profit organisation', and to collect revenue for training provided.

### **Promoting dialogue on labour rights**

The BBC Media Action Decent Work and Labour Migration for Media (Yay Kyi Yar) project launched the first ever televised discussion programme on decent work in Myanmar at the Secretariat Building in Yangon, with opening speeches by the Minister of Labour, Immigration and Population and the Head of the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) in Myanmar. The programme aims to increase social dialogue and government accountability on labour-related policy issues by engaging key decision-makers and advocates from government, civil society, private sector and trade unions. Importantly, the show provides a voice to workers who typically have no opportunity to directly interact with policymakers. Eleven episodes of the series were broadcast on the independent media channels DVB (6.7 million viewers) and Mizzima (1.6 million viewers) – bringing discussion on key policy and labour rights onto national media platforms that reach a large and diverse audience across Myanmar. Despite informal agreement from MRTV to broadcast the Yay Kyi Yar programme and substantial efforts to build their support and participation, the government network ultimately refused to broadcast the programme as they perceived the content to be “too sensitive”.

In designing the television programme, the production team carefully selected topics and shooting locations to maximise participation, engagement and impact of the policy reform discussions. The 11 themes covered by the Yay Kyi Yar television series and their locations were:

- » Domestic workers' rights, recorded in Pathein.
- » Discrimination in the workplace, recorded in Magway.

- » Skills development, recorded in Mandalay.
- » Irregular migration, recorded in Yangon.
- » Labour unions, recorded in Bago.
- » Child labour, recorded in Hpa An.
- » Memorandum of understanding (MOU) labour migration process, recorded in Nay Pyi Taw.
- » Labour disputes, recorded in Nay Pyi Taw
- » Health and safety in the workplace, recorded in Kayah.
- » International migration, recorded in Yangon.
- » Social security, recorded in Yangon.

An evaluation conducted of the Yay Kyi Yar television programme indicated that almost all viewers interviewed (95 per cent) felt they had learned something new and many felt empowered after watching: “If anything happens to me, after watching Yay Kyi Yar, I've learned that I don't have to stand there and take it. I can do something about it. I feel confident in taking legal action as I know what my rights are and I know how to stand up for them.” Among the television show panelists themselves, 94 per cent said they felt motivated to take action on the issues discussed. After participating as a panelist, the Director General of the Factory and General Labour Inspection Department said: “I can hear the different views and problems of stakeholders in one place. And we have a chance to answer their questions. If we amend the labour law to draw up a better law, we can think about their problems and include the voices of different sectors”. The most significant policy impact of the television programme related to domestic workers' rights; many panelists felt that the programme being aired as the law was being debated in parliament contributed to action on the Domestic Workers Bill.

### **Enhanced knowledge and capacity of stakeholders on decent work, labour migration and anti-trafficking**

#### **Improving implementation of labour migration governance**

The ILO's DIILM project continued to provide capacity building training to key stakeholders in 2020 to improve the implementation of labour migration governance in Myanmar. The project delivered training for newly recruited labour

attachés selected for posts in Thailand, Malaysia and the Republic of Korea in 2020. In addition, a two-day training of trainers on data management for labour complaints was organised for government officials from the Department of Labour. As a result of this series of workshops, the data collection system for cases filed by migrant workers dramatically improved, including the capability of producing national reports on demand that provide data on the type of complaint by country of destination, sector of work and gender of the complainants. Training was also provided to CSOs and labour organisation partners to improve bilateral cooperation on issues of health and medical checkups, pre-departure training and procedures for the return and reintegration of migrants.

#### **Increased data, studies and documentaries published in 2020 inform migration stakeholders**

Several research reports by the ILO were presented to stakeholders for validation. Five studies were published in 2020. A study by Professor Marius Olivier, Extending the scope of social security to internal migrants in the informal economy, was discussed at a workshop held in Nay Pyi Taw, with the participation of the Director Generals of the Department of



**Figure 4.5** Scenes from the Yay Kyi Yar television programme on decent work and labour mobility

Labour, the Social Security Board and the Department of Social Welfare. The paper's robust analysis was well received by the Government and resulted in the Social Security Board requesting regular meetings with the ILO to explore next steps for implementing the recommendations, including the extension of social protection to the informal sector, increasing portability of social security benefits and exploring the possibility of setting up a migrant welfare fund. The research study is published on the ILO website in English and Myanmar.

The validation of an assessment study on the skills of returned Myanmar migrant workers was held online by the ILO, attended by the Director General of the Department Labour, the Directors of the Migration Division and the National Skills Standards Authority, as well as CSO and recruitment agency representatives. The study findings highlighted the need to build awareness among returning migrants about the availability of skills training opportunities and to improve platforms for job matching. The workshop was held prior to the mass return of migrant workers in March 2020. It later gained even more salience with the State Counsellor noting in a speech on the situation of COVID-19 that the skills of returned migrants should be fully utilised for the benefit of Myanmar. The final report was released in English and Myanmar languages in December 2020 and will be used to advocate for expanding skills assessment and certification for returning migrants.

The ILO also published a rapid assessment on the Experiences of ASEAN Migrants during COVID-19, with a particular emphasis on returning Myanmar migrants. The findings highlight that COVID-19 increased the precarity of work and vulnerability to abuse for many migrants in destination countries, as well as the challenging and sometimes traumatic process of returning to Myanmar. As one migrant woman from Shan State recounted: "I came back to Keng Tung by bus and my brother picked me up at the bus terminal. There were many people in the bus, so I was worried about getting infected. I had my temperature tested at three checkpoints on the way back. As I didn't have a fever, they allowed me to go home. I was so afraid of the authorities at the

checkpoints. I worried that I wouldn't be able to go home if I had a fever".

Having observed a rapid increase in returning migrants into Ayeyarwady Region following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the IOM Migration as a Livelihood Diversification Strategy (MILDAS) project expanded its rapid assessment on the impacts of COVID-19 to include internal migrants. The assessment aims to better understand the rapidly evolving situation for returning migrants through examining the impacts of the pandemic on returning migrants and migrant-sending communities. MILDAS and partner CSOs interviewed 384 returning migrants and 50 community leaders in Bogale, Mawlamyinegyun and Labutta. The assessment found that the majority of returnee internal migrants had lost their jobs before returning. The loss of income resulted in reduced remittances to migrant sending communities in the Delta who reported an increased need for outside assistance that was not being met.

In partnership with the Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB), the IOM MILDAS project produced three video documentaries on circular migration in the Ayeyarwady Delta. Increasingly, families working in agricultural livelihoods in the region diversify their income through temporary labour migration during the off-season. To document and increase knowledge about this phenomenon, DVB sent a film crew to several of the MILDAS target areas to collect footage and interview beneficiaries. The documentaries produced, titled Challenges of Seasonal Work in Bogale, Financial Planning in Labutta, and Working Seasonally in Yangon were widely disseminated through television and social media to increase understanding and support policy formation. The final versions of the three documentaries were aired on DVB's TV channel and shared on the Miss Migration Facebook page (410,800 views).

Noting a major gap in the knowledge base, the IOM's Strengthening the Resilience of Conflict-Affected Communities in Kachin and northern Shan states through Increased Safe and Rewarding Migration (SAFE) project finalised a scoping study on labour migration among internally displaced people and host community members. Without more empirical evidence on the positive role that labour migration can play in the development of the region, the narrative has become very narrowly focused on the negative outcomes, particularly human trafficking for forced marriage in China. Qualitative research was completed by Dr. Victoria Jack to address the lack of data regarding migration trends and patterns in Kachin and northern Shan states and provide insight into the perspectives and needs of migrants and their communities. The study found a lack of sufficient opportunities for women and men to migrate regularly to international destinations, particularly to China. As a result, most migrants from the area who journey abroad do so without the legal documentation necessary for stay and work. It is therefore critical that safe migration information not only encourages the use of regular channels but also addresses the information needs of irregular migrants to reduce their likelihood of experiencing abuses. The findings of the study will be applied to support an evidence-based approach to project activities, including adaptation of the safe migration curriculum and informing the development of policy options for enhancing protection of migrants and maximising the benefits of migration.

The IOM Twe Let project moved forward with its migration research with the Center for Economic and Social Development (CESD). A memorandum of understanding was signed between IOM and the Australian National University (ANU) to deliver training support to CESD at the start of 2020. This cooperation included an eight-day capacity building workshop held in February for 26 local researchers (50 per cent women), facilitated by ANU experts in migration, demography and survey

design. Practical outputs of the workshop included the development of research tools and survey questionnaires for the first of the four studies planned by CESD on impacts of migration and remittances in conflict-affected areas in south-east Myanmar. ANU also facilitated a workshop on qualitative research practices for 34 participants. The Department of Labour provided formal approval for the first study on remittances in October 2020. Formal approval for the migration infrastructure study along with informal approval for the two smaller studies are anticipated from the Department of Labour in early 2021.

Since the start of the IOM Twe Let project, local CSO partners have been a central focus of institutional and technical capacity building so they can continue supporting migrants and their families beyond the life of the project. In early 2020, IOM conducted organisational capacity assessments to systematically determine the extent that its CSO partners' knowledge and skills to design and implement migration programmes had improved. Monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL) was a clear area where all of the partners had strengthened capacity, particularly in the application of monitoring tools, data collection, data management and data analysis. Gender mainstreaming was also found to be well understood by partners and taken into consideration during work planning and implementation. The partners had also gained a better understanding of how to plan activities, develop detailed budgets and document expenditures with vouchers and receipts. In addition, efforts to build capacity on social and behaviour change communications led to increased knowledge of how to implement effective safe migration information campaigns. Further training has been shared through quarterly project management meetings, including on terms and terminology for labour migration, fraud prevention and anti-corruption, and prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse. In October and December 2020, local partner RAFT provided technical guidance and capacity building support on conflict sensitivity for Twe Let project partners.

In response to large-scale return migration during COVID-19, IOM and its partners conducted a rapid assessment of the impacts on returning migrants and communities of origin from June to July 2020. The assessment was conducted in 10 states and regions of Myanmar – Ayeyarwady, Magway, Mandalay, Tanintharyi, Chin, Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, Mon and Shan. The survey questionnaire for returnees included questions for internal and international migrants, reaching a total of 2,311 respondents (47 per cent women). A questionnaire was also developed for community leaders, focused on gathering their opinions and experiences about returning migrant workers, which reached 453 respondents (23 per cent women). The study's findings and recommendations were used to inform the development of interventions and advocacy related to the health, humanitarian and socio-economic needs and vulnerabilities of returning migrants, their families and their communities.

The World Vision See, Hear, Empower: Supporting inclusive and transformative livelihoods for IDP and host communities in Kachin (SHE) project concluded three of its planned formative research studies in the first half of 2020. A baseline survey was completed with 900 households in the five project townships to obtain a better understanding of the needs of the community and provide a baseline measure for gender equality in the project's performance indicators. A labour market mapping was finalised in February, which included an assessment of the skills available, labour demands of employers and services provided by vocational training providers. Key sectors identified for training are construction, food and beverage, healthcare, weaving, sewing, tailoring, handicrafts, food processing and motorbike repair. A household

economy analysis was completed in the third study, which assessed the main income sources and the expenditures for households in the IDP camps, assigning them to four relative wealth groupings. Several of the studies will be published and disseminated to contribute to the knowledge base and to shape the design of project interventions.

The ADRA Vocational Education Support to Internally Displaced People and Host Communities (VESI) project had planned to conduct one labour market survey to inform its vocational training activities. The survey was completed in 2019 during the project's inception phase. However, the contextual changes resulting from COVID-19 necessitated a second assessment. It was found that the COVID-19 crisis had a substantial impact on the local economies of the target areas due to the long lockdown period imposed by the government to prevent the spread of COVID-19. In addition, the sudden return of tens of thousands of migrant workers from China affected the balance of the supply and demand for labour. After the analysis of the second dataset, the training courses to be provided were reassessed for viability to inform adaptations. With technical assistance provided by LIFT, a joint launch event was organised for the ADRA and World Vision projects' labour market assessments. The event was hosted on Zoom and was attended by more than 100 participants from INGOs, CSOs, UN agencies, government agencies and donors. Opening remarks were provided by Johann Hesse, Charge d'Affaires and Head of Cooperation for the Delegation of the European Union to Myanmar.

After completing its labour market assessment, ADRA determined that the training available at the three Government Technological High Schools in Myitkina, Lashio and Bhamo was not of sufficient quality or market relevance to achieve the labour market outcomes envisaged by the VESI project. In particular, the courses rarely met employer requirements because they were too focused on theory rather than acquiring the practical skills and competencies needed. To inform their capacity building support, ADRA carried out an assessment of the teaching skills and institutional resources available. Training was then initiated for 66 teachers to improve the pedagogical approach at the three schools. In addition, the teachers participated in the curriculum development process so they could learn how to design and develop short course vocational trainings. Post-training examinations found significant improvements among teachers, using the Teacher Quality Index.

Because of the disruption to training caused by COVID-19, ADRA worked closely with the Department of Technical and Vocational Training to adapt the activities so they could continue. The directives of the Government of Myanmar to control the spread of COVID-19 led to the closure of the three Technological High Schools and restricted movement from the target IDP camps. However, with encouragement and technical advice from LIFT, both the training of teachers and students were safely resumed using a combination of blended digital learning methodology, employer-based training and other approaches. In 2021, the ADRA consortium plans to scale up these approaches to make up for the delays faced during COVID-19 outbreaks.

The CARE Aung Myin Hmu project commissioned a feasibility study in early 2020 to explore the opportunities and challenges for establishing a training programme to support out-of-school youth to obtain decent work opportunities through garment and soft skills training. The research found strong need and plenty of room for collaborative work across a variety of private and public sector actors to support such an initiative. The study is linked to a new soft skills training curriculum and credentials being developed by the Department of Technical and Vocational Training

called the National Vocational Foundation Certificate (NVFC). CARE has the opportunity to partner in the NVFC programme through assisting with the development of the training modules and/or through a long-term partnership as an accredited training provider. To proceed with this partnership, CARE is waiting for evidence from the NVFC pilot. The pilot has, however, been postponed until 2021, which meant that the process of finalising CARE's potential partnership was delayed. The programme is particularly relevant to LIFT programming for internally displaced people and migrants who frequently have not been able to complete secondary school and need a credential to pursue further skills training. A memorandum of understanding agreement between LIFT and the Department of Technical and Vocational Training was expected to be signed to facilitate the participation of implementing partners in the programme and the institutionalisation of LIFT training content on labour rights and safe migration.

### **Expansion of Migrant Resource Centres**

To expand the availability of information and assistance for migrants in Kachin and northern Shan State, IOM launched the Migrant Resource Center (MRC) in Myitkina in November 2020 and has almost completed another MRC in Muse. Recruitment of MRC counsellors to staff these centres was finalised and delivery of services has begun. The MRC services include information about safe and regular migration, referrals to the Department of Labour's complaint mechanism to seek redress for abuses, assistance with obtaining official documentation and humanitarian support for migrants in situations of distress.

In 2020, IOM's Tve Let project also supported the Government to operationalise two new MRCs in Myeik and Tachileik. In Tachileik, the Labour Exchange Office expressed its readiness to accommodate the MRC counsellors and to start serving migrants as soon as the situation stabilised. At a meeting in June, the Director General of the Department of Labour informed IOM that he planned to prioritise the launch of the two MRCs so timely information and support services to aspirant and returning migrants could be provided during the COVID-19 crisis. However, intensifying conflicts and movement restrictions meant that progress towards this has been slow.

### **Improving services for trafficking survivors**

The Eden Project to Rescue Myanmar Migrant Women and Girls who have been Trafficked for the Purposes of Sexual Exploitation or Forced Marriage worked to improve the overall service environment for trafficking survivors, from first response to rehabilitation, through capacity development training for key stakeholders. Eden trained 72 government officials, civil society representatives and police on trauma informed care. Through these trainings, Eden seeks to increase the understanding of trauma at the organisational level to help ensure that survivors of trafficking are able to receive victim-centered support services throughout their rehabilitation experiences. Eden increased the availability of qualified trauma counseling in Myanmar by launching a trauma counselor certification course. Five trauma counselors were certified in 2020, potentially increasing the availability of qualified trauma counseling in Myanmar by up to 780 hours per year.

The Eden Project also conducted outreach and delivered assistance to women who had been trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation or forced marriage in local red-light districts, trafficking hubs and vulnerable communities in Yangon and Lashio. The project assisted 75 trafficked migrant women in 2020 by providing shelter and holistic rehabilitation programmes, with a focus on trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy. This included 39 new survivors who were referred

by other service providers or identified through outreach. Based upon follow-up mental health assessments, 90 per cent of Eden's beneficiaries experienced improved mental and emotional conditions, including a 50 per cent reduction in the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. Eden also broke ground on a new shelter in Tachileik during the year and began recruiting and training staff.

As part of the rehabilitation services provided, Eden offers immediate employment to every beneficiary in their jewelry-making social enterprise, as well as access to 11 different types of vocational training opportunities based on their longer-term livelihood interests. A total of 75 beneficiaries participated in vocational training during the first half of 2020. Tracing surveys found that among former graduates, four had started their own enterprises and 56 had found stable employment within six months. As 70 per cent of Eden's beneficiaries do not have National Registration Cards, Eden also works with the Department of Rehabilitation to apply for identification to ensure that there are no structural obstacles to Eden's graduates obtaining formal employment.

In the initial days of the COVID-19 pandemic, Eden worked to identify the most pressing needs for women and girl migrants living in vulnerable communities in Yangon and Mandalay. To replace lost income, Eden shifted from jewelry-making for women trafficking survivors to sewing reusable face masks and producing liquid soap. The income generation provided by this activity helped 692 migrant women in Yangon and Mandalay, many of whom had lost their jobs in garment factories. The liquid soap and reusable face masks produced were then distributed to 77,400 migrants (54 per cent women) to help prevent infection in poor communities. A handwashing information campaign was also implemented in these areas, reaching 17,300 migrants (54 per cent women) with information about proper handwashing techniques. As food insecurity quickly became one of the most urgent needs for households lacking a stable income, Eden provided 36,064 beneficiaries (54 per cent women) with prepared meals, lentils and fortified rice to improve their nutrition and reduce negative coping strategies.

### **Building the capacity of CSOs and labour organisations to improve support to migrant workers**

In 2020, People in Need Empowering Labour Migrants in Shwe Pyi Thar (Aye Chan Thaw Ein) project delivered trainings to build the capacity of CSOs and labour organisations supporting migrant workers in Yangon. A training-of-trainers on safe migration and labour rights was provided to 32 key project staff and 50 participants from civil society organisations and trade unions. The training addressed critical issues faced by migrant workers, including occupational safety and health, labour laws, employment agreements, social security, required documents and access to assistance. A paralegal training package was developed and delivered to 26 participants (48 per cent women) to support delivery of legal services within migrant communities. The training curriculum included content on the role of paralegals, labour laws, dispute settlement mechanisms and case documentation. A financial literacy training package was also adapted and delivered to 20 participants. To support CSOs and labour organisations to participate effectively in policy dialogue and develop evidence-based case studies, an advocacy training was organised for 16 participants (50 per cent women). A practical outcome of the training was the initial drafting of a policy advocacy agenda on safe migration and labour rights issues to be taken forward by the project's partners.

The IOM SAFE project also made considerable progress in establishing the foundations for the delivery of safe migration information and protection services by CSOs to migrants and trafficking survivors in conflict-affected



**Figure 4.6** State Minister U Zaw Win launches the Migrant Resource Center in Myitkina

communities. A series of three 3-day capacity building workshops were organised for nine local CSO partners in northern Shan and Kachin State to support their delivery of case management and reintegration services for survivors of human trafficking and vulnerable migrants. The workshops covered key relevant concepts and approaches, including labour migration, human trafficking, migrant smuggling, principles of direct assistance, case management, referral pathways, information management and data-entry. Following the training, 85 survivors of trafficking and vulnerable migrants were referred or provided with direct assistance by CSOs to support their successful return and reintegration. In addition, two 4-day training-of-trainer workshops were held to enable delivery of the safe and beneficial migration curriculum, providing training to seven local CSOs. The rollout of the safe migration training in Kachin State has so far provided 26 two-day trainings to 493 participants (78 per cent women) between August and December 2020 and will start in northern Shan in January 2021.

World Vision made progress in advancing inclusion of women and people with disabilities in Kachin State through training of village development committees (VDCs) to implement community action plans. During 2020, mapping identified 61 VDCs in camps for internally displaced people and host communities with 676 members (55 per cent women). Gender and disability training was then provided to 194 of the VDC members (69 per cent women) to provide them with an increased understanding of gender equality, women's empowerment and disability inclusion to ensure the consideration of these concepts in the committee's composition and activities. The VDCs were then given responsibility for carrying out the pre-selection of youth beneficiaries for the project's

vocational training and establishing a feedback mechanism in the camps and host communities. The strengthening of the VDCs will interlink with World Vision's activities on savings groups, women's networks and gender and inclusion champions to create an enabling environment that promotes the participation of women, youth and people with disabilities in employment opportunities and community leadership.

#### **Improving media coverage of decent work and labour migration issues**

BBC Media Action expanded its capacity building activities to improve media coverage of decent work and labour migration issues during 2020. Partnership agreements were signed with DVB and Mizzima for distribution of Yay Kyi Yar content on television and online platforms in exchange for supporting the development of their independent media operations. The project also continued to deliver coaching to four local ethnic media partners (Myitkyina News Journal, Shan Herald, Dawei Watch and Voice of Myanmar), leading to the production of 19 feature reports on migration and decent work to inform their audiences. For example, Dawei Watch produced a video feature titled *Let us return home through the Ranong-Kawthaung route*, which addressed the challenges created for many returning migrants by having no choice but to return to Myanmar through the Myawaddy border checkpoint. Not long afterwards, the policy was changed to allow returning migrants to enter Myanmar through Kawthaung.

To contribute to better cooperation between stakeholders and more balanced reporting on migration issues, BBC Media Action organised four media and migration workshops in Chin, Kachin, Mon and Nay Pyi Taw. By building connections between people from different sectors, the workshops proved effective at improving the information shared about migration to local and national audiences. As one government official in Nay Pyi Taw reported: "I've changed my attitude. Before the workshop, I was afraid of the media and thought they wrote whatever they wanted. Now, I've learned that we can't do without the media. As I understand the difficulties they face, I feel I want to be more flexible about working with them". The media actors involved have been prolific in publishing related stories after the workshop, producing 55 media outputs to date and applying a more rights-based perspective to migration issues. As one reporter in Nay Pyi Taw said: "I learned the proper usage of migration terminology during the workshop. According to human rights standards, we should not refer to 'illegal migrant workers'. We should only say they are undocumented because no person is illegal. I have shared this kind of knowledge within my department."

#### **Increased access to information, training and support services for women and men migrants and other vulnerable workers**

##### **Building the skills of migrant garment workers**

To improve the prospects of obtaining decent work for women migrating to Yangon, the CARE Aung Myin Hmu project provided skills training for the garment sector through its training centre in North Dagon and factory-based training lines. Since it began, the project has trained 5,246 workers (92 per cent women) as sewing machine operators, sewing machine mechanics, cutting room operators and quality controllers.

In 2020, a smaller number of beneficiaries were trained than usual (744 workers) because the Aung Myin Hmu Training Centre was forced to close on 18 March to comply with government directives on COVID-19. It reopened on 24 August but closed again on 1 September. In response to the closure of the Training Center, AMH developed online training via 23 videos and four animations; 133 participants (83 per cent women)

attended online training on labour laws, merchandising and industrial engineering.

Robust monitoring and evaluation of the results of CARE's skills training continues to demonstrate systemic increases in productivity and income for beneficiaries in comparison to informally trained garment workers. Workers trained by the Aung Myin Hmu project earn an average of MMK 69,000 (USD 50) per month more in wages than before they were trained due to performance bonuses and promotions. This increased income contributes to the resilience of both the workers and their family members in communities of origin, with Aung Myin Hmu's trainees able to send a monthly average of MMK 113,000 (USD 81) home in remittances. An ancillary impact of their increased productivity is that sewing machine operators are able to work fewer overtime hours to meet their targets, leaving them more time for rest, eating properly and spending time with family. They are therefore less susceptible to malnutrition, poor health and job burnout.

While it was not possible to recruit new migrant workers to come to Yangon for training because of the risks of travelling and lack of hiring by garment factories, CARE joined forces with the Myan Ku Fund to provide upskilling training to garment workers who had lost their jobs. The intention is to resume training for unemployed workers in 2021.

In 2020, the ActionAid Safe Migration for Decent Work in the Peri-Urban Areas of Yangon (Secure) project worked to build the capacity of 853 vulnerable migrant workers, primarily women, to understand and claim their labour rights and connect with information and networks in order to adopt safer migration paths. This was done through pre-departure training, peer-to-peer network training, Sunday cafes, psychosocial counselling, leadership training and legal awareness training. With the massive layoffs in the garment sector resulting from COVID-19, there was a major need for legal assistance services for workers to claim compensation in peri-urban Yangon. Under the ActionAid project, legal support was provided to workers and trade unions to resolve collective and individual labour disputes. The services within communities were delivered by Legal Clinic Myanmar, WE Generation and the Cooperative Committee of Trade Unions, reaching 265 complainants. Legal Clinic Myanmar provided legal counselling through their 24-hour hotline service to 757 callers. The subject of the cases included compensation for layoffs, contract disputes, eviction notices and gender-based violence. Around USD 22,700 in compensation was paid by factory owners to 105 complainants.

#### **Women-supported peer network established for the garment sector**

Now registered as an NGO, Business Kind Myanmar achieved its five-year goal of forming a sustainable and scalable woman-supported peer network in the garment sector – Thone Pan Hla Association. Working in close cooperation with the skills training component of the CARE project, Thone Pan Hla implemented a wide range of peer-directed services for migrant women in Hlaing Thar Yar and Shwe Pyi Thar Townships. Though participation had to be reduced due to COVID-19 restrictions, 2,902 women factory workers participated in Sunday Café events to improve their knowledge and build supportive peer networks. During COVID-19, Sunday Café's messages were disseminated by 40 active Thone Pan Hla peer leaders to a network of 28,200 workers. The reach of this information was amplified through 'Sunday blast messages' via Facebook and SMS that were received by 65,926 migrant workers. TPL's LeapFrog basic computer training was delivered to 121 migrant women. In addition, 179 migrant women received emergency support through the Women in Crisis programme for problems of homelessness, loss of

employment, sexual violence and human trafficking.

#### **Protecting women migrants from gender-based violence**

To respond to the critical need of protecting women migrants from gender-based violence and sexual harassment, CARE implemented an extensive programme of awareness-raising, capacity building and response mechanisms. Sexual harassment and gender-based violence awareness messages were delivered through trainings, workshops and special events within communities to 15,700 people. They were also reached through social media, in particular with the project's launch of the Facebook page titled YAT (STOP Sexual Harassment) in June 2020. Progress on addressing harassment within the workplace was also achieved in 2020, with trainings of management and human resource staff at 20 garment factories leading to adoption of factory-level sexual harassment policies and complaint mechanisms in 13 factories. CARE's collaboration with trade unions resulted in more workers being reached with support on demanding policy/system changes at the workplace and in higher level policy dialogue. The trade unions reported that 20 women leaders from four factories were advocating to factory management to include sexual harassment provisions in employment contracts. CARE also adapted their training approach by organising online training for workers and holding regular phone calls with factories to provide support. A mini-survey with factories showed that a majority of respondents felt safer at their factories since complaint mechanisms were put in place and that they would feel comfortable reporting a sexual harassment complaint.



**Figure 4.7:** Dawei Watch article on women migrants returning to Kawthaung during COVID-19



With the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is evidence that cases of gender-based violence are increasing in Yangon. The CARE Aung Myin Hmu project continued to strengthen its referral pathway for gender-based violence to effectively respond to these cases, in partnership with Legal Clinic Myanmar (LCM) and community stakeholders. Aung Myin Hmu updated the gender-based violence referral guidelines to have a proper referral system and effective case management practices. This was shared among township coordination networks and community based organisations. LCM also established a community-based paralegal centre to expand available services. Noting the emerging crisis of increased incidence of violence during the pandemic, efforts were made by LCM to disseminate information through DVB television, Mizzima television and MNTV television, as well as through social media to raise awareness. In 2020, 242 calls were received through LCM's 24-hour hotline service, 220 beneficiaries were provided with legal consultation and mediation services and 14 beneficiaries were provided with legal representation in court cases. Seventeen beneficiaries were provided with paralegal support from the community-based paralegal centre.

### COVID-19 support

The CARE project was active in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic in Hlaing Thar Yar and Shwe Pyi Thar townships, working in collaboration with its CSO partners Business Kind Myanmar and Legal Clinic Myanmar. Leveraging its strong relationships with the private sector, CARE brokered the low-cost production of over 3.3 million reusable masks through 14 garment factories, providing personal protective equipment and helping to ensure the ongoing employment of 795 women factory workers. A worksheet and video for INGOs and CSOs with the mask pattern, tech pack and costing sheet was produced and disseminated so that they could support their own income generating activities on mask production. To better understand the impact of COVID-19 on garment factories and workers, a rapid assessment was carried out in partnership with MDRI-CESD. Fifty factories and 231 workers were surveyed on factory production, payment for orders, employment and conditions for factory workers, and their future plans. Information and hygiene kits to prevent COVID-19 were distributed to 125,474 workers and ward residents in Hlaing Thar Yar and other townships in Yangon, with preventative materials being supplied to government offices, township courts, trade unions, hostels and fever clinics.

Responding to the urgent need for income replacement among Yangon's migrant communities during the COVID-19 crisis, cash transfer programmes were rapidly implemented via CARE's CSO partners. Business Kind Myanmar provided immediate support to migrant workers in the garment sector who had lost their jobs. Through Wave Money and in-person distribution, 6,450 factory workers (86 per cent women) received amounts of up to MMK 50,000 (USD 36) to pay for hostel fees and meals. CARE also collaborated with the Sex Workers in Myanmar CSO to organise cash transfers and provide self-protective information to migrant sex workers who had lost their incomes due to the closure of their workplaces and faced stigma and criminalisation that prevented them from accessing government support. Five hundred female sex workers who met the programme eligibility criteria were identified and provided with cash transfers through Wave Money.

The ILO supported returning migrants in conflict-affected communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. Responding to an urgent request from the Shan State Refugee Committee, the ILO supported the provision of food rations to 6,101 internally displaced people/cross-border migrants (49 per cent women) living in the six unrecognised camps on the Shan-Thai border. The people in these camps usually support themselves by crossing the border to work as day labourers in Thailand but were

unable to do so after the border closed and were no longer able to feed themselves and their families. Working with the camp committees, a needs assessment was conducted and rice and soya beans were distributed. In addition, the Karen Department of Health and Welfare provided support to 650 returning migrants (50 per cent women) in areas of Hpa-An controlled by the Karen National Union (KNU).

A disturbing rise in negative public perception and stigma associating returning migrants with the spread of COVID-19 was observed during the fourth quarter of 2020. Leveraging its relationship with independent broadcaster the Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB), the IOM Twe Let project developed a media campaign Voices of Returning Migrants to increase understanding of the challenges that migrants face during the pandemic in order to increase empathy and counter discriminatory messages about returning migrants. From 22 June to 29 September 2020, the campaign produced four talk shows and 11 interviews, with an aggregated total of 414,553 estimated views on social media. It employed an innovative model that combined the filming and dissemination of vox pops (short interviews where reporters ask the opinions of the public) and virtual talk shows where panelists and audiences joined live discussions remotely due to COVID-19 mobility restrictions. DVB reported that the campaign led to many expressions of goodwill by viewers and users of its social media channels, with live audience comments being especially supportive of discussions on how to support returning migrants to cope with the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic.

With thousands of migrants returning after losing their jobs in China, the IOM SAFE project developed a robust COVID-19 response for returning migrants and their communities in Kachin and northern Shan States. The interventions were designed to meet the basic humanitarian needs of returning migrants in the project areas, while also safeguarding and supporting the broader public health efforts to mitigate the spread of the COVID-19 virus. IOM, Metta and other CSO partners reached 148,763 beneficiaries (52 per cent women), with direct assistance in the form of food, hygiene items, bedding and other support during quarantine. A particular feature of IOM's response in Kachin and northern Shan was the assistance delivered to 7,596 vulnerable migrants and survivors of trafficking (36 per cent women) at Department of Rehabilitation shelters, including pregnant women, elderly and children. In addition, IOM developed mental health and psychosocial support materials, including a booklet on stress and coping with COVID-19, to deliver counselling to 7,474 migrants (72 per cent women) in quarantine.

Recognising the rapidly changing situation for returning migrants and local communities in the Ayeyarwady Delta during COVID-19, the IOM MILDAS project developed an emergency response to meet the most urgent needs of these communities. Hygiene supplies, personal protective equipment, select non-food items, and IEC materials with risk communication messaging were quickly procured and sent to MILDAS target areas. Starting in April, partner CSOs distributed items to returning migrants in quarantine facilities and internal returning migrants in home quarantine, in close coordination with local authorities. By the end of August, 9,924 returning migrants and family members (44 per cent women) had received material assistance and approximately 162,588 (51 per cent women) had been provided with awareness raising information on COVID-19 prevention. In July, in response to a request from the Ayeyarwady Regional Government and Regional Department of Labour, IOM reached a further 1,887 (506 women) returning international migrants in quarantine in Patheingyi, Hinthada and Maubin townships with the provision of hygiene, WASH, non-food-item kits and drinking water and supported the installation of water supply and sanitation

infrastructure at the Patheingyi Department of Labour compound.

The PIN project implemented a substantial programme of preventative activities for COVID-19 for migrants and their households in eight target wards of Shwepyithar Township. Pamphlets containing information from the Ministry of Health and Sports were provided to 20,000 beneficiaries through Ward Administrator Offices and Quarantine Centers. Hand sanitiser and soaps were directly delivered to households or community quarantine stations, reaching almost 38,500 beneficiaries (54 per cent women). To further raise community awareness about COVID-19 prevention and assistance, PIN erected 49 billboards and distributed 160 vinyl posters. Information was broadcast through loudspeakers, which reached an estimated 78,000 migrants and host community members. A post-distribution monitoring study was conducted to elicit feedback from 193 households that received this support. Nearly all respondents were satisfied with the quality of the information and materials provided. However, the findings also showed that the biggest problems faced by recipients related to loss of income and the majority needed additional financial support.

The EVE project mounted a large campaign to distribute information, soap, hand gel and masks to migrant workers during the COVID-19 crisis. Working closely with township Health and Social Welfare authorities, 63,928 beneficiaries (79 per cent women) were provided with assistance in migrant communities. Essential information and materials,



**Figure 4.8: Business Kind Myanmar distributes information and hygiene kits to garment factory workers in Hlaing Thar Yar**

including brief training sessions on proper handwashing procedures were delivered door-to-door. Because of its strong relationships with community-based organisations, WON was also able to support local women's groups to produce their own soap and hand sanitisers for distribution. For example, after teaching the Lan Pya Kyelzin women's group in Nyung Village how they could make these products for sale, they received orders and were able to support themselves during the pandemic. Similarly, in the Nyaung Ywar village, the Guiding Star women's group produced and sold bottles of hand sanitiser to other organisations for distribution to poor migrant communities in Yangon.

To support unemployed workers during the COVID-19 pandemic, the ActionAid Secure project provided cash transfers to 1,458 vulnerable workers (76 per cent women) via Wave Money and in-person distribution. An initial assessment of eligibility was carried out with support from CSO partners, ward administrators and the Myanmar Garment Manufacturers Association. Among the 3,300 workers assessed, the most vulnerable workers who had not received any other form of support from state and non-state actors received cash transfers of up to MMK 240,000 (USD 173). This included unemployed factory workers (63 per cent), informal sector workers (21 per cent), people with disabilities (9 per cent) and people living with HIV (7 per cent). The cash transfers proved a fast and effective way of providing assistance to families that allowed them to make their own decisions about critical needs during the crisis. Anecdotal information from partners providing the cash support suggests that as much as 80 per cent was used to purchase food and pay for housing costs. It is anticipated that cash transfers to 1,458 individuals indirectly benefited a further 5,932 people.

Leveraging the reach of its local CSO and trade unions partners in Yangon, ActionAid's preventative activities distributed awareness raising information on COVID-19 to 95,971 workers (79 per cent women). In addition, hand gel, gloves and masks were disseminated to approximately 10,000 workers (87 per cent women). The consortium organised training and formed a volunteer group in Hlaing Thar Yar to help support the Department of Health with managing community-based quarantine facilities and fever clinics. A total of 333 volunteers (58 per cent women) were trained on basic health education related to COVID-19. These volunteers actively supported authorities to implement their response plans and have committed to continuing to assist the township in the event of future waves of the virus.

With the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic eliminating millions of jobs and shutting borders, there was an urgent need to provide timely and accurate information to migrants returning to Myanmar and in destination countries. Quickly converting from television to radio, BBC Media Action re-launched the Yay Kyi Yar radio programme in June with 14 new COVID-19 related episodes that were broadcast twice a week on Myanma Athan (3.2 million listeners), Padmayar FM (2.8 million listeners) and MAP radio in Thailand. Not losing sight of the need to maintain audience engagement, each episode included human-interest stories and entertainment segments with the popular character U U Pike San, as well as critical information on COVID-19. Evaluation of the radio programme showed that listeners retained a high level of information due to the use of humor and relatable personal stories. Audience members interviewed reported applying the COVID-19 prevention practices suggested, including wearing masks, frequent handwashing, social distancing and other preventative measures: "I followed the advice after listening to this programme. As COVID-19 is happening, I am now careful to wear a mask and wash my hands regularly."

The Yay Kyi Yar facebook page also pivoted its digital content production

towards COVID-19 from March 2020, making a total of 234 social media posts that received 918,319 likes. The number of followers of the Facebook page continued to grow rapidly during 2020, reaching over 1 million people (40 per cent women) across more than 10 countries. The digital content provided migrant audiences with timely and accessible information related to their work and travel during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as promoting more positive attitudes towards migrants in Myanmar and filling other critical information gaps. The videos of celebrities providing COVID-19 related advice and information proved particularly popular, with these video posts receiving 26.9 million views.

The project's final evaluation found that the Yay Kyi Yar Facebook page is likely to be one of the most significant legacies of the project, as it continues to be a trusted source of information on decent work and labour migration issues in Myanmar. Surveys with audiences found that 80 per cent of respondents described the Yay Kyi Yar Facebook content as useful. A young female follower of the Facebook page said, "I think Yay Kyi Yar is not only an educational page but also provides practical information related to the rights of workers. It shares the real stories of workers and the issues between employers and employees". The strong audience rapport established by the page was also demonstrated by more than 2,400 direct questions from audience members seeking information. Regular referrals were made to available resources and organisations to respond to these queries and provide assistance. One example is the workers at the HAGL factory, where over 70 workers were dismissed from work without compensation. They contacted the Yay Kyi Yar Facebook page who facilitated their contact with the Department of Labour. Two days later, one of the workers called back to say thank you and inform them that all of those who had been laid off were able to get their jobs back.

#### **Supporting migrant-sending households**

The IOM MILDAS project's endline survey demonstrated that the project surpassed targets set for landless and vulnerable households to diversify their income and for rural households to be less vulnerable to shocks. This was achieved through targeted financial literacy and business start-up support and financial and remittances management coaching provided to migrant-sending households. Beneficiary tracking found 93 per cent of migrant-sending households reported improved financial management practices, with 76 per cent of those who received micro-enterprise start-up coaching successfully establishing businesses. The project also successfully implemented revolving funds in villages without sufficient access to financial services to reduce migration-related debt, setting up 63 fund mechanisms in the Ayeyarwady Delta. The funds support small loans of up to MMK 200,000 (USD 144) to pay for migration costs or to support returning migrants to pursue local livelihoods, requiring repayment of the principal plus 2 per cent interest. They help to fill a gap in access to credit in poor communities, where potential migrants are typically unable to take out loans from a commercial bank and the interest charged by money lenders can be up to 10 per cent per month. In total, 2,391 migrants (61 per cent women) have now received loans disbursed by the funds with no default on the repayments. USD 149,155 worth of loans have been disbursed.

IOM MILDAS also tracked skills development training graduates to inform post-training support activities and managed to track a total of 181 graduates (including 69 women). The tracking found that 71 per cent of graduates had found employment while 17 per cent had begun self-employment after having received skills development training. Post training support was provided to 29 graduates.

#### **Pre-migration outreach services**

The IOM Twe Let project made substantial progress on implementation of pre-migration outreach activities to support safe and beneficial migration experiences. IOM and its CSO partners (Parami Development Network, Chin Human Rights Organization, Mon Women's Organization and Social Care Volunteer Group) supported 58,330 beneficiaries (55 per cent women) in 173 target villages of the Dry Zone, South-East, Shan and Chin States. The services are adapted and localised for each context and include hybrid safe and beneficial migration training (pre-migration/financial literacy), advanced financial literacy training, community-based savings groups, edutainment sessions on safe migration and safe migration theatre shows. Information and assistance was also provided through Migration Advice Centers to 2,931 people. Training and information was regularly updated to reflect changes in the COVID-19 guidance. The results of Twe Let's outcome survey found that a significant proportion of beneficiaries had knowledge to plan and prepare for migration, improved savings practices, and that reported labour abuses were low across project target areas. This has included reports of migrant workers refusing to sign contracts having noticed they were for jobs different to the job offered by the agent.

The theatre shows and edutainment sessions organised by CSO partners in the Dry Zone, Chin and Shan States enabled the IOM Twe Let project to reach a wider audience than village-level safe migration awareness training sessions, which specifically target aspirant migrants and their families. All performances were followed by post-show discussions, which demonstrated that participants were highly engaged and had absorbed the key safe migration messages provided. While the shows do not provide enough information on their own, they have proven effective at mobilising aspirant migrants to seek additional information and support before migrating. For example, after a performance in Shan State, the Migration Advice Center in Taunggyi managed by Parami Development Network received more than 90 phone calls and visitors seeking information about destination countries.

With the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in March, IOM Twe Let and its CSO partners assessed the activities that could continue and adapted and expanded programming to respond to the effects of the crisis on migrants and their families across the country. Key adjustments were made to increase support for returning migrants, vulnerable migrants, trafficking survivors and migrant communities on preparedness and response to COVID-19. IOM and its partners reached more than 1 million people (52 per cent women) in the target states and regions with these activities and completed a nationwide rapid assessment focused on the impact of COVID-19 on returning migrants and communities. The pre-migration training content was updated to respond to the rapidly changing situation, including provision of health-related information, regulations and requirements by destination countries. Reintegration livelihood support for returnees was increased through skills development training, support for micro-enterprise development through targeted coaching, and job-matching services.

#### **Dramatic expansion of safe migration information and support services**

The ILO DIILM project dramatically expanded the provision of safe migration information, training and support services for migrant workers through six Migrant Centres (MCs) managed by CSOs and labour organisations in Kawthaung, Myawaddy, North Dagon, Hlaing Thar Yar, Bago and Tachileik. Further direct outreach, social media campaigns and radio programmes targeted migrants in border areas of the South-East. These services are a critical supplement to the support offered by the

government Migrant Resource Centers due to their active outreach and the continuing reluctance of many migrants to approach government officials for assistance. Since the MCs were established 18 months ago, 37,338 migrants (44 per cent women) received direct services to help ensure safe and rewarding migration experiences. In addition, safe migration information materials were provided to more than 61,000 potential migrants. Tens of thousands more were reached through radio programmes and social media in Shan and Myanmar languages.

The MCs have been particularly effective at increasing access to justice for migrant workers to resolve complaints relating to labour rights abuses and to make social protection benefit claims. Almost 3,000 migrants (31 per cent women) resolved their grievances since the MCs began delivering these services, led by the efforts of the Confederation of Trade Unions Myanmar in North Dagon. The money awarded as a remedy in these disputes is MMK 1,151 million (USD 828,000). The cases most commonly related to non-deployment after paying recruitment fees and contract substitution.

The MCs have been a core element of LIFT's COVID-19 response for migrants, acting as first responders at the main border checkpoints with Thailand in Kawthaung, Htee Kee, Three Pagoda Pass, Myawaddy and Tachileik. They worked closely with local authorities during the chaotic return of tens of thousands of migrants in late March, providing information, masks, hand sanitisers, soap, sanitary pads, food, water, counselling and paralegal assistance. As quarantine facilities were set up in communities of origin, the MRCs further expanded their activities to Bago, Hpa-An, Mawlamyine, Sagaing, Pakokku, Magway and North Dagon to support migrants during the quarantine period. In Shwe Pyi Thar Township, the Yaung Chi Oo Workers' Association set up a workshop for 50 workers who had been dismissed from their jobs at the World Jin garment factory to produce masks and hand gels, which were then distributed to quarantine centres by the Yangon Regional COVID-19 Committee. By the end of 2020, the COVID-19 response activities of the ILO and its CSO partners reached 141,716 migrant beneficiaries (44 per cent women) with gender-sensitive material assistance and 50,666 with preventative information. The MCs received certificates of recognition for their services to migrants during COVID-19 signed by the State Counsellor.

In January and February, the Women's Organization Network EVE project held launch events for four Migrant Support Centers managed by CSO partners in Hlaing Thar Yar and Dagon Myo Thit Townships of Yangon. The timing was particularly fortuitous as the centres were operational when the COVID-19 pandemic began and were ready to provide essential assistance for migrant workers adversely affected by the crisis. In 2020, emergency accommodation was offered to 166 women migrant workers who had lost their jobs or experienced gender-based violence. In addition to housing, they were provided with meals, counselling on gender-based violence, awareness raising on labour rights and job matching services. Among those assisted at the Migrant Support Centers, 35 women were able to find new jobs. The project has identified 75 peer leaders who were provided with training on gender-based violence and labour rights.

The PIN Aye Chan Thaw Ein project set up four Worker Centers to reduce the vulnerabilities and strengthen the resilience of migrant workers by enabling access to safe migration information, legal assistance, financial literacy training and other services. A key service provided to migrant workers through the Worker Centers is paralegal support for cases of labour exploitation and abuse. With the outbreak of COVID-19, there was high demand for these services, which are delivered by Action

Labour Rights and Solidarity Trade Union of Myanmar. A total of 272 complaint cases were received, involving 41,269 workers (76 per cent women) who were provided with collective and individualised paralegal support. A digital case documentation system was developed to closely manage and track the cases. Financial remedies of MMK 1,340,000,000 (USD 952,000) for migrant workers have been recorded so far. More than 2,000 migrant workers received career counselling (125 migrants), soft skills training (369 migrants), peer exchange opportunities on employment challenges (182 migrants). An awareness event on dispute resolution attended by 30 people was viewed online by a further 2,354 people. Information was further disseminated through Pyo Pyo Mya mobile application and Facebook page reaching 656,703 people, and through Aye Chan Thaw Ein Facebook page reaching 7,500 .

In response to the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health, PIN and Helvetas launched a psychosocial counselling service for workers to support them in coping with the heightened level of stress. During 2020, 640 workers (over 70 per cent women) were provided with counselling at the Workers Centers or through a telephone hotline service named 'Call Me Today'. Most of the calls were related to loss of employment, lack of emotional support and fears about the possibility of becoming sick. In-person group counselling sessions was the preferred modality and most workers felt more comfortable discussing their problems in groups than in individual counselling sessions. Where further services such as legal assistance, skills training and career counselling were needed, referrals were made. In response to the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health, PIN and Helvetas launched a psychosocial counselling service for workers to support them in coping with the heightened level of stress. During 2020, 640 workers (over 70 per cent women) were provided with counselling



**Figure 4.9: Director of Future Light Center Thet Thet Aung distributes cash to a pregnant factory worker who lost her job during COVID-19**

at the Workers Centers or through a telephone hotline service named 'Call Me Today'. Most of the calls were related to loss of employment, lack of emotional support and fears about the possibility of becoming sick. In-person group counselling sessions was the preferred modality and most workers felt more comfortable discussing their problems in groups than in individual counselling sessions. Where further services such as legal assistance, skills training and career counselling were needed, referrals were made.

### Skills training for domestic workers

Extending its cooperation with the social enterprise Three Good Spoons, the ILO provided skills development training to another two batches of domestic workers in 2020. The four-week intensive training course 'Licence to Stir' has now been completed by 51 domestic workers. The course includes content on safe food handling, kitchen hygiene, cookery, kitchen management, nutrition, money and time management, safe migration and personal security. The training approach rejects the notion that women employed in domestic work are inherently vulnerable or voiceless. Rather, it responds to the societal and legal norms that have tended to disempower and marginalise them, devaluing women's work, reducing upward mobility and preventing their full and effective participation. The training aims to increase their capacity and empowerment to support greater recognition of domestic work as skilled work. A practical demonstration of this was provided when 19 domestic workers who graduated from the trainings were confident enough to go on camera to advocate for the rights of domestic workers. In response to the training restrictions posed by COVID-19, the ILO also developed a bilingual website to provide digital learning content, including 40 'micro-learning' videos and five decent work videos, to make the key content from the Licence to Stir curriculum more accessible.

### Social media delivers migration information

IOM's Miss Migration (Mel Shwet Pyaung) chatbot and Facebook page provide up-to-date, accurate migration information that people can access easily. The user population of both has grown steadily since their launch in 2018. The Miss Migration chatbot has held 5,900 unique conversations with users, has 20,471 followers and has posted content that has reached almost 4 million people. The most common inquiries were around migration to Malaysia, Thailand and Japan, and questions about migrant resources centers. This online information has proven to be a useful supplement to the in-depth training provided to 8,000 migrants and their family members on safe and gainful migration in the Delta region, as well as the peer information received by 2,300 migrants through community-based safe migration promoters. Beneficiary tracking has found that IOM MILDAS training has resulted in 89 per cent of aspirant migrants adopting more positive behaviours related to migration planning.

### Business development and vocational training

To expand entrepreneurship, the World Vision SHE project began delivery of business development training in five townships of Kachin State in 2020. Around 500 aspiring entrepreneurs (97 per cent women) completed the Business Eye Opener training that was delivered in 65 camps for internally displaced people and host communities. The training covers a basic understanding of markets and marketing, calculating profit and loss, conceptualising a business and ensuring financial sustainability, among other topics. The training is an introduction and will be followed up with additional sessions to identify feasible business ideas, develop business plans and start up businesses through the ILO Start and Improve Your Business methodology, which 123 beneficiaries have received so far (96 per cent women). In combination with the training,

Service	Men	Women	Unknown	Total
Community Mobilization	7,709	7,034	-	14,743
Advocacy Campaign	1,450	1,507	-	2,957
Training Services	2,987	2,604	-	5,591
Complaint Cases	2,071	914	-	2,985
Drop-in Services	3,148	2,934	-	6,082
Telephone Hotline	3,551	1,429	-	4,980
IEC Materials	-	-	61,782	61,782
Social Media Interactions	-	-	154,584	154,584
<b>Total</b>	<b>20,916</b>	<b>16,422</b>	<b>216,366</b>	<b>253,704</b>

**Table 4.14.: Women and men migrants provided with services by ILO Migrant Centers 2019-2020**

64 savings groups were established with 1,185 members (87 per cent women) to help aspiring entrepreneurs obtain the financial resources necessary to start micro-enterprises. Small grants will be provided for business ideas with high potential. Linkages have been established with the LIFT-supported VisionFund Myanmar, a LIFT-supported MFI, to provide access to contextually-specific financial products that meet the credit needs and capacity of aspiring entrepreneurs in the camps.

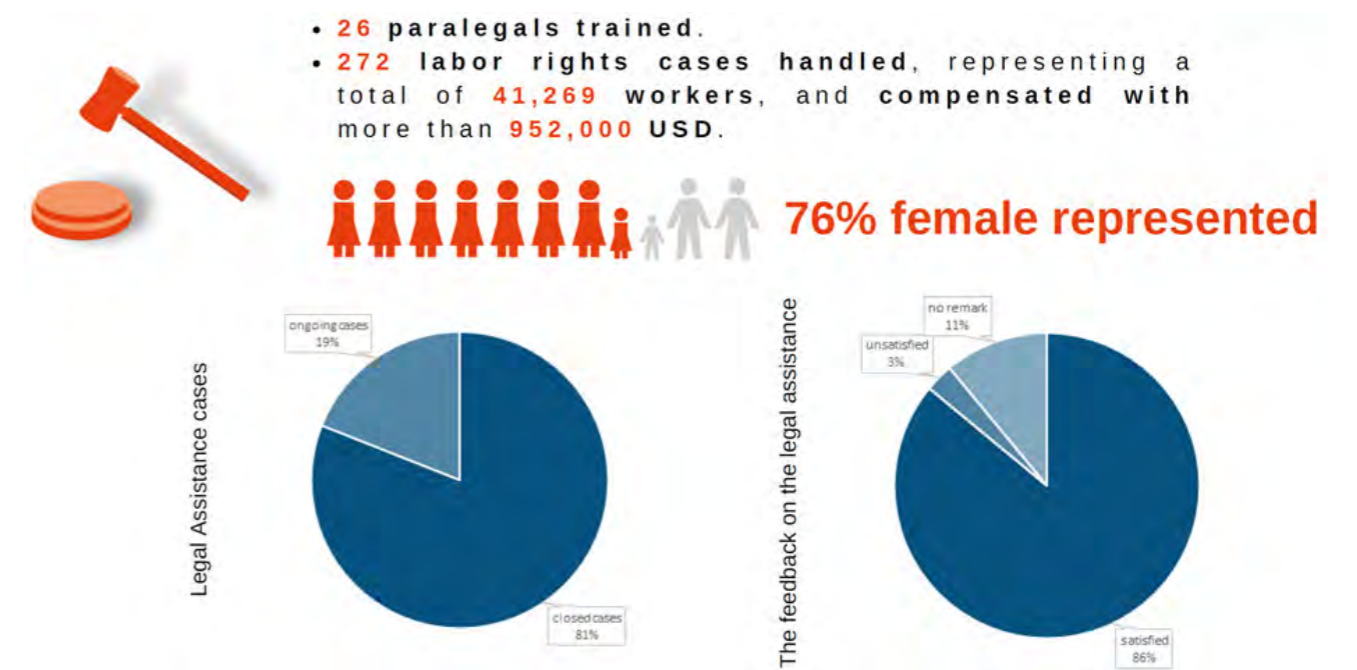
To diversify the livelihood opportunities available to vulnerable households in Kachin State, World Vision also started delivery of vocational training for off-farm employment during the year. After identification of appropriate government and private sector vocational training providers during its Labour Market Mapping study, the SHE project delivered pre-training on job readiness, life skills and safe migration to 578 youth (72 per cent women) in 54 camps and host communities. Following completion of this initial training, youth were selected for market-oriented vocational training courses based on their commitment to pursuing employment. The first batch of 52 trainees (72 per cent women) are participating in two-to-six month vocational training courses on hair cutting, sewing, beautician, pharmacist/nurses aid, motorcycle repair and car repair. Consultations with 58 private sector employers in these industries in Kachin, northern Shan, Mandalay and Yangon have identified opportunities for internships and job placements for all of the trainees upon completion of their training.

The ADRA VESI project started providing vocational training in collaboration with three Government Technological High Schools in Lashio, Myitkyina and Bhamo. Drawn from camps for internally displaced people and host communities, 258 young people (22 per cent women/5 per cent with disabilities) completed competency-based vocational training in computers and office administration, motorcycle repair and electrical wiring that are aligned with Myanmar's National Occupational Competency Standards. The overall length of each course is 360 hours: 20 per cent theoretical content and 80 per cent practice. To ensure a more inclusive approach, further short-course training options are being developed for sewing, handicrafts and construction. A study on gender sensitivity was conducted to support an increase in the matriculation of women. The trainees are provided with life skills, business skills, internships and job matching support to increase their employability and likelihood of success after completing the courses. A tracing study conducted found that approximately 45 per cent of the graduates had successfully started their own businesses or found employment.



**Figure 4:10.** The Foundation for Education and Development in Kawthaung provides medical care, baby supplies, food and clothing to a woman who was deported from Thailand and gave birth in quarantine.

Active engagement of the private sector is essential for ensuring that ADRA's vocational training is responsive to labour market needs, and to facilitate the internship and job matching activities. Unfortunately, this has long been a weakness of Myanmar's TVET systems, which have historically delivered training that is not highly relevant to market demands. With the aim of improving linkages between the Government Technological High Schools and local companies, meetings were organised with 111 business owners. MOU agreements were reached with 57 companies to recruit students trained by the VESI project as interns upon completion of the theoretical modules of their training. Based on these efforts, internships have now been completed by nearly all trainees in Myitkyina, Lashio and Bhamo, who received further support to secure employment or start small businesses after finishing.



**Figure 4.11** Legal assistance provided to migrant workers in Shwe Pyi Thar for labour rights abuses

## LOOKING AHEAD

Working conditions in Myanmar's labour market faced decades of neglect under authoritarian governments, contributing to a laissez-faire system where employers unilaterally set the terms of employment for their workers and labour rights were neither adequately established under law or enforced in practice. At the same time, under-development caused by isolation from the international community and a regime of strict economic sanctions meant there were insufficient job opportunities available domestically and the majority of the labour force was employed in low productivity and subsistence agricultural work. At this nexus of poor labour governance and high rates of poverty was a labour market that was unable to produce conditions of decent work for most of Myanmar's workers.

Since a wide-ranging political and economic liberalisation process was initiated in 2010, intensive efforts at reforming Myanmar's outdated labour law and policy frameworks have been made. Important improvements related to labour migration, minimum wages, freedom of association, dispute resolution, occupational safety and health, social security and other key elements of labour governance have been enacted. However, many challenges still remain in ensuring that these laws and policies are in line with international standards and implemented effectively, requiring further advocacy and capacity building for the actors involved. Moreover, with such a wide array of new policy and legislative instruments being promulgated, there has been a lack of coherence within the government's actions for promoting decent work, requiring more coordination and dialogue between the key stakeholders involved.



**Figure 4.12. A returned migrant worker in Shan State receives individualised coaching on enterprise development from the Parami Development Network**

Although significant progress was made in increasing workers' rights and addressing decent work deficits in Myanmar's labour market during this period of reform, the changes are still at an incipient and fragile stage of development. With the recent military coup in Myanmar, much of this progress is being rolled back. Already, it is clear that fundamental labour rights such as freedom of association and collective bargaining are openly under attack, and there have been some renewed reports of the use of forced labour by the military authorities. The majority of trade unions and labour rights organisations in Myanmar have been declared illegal and their leadership face arrest and persecution if they continue their work. Workers attempting to assert their basic labour rights have been met with violent repression and many internal migrants in the peri-urban areas of Yangon have fled home to their communities of origin.

In response, the Decent Work and Labour Mobility Programme will need to substantively adapt to this dramatically changed reality. In the absence of government partners willing to collaborate on the development of rights-based labour governance in Myanmar, the programme will refocus its activities on strengthening the direct support provided to women and men migrants and other vulnerable workers, particularly through building the organisational resilience, service delivery capacity and worker organising activities of civil society and labour organisations. As the programme has already been structured around a core of strong partnerships with these grass-roots organisations, it is well positioned to continue to deliver essential support to migrants and other vulnerable workers during this period of political turmoil in Myanmar.

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***The adaptive management strategy enabled LIFT and its partners to provide the largest programmatic response to the COVID-19 crisis for internal and international migrants in Myanmar.***

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*Mya Aye expands her skills and learns how to negotiate for better working conditions*

## MYA AYE

My name is Mya Aye. I am from the Ayeyarwady Delta region. I came to Yangon for work to cover school fees and costs when I was a high school student. After I finished school, I worked as a babysitter for about 13 years. Later on, I started work as a domestic worker, which I have been doing for the last seven years.

During that time, I had the opportunity to attend an ILO training course at Three Good Spoons in Yangon called 'License to Stir'. After finishing the course, I had a better understanding of what my wages and working conditions should be. When I returned to working again, I negotiated with my employer regarding the work hours, rest hours and pay I would receive. My employer agreed to the terms I proposed and increased my salary from USD 250 to USD 350 per month.

In June 2020, my employer returned to their home country but they also helped me to find a new employer before leaving. Now I am happy with my work and receive USD 400 in monthly wages with decent working conditions and entitlements. This is because of what I learned at the Three Good Spoons programme, which increased my confidence and knowledge about labour rights. Now I feel more assured of the value of my work and am aware of and understand the terms and conditions included in my employment contract.

I am grateful to the Three Good Spoons programme as the skills and lessons I learned have made a big difference in my life and I hope that other domestic workers will also be able to gain such skills. Now, I am saving my salary to start up a business in my hometown. That is my dream. I would like to urge all domestic workers to attend the Three Good Spoons training so that they can pursue their dreams too.

*I am grateful to the Three Good Spoons programme as the skills and lessons I learned have made a big difference in my life and I hope that other domestic workers will also be able to gain such skills.*

— MYA AYE







*I would like to have the opportunity to open a small shop since it would be easier on my health.*

— Nang Kyuu



## THE LONG ROAD HOME FROM THAILAND FOR NANG KYUU

Nang Kyuu is a 27 year old migrant woman who recently returned to Shan State from Thailand. Now back in her home village of Ho Nam, she spends her time caring for her two boys while her husband continues to work in construction in Thailand.

Prior to the outbreak of COVID-19, Nang Kyuu had migrated to join her husband in Thailand through a local broker while she was pregnant. The broker charged her 5.5 lakh but she could not afford this and had to borrow the money at 10 per cent interest. Once in Thailand, Nang Kyuu

worked at a durian processing factory for four months. However, due to her pregnancy and the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic, she decided to return to Myanmar. She was particularly worried she would be unable to access health services at a Thai hospital due to the language barrier.

While she was working at the durian factory, Nang Kyuu earned only 6,000 Thai Baht per month. This salary is well below the legal minimum in Thailand, which Nang Kyuu believes was because her employer took advantage of her irregular legal status. It was not enough to save money or pay back the loan she had taken to migrate to Thailand. It was also not enough to cover the cost of the 3,500 Baht broker fee for her to return to Myanmar. In the end, however, her husband managed to find enough money to help pay for the cost of her trip home.

The journey to cross the border was not difficult. But once back in her home village, Nang Kyuu was told she would have to stay at the village quarantine facility for 14 days. After just one night in quarantine, Nang Kyuu suffered a miscarriage. She was bleeding heavily and needed to go to a hospital for emergency medical attention. Staff at the local hospital where she was taken explained that she needed surgery and rented a car to send her to Taunggyi.

Communication with the hospital staff in Taunggyi proved very challenging. Nang Kyuu does not speak Myanmar language and neither did any of her family members who accompanied her to the hospital. A community-based organisation who was helping Nang Kyuu contacted IOM's partner the Parami Development Network (PDN) to provide additional support. PDN immediately went to the hospital to provide interpretation and assistance. Nang Kyuu's family requested that they stay with her as they could not understand what the doctors were trying to convey regarding the need for a blood transfusion and administering medication. They also did not know anyone in Taunggyi and did not have enough money to cover the hospital costs. PDN agreed to stay with Nang Kyuu, paid for the hospital expenses and helped to mobilise blood donors for the transfusion.

Although she is now in better health, Nang Kyuu still faces many challenges. Her husband remains in Thailand but she has not received any remittances as her husband's income has been adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. She supports herself by working as a day labourer in her village, which pays only MMK 3,000 (USD 2.15) per day. This is not enough to support her and her two children and Nang Kyuu is unable to work every day as her surgical wounds are still healing. She is very grateful for the extensive support provided by PDN, however, she also requested that "organisations and government authorities should support the livelihoods of people returning to Myanmar more and try to create local jobs. I would like to have the opportunity to open a small shop since it would be easier on my health."

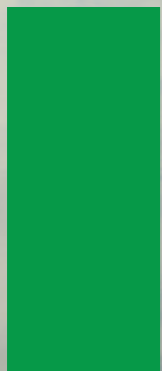
# CONFLICT- AFFECTED AREAS

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# RAKHINE

## CONFLICT-AFFECTED AREAS

# 5.1

## RAKHINE

### CONTEXT

About 125,000 Muslims remain displaced across 21 camps in Rakhine following the intercommunal violence that erupted in 2012.<sup>57</sup> In 2017, more than 742,000 people fled to Bangladesh to escape the brutal and deadly military operations in Maungdaw District. Attempts to repatriate refugees in Bangladesh have been unsuccessful so far. The denial of citizenship rights and formal and informal movement restrictions for most Muslims in Rakhine are “central to the continued persecution of the Muslim population”.<sup>58</sup> This means they cannot access basic public services and have little livelihood options, which results in a high dependency on assistance for most basic needs, including food. Significant barriers remain to identifying sustainable and durable solutions for those in camps and for host communities, who need livelihood support to reduce this dependency, build resilience and offer prospects for greater dignity.

There continues to be limited progress in the implementation of the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State (RAC). The establishment of working committees and subcommittees involving affected populations and defined in the *National Strategy for Resettlement of IDPs and Camp Closure*<sup>59</sup> is not yet completed. Developments around the Kyauk Ta Lone camp in Kyaukphyu Township, where local authorities announced unilateral decisions on resettlement, illustrate the difficulties in adhering to the mechanisms identified in the national strategy, as well as alignment gaps between the administrative units involved. Differences in the interpretation of the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT)’s ‘protection principles’<sup>60</sup> and difficulties to engage with relevant authorities have

<sup>57</sup> CCCM (Camp Coordination Camp Management) data 2020.

<sup>58</sup> Freedom of movement in Rakhine State, Independent Rakhine Initiative (IRI), March 2020.

<sup>59</sup> National Strategy on Resettlement of Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) and Closure of IDP Camps, Rebuilding Lives of IDPs in Safety and Dignity without Dependency, Ministry of Social Welfare Relief and Resettlement, October 2019.

<sup>60</sup> Operating principles for humanitarian organizations in displacement sites declared closed by the government in central Rakhine, a position of the Myanmar protection sector.

resulted in marked divisions on appropriate approaches for working in 'closed' camps. The camp-specific monitoring frameworks<sup>61</sup> were finalised in early 2020 and field tested. While introduced as the main tools to measure changes on freedom of movement to allow internally displaced people to access livelihoods, markets and non-segregated services, consensus was not reached on how their usage can guide programmatic decisions and how change can be collectively assessed.

### Intercommunal tensions remain high.

Calls continue for more effective participation of affected populations and participatory community planning as a pathway towards peaceful coexistence and a step towards peace building. Issues of housing, land and property<sup>62</sup> for internally displaced people have largely been overlooked so far while the many barriers to the return and resettlement of the internally displaced people are considered. If not properly addressed, these issues will continue to undermine all efforts and potential gains made towards increased social cohesion and more peaceful coexistence.

Denial of citizenship rights and formal and informal restrictions on movement for most Muslims in Rakhine means they cannot access basic services and livelihood options. Internally displaced people in camps have no access to land, depleted assets and very limited income generation options. Overall, the environment for economic development in central Rakhine, and in displacement camps in particular, remains extremely poor. There are opportunities for casual work in construction and agriculture in camps and neighbouring villages, but the labour market is highly saturated. This results in high dependency on assistance for food, hygiene and other basic household needs. Significant barriers remain to identifying sustainable solutions for those in camps and for host communities, who need support on livelihoods to reduce their dependency, build resilience and offer prospects for greater dignity.

The conflict between the Tatmadaw and the Arakan Army has taken a heavy toll on the civilian population and adds further complexity to the relations between the Union Government and the State Government. Around 103,000 individuals were displaced by the conflict at 194 sites in Rakhine and Chin State.<sup>63</sup> More than half of the victims of landmines/explosive ordonnances in the country are estimated to be in Rakhine. Recurrent military and police scrutiny, arbitrary arrests, extortion and increasing protection incidents hamper the population's well-being, trust in local authorities, and an already limited social cohesion. The cease in active conflict observed from November 2020 onwards is a positive development but that needs to be treated carefully. The decision by the Union Election Commission not to hold the general elections in approximately two-thirds of the constituencies in Rakhine yielded a generalised backlash from the Rakhine population. This is expected to further increase divisions and mistrust in administrative and parliamentary processes. Unless addressed, this will remain a major source of tensions, and possibly active conflict, between Rakhine State and Nay Pyi Taw.

<sup>61</sup> Framework for measuring progress on freedom of movement/access to livelihoods, monitoring framework

<sup>62</sup> Houses being burnt, squatters on their lands and/or in houses of origin, insufficient documentation before displacement.

<sup>63</sup> Humanitarian Updates for central Rakhine State & Paletwa, Chin State from 1-18 January, OCHA.

### COVID-19

Due to high levels of vulnerability, Rakhine State is paying a heavy price in the socio-economic crisis resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and the rapid and sudden increases in infections in Rakhine in 2020. Rakhine has the highest poverty rate<sup>64</sup> in the country and capacities to cope with the socio-economic shocks brought by the pandemic have been rapidly stretched.

Trade, value chains, household livelihoods and food security have been affected from the onset of the pandemic. Lockdown-like measures reduced capacities to trade, lowered consumer demand and local demand for work, which resulted in loss of incomes. In Rakhine, like across the country, communities reported that "two-thirds of the households in their communities experienced a decline in income" between January and June 2020.<sup>65</sup> For vulnerable households, such as those internally displaced, the main coping strategies were to reduce expenditure, including on basic needs, and resorting to using savings and going into debt. Purchasing power and access to food will continue to decrease, pushing vulnerable households to resort to harmful strategies. LIFT partners' monitoring data with households in Muslims camps collected early in 2021 shows how COVID-19 had impacted daily needs. More than half of the interviewed households were in a situation of stress, based on the strategies they were mobilising to maintain an acceptable diet; 88 per cent reported that they had lost part or all of their income. A monitoring exercise conducted between June and September 2020 showed that 25 per cent of the households interviewed in Rakhine experienced moderate food insecurity according to the food insecurity experience scale (FIES).<sup>66</sup>

Micro-and-small businesses were affected and continue to be as virus containment measures are extended. Three-quarters of businesses interviewed<sup>67</sup> in central Rakhine in mid-2020 reported an impact due to COVID-19. In Maungdaw Township, 80 per cent of business owners reported a negative impact from COVID-19 and 95 per cent expected difficulties to continue during the next three months.<sup>68</sup>

The nutritional status of children in Rakhine is among the worst in the country, with 38 per cent of children aged under five stunted and 14 per cent wasted.<sup>69</sup> When health resources were prioritised for the COVID-19 response, the delivery of basic health and nutrition services was affected, particularly in rural areas and camps for internally displaced people. Without these services the nutritional status of mothers and young children may worsen.

The COVID-19 outbreak did not result in any de-escalation of conflict or violence perpetrated by either the Arakan Army or the Tatmadaw. On the contrary, increased insecurity and conflict incidents were reported in Rakhine over 2020 and the COVID-19 situation and resulting restrictions are considered to have exacerbated the pre-existing conflict and tension between groups in Rakhine. For many communities living in conflict hot spots of Rakhine, intensified conflict insecurity was compounded with

<sup>64</sup> 78 per cent compared to a national rate of 37.5 per cent, 2014 World Bank poverty data review.

<sup>65</sup> Community perceptions of the social and economic impacts of COVID-19 in Myanmar, Insights from a National COVID-19 Community Survey (NCCS) - June and July 2020, IFPRI, Myanmar, September 2020.

<sup>66</sup> Joint (FAO-WFP) Agricultural Livelihoods and Food Security Monitoring in the context of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

<sup>67</sup> ACTED, June 2020. Key Informant interviews with 75 micro, small and medium enterprises owners.

<sup>68</sup> Rapid Needs Assessment, DRC, June 2020. Trader survey with 80 business owners.

<sup>69</sup> Myanmar Demographic Health Survey, 2016

threats induced by COVID-19, while access to basic services and aid delivery became limited due to travel restrictions.

All sectors of the economy experienced the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Rakhine economy was estimated to have grown by only 1.5 per cent for the fiscal year 2019/2020, a sharp decline from the previous fiscal year's growth calculated at 6.8 percent.<sup>70</sup>

Poverty will "rise above its pre-pandemic level with many poor households likely to be persistently and more deeply impoverished in 2020".<sup>71</sup> Remittances from migrants - vital in normal times to support small businesses and families' basic needs - dried up in 2020. With more than 2 million internal migrants originating from Rakhine.<sup>72</sup> The loss of remittances hit Rakhine hard. Many small and micro business owners in camps and host communities are at risk of having to sell their productive assets and to be left with no capacity to earn an income.

This economic slowdown represents a severe threat for the most vulnerable groups and adds to the significant challenges already brought by protracted conflicts in Rakhine. Internally displaced persons are the most poorly equipped to cope with, and recover from, the pandemic. Available financial resources are hardly sufficient for them to maintain access to basic needs, and options to secure income are rare. Consultations on debt burden and indebtedness confirmed that persistent issues in Rakhine have worsened with the effects of COVID-19. Lack of resources and access restrictions result in households taking on more debt to meet basic needs and cover medical costs, in particular for Muslim families. Requests to receive food support have increased, in particular from families with young children. Risks of gender-based violence, exploitation and human trafficking remain and may have worsened as the prospects of experiencing more dignified living conditions diminishes.

#### **LIFT COVID-19 response in Rakhine State**

In Rakhine, LIFT mobilised existing resources through on-going projects to deliver immediate actions related to COVID-19. LIFT approved budget adjustments with the International Labour Organization, Save the Children, Danish Refugee Council, VisionFund Myanmar, International Rescue Committee and Relief International for the delivery of support to Muslims and Rakhine people internally displaced in camps, as well as people in villages and urban areas. Overall, a budget of approximately USD 1 million was approved for these activities.

In addition, to expand the reach of its support and to contribute to strengthening civil society in Rakhine, LIFT's Fund Board approved the set-up of a small grant mechanism in Rakhine. The small grant mechanism started in Rakhine on 1 July, 2020 and will run for 18 months working with Rakhine-based civil society organisations to help vulnerable groups and internally displaced people to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and its socio-economic impacts.

The majority of LIFT's on-going interventions in Rakhine were put on-hold due to restrictions imposed by local authorities to prevent spread

of the virus. However, with its nutrition partner Save the Children, LIFT was able to maintain essential nutrition activities for internally displaced people in camps in Pauktaw Township. The Outpatient Therapeutic Programme (OTP) centres, which treat severely and acutely malnourished children, remained functional, adapting operations to comply with virus prevention guidelines.

In Rakhine, COVID-19 support from LIFT's Rakhine Programme reached 293,373 direct beneficiaries (52 per cent women) and an estimated additional 178,025 indirect beneficiaries in 519 locations (322 villages, 128 wards and 69 camps for the internally displaced), six hospitals and 23 quarantine centres in all 17 townships of the State. In addition, the COVID-19 support delivered to MCCT beneficiaries with the Department of Social Welfare reached 137,632 direct beneficiaries in Rakhine State, including 3,654 internally displaced people.

LIFT worked closely with implementing partners and other actors in the response to identify needs and gaps and coordinate and align the response in Rakhine State. LIFT's response focused on preventing the spread of the virus among vulnerable internally displaced persons, host communities, rural and urban populations through awareness raising. This was done through:

- » Maintaining provision of, and access to, essential nutrition support to the most vulnerable groups, especially children and women in camps for internally displaced people.
- » Improving infection prevention and control through WASH activities for internally displaced people, production of PPE, targeted PPE support for health workers and health volunteers and the establishment and improvement of quarantine facilities, complementing the support provided by the Access to Health Fund and other stakeholders.
- » Mitigating the social and economic impacts of COVID-19 on vulnerable populations experiencing a loss of livelihood and income, through cash transfers and support to small and micro-businesses.

Before ending its project in Rakhine in September 2020, the International Labour Organization (ILO) directly reached 22,619 individuals (49 per cent female), including 2,304 elderly and 285 people with disabilities from 34 villages and 54 wards across six townships in Rakhine. ILO set up 34 hand-washing stations, posted 64 large awareness posters and distributed 4,400 household hygiene kits.

While Tat Lan II project activities remained suspended during 2020 and until the project ended in October 2020, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) contributed to LIFT's COVID-19 response activities by responding to the WASH needs of nine camps and raising awareness of COVID-19 in 39 villages in Myebone and Minbya Townships and nine camps in Myebone, following a rapid assessment conducted in April 2020. This support reached 20,232 beneficiaries (57 per cent women).

A total of 4,505 people (77 per cent women) were reached with multiplier training sessions on COVID-19 awareness raising through networks of community nutrition promoters, community hygiene promoters and trained Village Development Committees. Hygiene kits were distributed to 2,723 households supporting approximately 11,709 people including 2,714 internally displaced people from Myebon Township. The project also installed six handwashing stations, two latrines and two 500 litre water tanks for the quarantine centre.

Nutrition activities in groups were postponed from the end of March

<sup>70</sup> Myanmar Economic Monitor December 2020: Coping with COVID-19, World Bank

<sup>71</sup> Assessing the impacts of COVID-19 on household incomes and poverty in Myanmar, A microsimulation approach, Xinshen. Diao and Kristi Mahrt, IFPRI, July 2020.

<sup>72</sup> ILO, 2014 census analysis.

2020 for the whole year. However, Save the Children maintained lifesaving activities of the Tat Lan Plus project while following Ministry of Health and Sports (MoHS) COVID-19 prevention guidelines. These activities included mid-upper arm circumference (MUAC) screening (in camps setting only), referring children with severe and moderate acute malnutrition to OTP centres and individual counseling sessions in camps in Pauktaw and Sittwe. Individual health education sessions were maintained with mother leaders and pregnant/breastfeeding women experiencing challenges. Save the Children also provided 400 PPE kits to the State Health Department. Awareness raising was conducted through mixed methods, including public announcements through loudspeakers, billboards, pamphlets and dissemination of COVID-19 messages and information through mobile phones. In coordination with the WASH actors, Save the Children provided 88,984 soaps to 25,744 individuals in four camps and 32 villages of Pauktaw and Sittwe Townships. WASH support was also delivered in the quarantine centre near Ohn Taw Gyi camp for former Muslim prisoners who were sent back to Rakhine. Save the Children contracted 30 sewers in Pauktaw town through cash-for-work arrangements who produced face masks that were then distributed to 11,514 individuals (50 per cent women). In the last quarter of 2020, Save the Children resumed livelihoods training such as financial literacy and business development through remote learning arrangements.

The Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) pivoted programme resources towards strengthening community-level prevention, preparedness and response to COVID-19-induced economic shock in Rakhine State. This included WASH support, distribution of non-food items, hygiene kits and masks, awareness raising and business cash grants to small- and medium-sized enterprises to help entrepreneurs develop COVID-19 resilience strategies. Almost 5,600 young people (48 per cent women) were reached through awareness raising and hygiene promotion. The project also capitalised on the existing capacities of the TVET component, engaging trained participants on TVET courses relevant for COVID-19 prevention and response. Sewing course graduates were mobilised through cash-for-work arrangements for the production of reusable face masks and face shields. The distribution of these benefited 31,231 individuals (45 per cent women); vulnerable groups in camps were prioritised. Learning components of the projects were mostly moved online. The Better Learning Programme for youth, focused on the provision of psychosocial support and resilience building, reached 1,504 youths by the end of the year (50 per cent women).

Relief International constructed 10 latrines, six handwashing stations, three bathing areas and three drinking water tanks in the three primary and middle schools used as quarantine facilities in Mrauk-U villages used to shelter 92 Muslim people freed from jail, including three women and two children. The construction met SPHERE standards and augmented the existing facilities at the schools and will remain as permanent infrastructure. Relief International also provided 92 individuals with a full set of non-food items. In Myebon, Relief International could maintain activities under the LIFT-funded project in Taung Paw camp, adjusting to the new guidelines in regards to COVID-19. The protection monitoring remained, with the project team conducting key informant interviews in Myebon town and Taung Paw camp.

The roll-out of the Small Grant Fund with Rakhine civil society organisations by partner Metta Foundation enabled LIFT to substantially increase COVID-19 response capacities in Rakhine. In six months of operation in 2020, the fund signed 35 grants with Rakhine-based organisations for three- to six-month projects. The support delivered though these grants reached vulnerable groups in areas previously out

of LIFT's reach. A range of activities were delivered, including: support to community-based quarantine centres, short-term food and cash assistance, distribution of PPE and hygiene kits and COVID-19 awareness raising. By the end of the year, the supported CSOs reached 115,951 individuals (53 per cent women).

COVID-19 had a profound impact on the work LIFT intended to deliver in Rakhine in 2020, due to limitations on travel, on the number of people allowed for gatherings and the types of activities approved by local authorities for field work. From late March 2020 to the end of 2020, only activities considered essential by the Rakhine State authorities or were COVID-19 specific would receive approval. COVID-19 related restrictions exacerbated prevailing operational and administrative challenges due to deteriorated security and constant rejections of travel requests by local authorities in most of central and northern Rakhine State. Overall, by the end of 2020, these adaptations enabled LIFT to reach 74,847 individuals (55 per cent women) through support planned for 2020 before COVID-19 happened; achieving 80 per cent of the target set for 2020.

### Maintaining essential nutrition work

Essential activities, in particular for stunting prevention, the screening, referral and treatment of children with severe acute malnutrition were maintained through existing networks of camps/villages-based staff and volunteers. The mobilisation of influential stakeholders within communities, such as mother leaders, was key to maintaining a minimum of nutrition counseling and support for vulnerable women and children, especially as government health staff and health workers were fully mobilised for the COVID-19 response. During periods of lockdowns or travel request rejections, nutrition work could be maintained thanks to the presence of community-based nutrition staff and volunteers. This was a determining factor in maintaining less regular, but crucial, contact with women and their children and in continuing to screen and refer severely malnourished children to Therapeutic Feeding Centres. Screening and referrals could be maintained most of the year with minimal disruption in camps for internally displaced people in Pauktaw



Partner	Project name	Main activities	Project duration	Geographic coverage
Metta	Small Grants Fund	COVID-19 prevention and recovery Emergency assistance Organisational development	Jul 2020 – Nov 2021	All townships in Rakhine State
Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)	Vocational Training and Livelihood Opportunities for Youth in and out of camps in Rakhine State – Phase II	Vocational skills training	Jan 2019 – Dec 2020	Sittwe, Maungdaw townships
International Labour Organization (ILO)	Skills for Improvement of Livelihoods, Economic Opportunities and Security	Inclusive TVET policy development in Rakhine Development and implementation of a diversified and flexible approach to skills development	Jul 2017 – Sep 2020	Sittwe, Kyaukphyu, Thandwe, Gwa, Buthidaung, Maungdaw townships
International Rescue Committee (IRC) <sup>73</sup>	Tat Lan Sustainable Food Security and Livelihoods Programme Phase II	Agriculture technical support Mother-to-Mother support Groups WASH infrastructure and hygiene promotion	Jan 2016 – Oct 2020	Myebon, Minbya townships
PATH <sup>74</sup>	Introduction of Fortified Rice in Myanmar	Introduction of fortified rice in Myanmar	Oct 2013– Jun 2020	Sittwe, Kyauktaw townships
UNOPS/LIFT	Rakhine Communication Hub (RCH)	Communication with local communities, media and Civil Society Organisations Media production training	Jul 2019 – Jun 2021	Rakhine State
Relief International (RI)	Response Mechanism for Addressing Protracted Displacement in Rakhine State, Myebon and Mrauk U	Strengthening Livelihoods and Social Cohesion Service delivery to support the resettlement process Protection monitoring and mechanisms	Jan 2019 – Dec 2021	Myebon and Mrauk-U townships
Save the Children (SCI)	Tat Lan Plus	Improved nutrition security for men, women, girls and boys in targeted households across all communities Strengthened health and nutrition services and WASH commodities	Jan 2019 – Jun 2021	Sittwe, Pauktaw townships
Vision Fund Myanmar (VFM)	Financial Inclusion in Central Rakhine	Provision of sustainable and Inclusive Financial Services in central Rakhine communities	Sep 2018 – Sep 2021	Sittwe, Mrauk-U, Kyauktaw, Kyaukphyu, Rameree townships
World Food Programme (WFP)	Scaling up fortified rice production and consumption through Myanmar	Distribution of fortified rice to crisis affected people through the emergency/relief programme.	Aug 2017 – Sep 2020	Sittwe Township
Yoma Bank	Yoma Bank Agri-Business Finance Program (Yoma Bank AFP)	Hire purchase of agriculture machinery	Dec 2015 – Jun 2020	Countrywide including Rakhine State
United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF)	Leaving no one behind	Strengthening MFIs through technical assistance and financing Financial Inclusion	Dec 2019 – Dec 2022	Countrywide including Rakhine State

<sup>73</sup> Project suspended in January 2020 due to lack of access. In 2020, only conducted COVID-19 response in WASH

<sup>74</sup> Project also covering other parts of the country

Partner	Project name	Main activities	Project duration	Geographic coverage
Pact Global Microfinance Fund (PGMF)	Livelihood Improvement in Vulnerable Environment (LIVE)	Access to financial services	Oct 2019 – Jun 2022	Countrywide including Rakhine State
Microfinance Delta International Company Limited (MIFIDA)	Microfinance Capital Market Development Programme	Supporting MFIs access affordable funding Allowing MFIs to continue to grow their capacity and funds available for individual borrowers	Feb 2020 – Jan 2024	Countrywide including Rakhine State

**Table 5.1:** LIFT-supported projects in Rakhine

and Sittwe. However, the project could only work with basic health staff in Pauktaw villages to screen and refer between January and March. On average, 9,969 children aged 6-59 months of age were screened per month during 2020, about 89 per cent of the children that age in the concerned camps and villages. Over 2020, 119,627 MUAC screenings were conducted.

On average, 36 of the children screened with MUAC were referred for Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) treatment per month, representing an average of 0.36 per cent of all the children screened. Over the year, 433 children (58 per cent girls) identified with SAM were referred by the project for treatment. All of them were identified in internally displaced persons camps in Pauktaw and Sittwe Townships. The cure rate for the year in the Therapeutic Feeding Programme supported by the Rakhine programme reached 99.7 per cent.

#### Adapting livelihoods support

Preventive measures put in place to limit the spread of the virus and protect vulnerable groups meant that livelihoods activities were put on hold at the early stages of the pandemic. Livelihoods activities generally encompass individual and group training or field work that was not considered essential by local authorities during the pandemic. Once necessary resources were pivoted to implement LIFT's COVID-19 response, the focus moved to resume as much of the livelihoods work as possible under new arrangements. Training modules for TVET work were digitised for students with access to mobile devices. For students without devices, arrangements were put in place to provide them with access. Most of Rakhine State experienced a prolonged mobile internet blackout so non-tech arrangements were also needed. This was mainly done through providing remote training to community-based staff and volunteers, who then cascaded learning to communities. DRC and NRC extended business development and management support to businesses struggling with economic shocks resulting from the pandemic. The consortium partnered with a local businesses management consultant organisation (ONOW) and provided youth-led businesses with business resilience strategies through tailored mentoring and coaching support.

Acknowledging that extended periods of lockdown increased stress and anxiety within households especially those who lacked coping strategies, NRC promoted the use of its Better Learning Program, through an offline digital application and audio messages reaching 1,582 youth and community members (49 per cent women). Additionally, NRC distributed

13 recreational kits to support resilience activities in 13 camps and villages. The activity was supported by youth focal points who were the first recipients of this training and later disseminated the knowledge within their communities by phone and face-to-face when possible. The Better Learning Program toolkit was designed to provide psychosocial support and improve resilience during periods of stress. Fears related to COVID-19 were addressed by designing content that helped families understand more about the pandemic, how to promote good health behaviours, and how to strengthen stress management and increase wellbeing.

### Supporting civil society in Rakhine

The launch of the Small Grant Fund with Metta in 2020 materialised LIFT's commitment to strengthening civil society in Rakhine. The Rakhine Small Grant Fund builds on Metta's experience managing small grants with civil society in complex Upland environments within the humanitarian-peace-development nexus. The Small Grant Fund aims to support the most vulnerable and marginalised people in Rakhine to increase their resilience to the spread of COVID-19 through inclusive, conflict- and gender-sensitive support from the civil society in Rakhine State.

The fund offers three types of grants:

- » Core grants, with budgets up to MMK 70 million (USD 50,400)
- » Mini grants, with budgets up to MMK 20 million (USD 14,400)
- » Opportunity grants, with budgets up to MMK 20 million (USD 14,400).

Among the 35 grants signed in 2020, six were core grants, 12 mini grants and 17 opportunity grants. All grants included COVID-19 prevention and preparedness activities, 46 per cent included mitigation activities and 6 per cent provided support for recovery activities.

The Small Grants Fund supported six women's groups to deliver support relevant to COVID-19, including psychosocial support services and counselling, training on gender-based violence and discrimination against women. The groups provided supplementary food to households with pregnant women, elderly people, widows and people with disabilities, as well as sewing training and gender-sensitive support to returning migrant workers in quarantine centres.

Metta also worked to strengthen the existing local humanitarian network the Arakan Humanitarian Coordination Team (AHCT). Before starting the project, Metta had coordinated with AHCT members to assess the humanitarian needs of internally displaced people in Rakhine. AHCT already had an action plan to prevent COVID-19 spread and minimise its impact on the population in Rakhine with a particular focus on the most vulnerable and those affected by ongoing conflict.

With the Small Grant Fund's support, the AHCT took a lead role in opening quarantine centres in Sittwe, where most COVID-19 cases were recorded. The AHCT also provided technical support to CSOs working in different townships regarding quarantine centre support.

Capacity-building activities in 2020 were all conducted remotely due to COVID-19 restrictions on people gathering. Internet connectivity was poor in Rakhine throughout the year. Regardless, the Small Grant Fund provided financial guidelines and orientation sessions on financial management, M&E guidelines orientation sessions and support to CSOs on administration and templates to use during field activities and when making distributions/cash payments.

## LOOKING AHEAD

In 2021, LIFT will move forward with designing the next Rakhine Programme. A call for concept notes was published in early December 2020. Concept notes were received in March 2021. The call for concept notes was framed within a larger COVID-19 recovery framework where 'building back and building better' were central to attaining resilience objectives that are central to LIFT's strategy. The recent changes in the political and socio-economic contexts in 2021, and the possibility of a deepening humanitarian crisis, will require LIFT to amplify its strategic shifts in Rakhine. LIFT's work will continue to bring internally displaced people and returnees into its programme by supporting the humanitarian development transition, contributing to improved nutritional outcomes, helping displaced people secure jobs and income when opportunities arise, preventing exploitation, providing protection services to victims of trafficking and building cohesion with host communities.

Ultimately, LIFT aims to contribute to providing durable livelihoods opportunities and access to basic services for vulnerable groups in conflict affected areas.

Under the current context, this may materialise through:

- » Supporting return and resettlement programmes that are inclusive, participatory and voluntary. Internally displaced persons and host communities will be given a stronger voice in decision-making, including on the resettlement of internally displaced persons and camp closure. LIFT will build on its former support to rights-based programming to work with relevant stakeholders at different levels. LIFT will promote people-centered approaches that respect rights, dignity and safety, in particular in decisions that impact on access to essential services and livelihoods.
- » Collaboratively identifying solutions to issues related to housing, land and property rights for internally displaced persons, particularly women. This will include increasing understanding and knowledge of the operational, institutional and legal contexts to identify programmatic openings for LIFT and possibly other stakeholders.
- » Strengthening civil society as key agents of durable change. LIFT will further promote local leadership to strengthen and increase capacities, networking, research, advocacy and service delivery.
- » Mainstreaming conflict sensitivity and social cohesion actions. LIFT will place emphasis on mitigating conflict and strengthening (or rebuilding) social cohesion as a step towards peace-building. LIFT will work at the required levels with local communities and stakeholders and within the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.
- » Working towards gender equality and women's empowerment. LIFT's gender-responsive programming will focus on equal participation so that women's voices are heard. It will also focus on increased stakeholder capacities and understanding of gender issues so that women can take up leadership roles within their communities. LIFT will also seek to increasingly partner with women organisations.
- » Supporting coordination of key sectors in humanitarian and development contexts (e.g. nutrition and food security). Increasing and improving communication between civil society organisations, international actors at local and national levels will also be promoted.

LIFT's new Rakhine Programme is expected to start in the second half of 2021.



# NORTH EAST: KACHIN AND NORTHERN SHAN STATE

## CONFLICT-AFFECTED AREAS

# 5.2

## NORTH EAST: KACHIN AND NORTHERN SHAN STATE

### CONTEXT

Kachin and northern Shan State are rich in natural resources, including minerals, hydropower, and timber, and have vast areas of productive agricultural and agro-forestry land. However, several factors have adversely affected socio-economic development: the history of intensive, long-standing conflict between the Government of Myanmar and ethnic armed organisations (EAOs), as well as among EAOs, the presence of a multitude of militias, coupled with large-scale illegal production of opium and heroin and other illegal activities such as gambling and smuggling. Kachin has higher than average poverty levels (36.6 per cent compared to the national average of 24.8 per cent).<sup>75</sup> Poverty in Shan State is even higher with 37.4 per cent of the population categorised as living below the poverty line.<sup>76</sup>

Protracted conflicts have impeded economic development and caused large displacement of populations. As of June 2020, there were 169 sites for internally displaced people in Kachin and northern Shan where almost 105,192<sup>77</sup> internally displaced people were living. Many of the displaced (about 40 per cent in Kachin State) are in areas outside of government control with limited humanitarian access.<sup>78</sup> Many experience hardships due to displacements compounded by harsh weather in the hilly regions.

<sup>75</sup> Myanmar Living Conditions Survey 2017, Central Statistical Organization (<https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/myanmar/publication/poverty-report-myanmar-living-conditions-survey-2017>); Poverty Report, 2019, CSO, WBG, UNDP (<http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/921021561058201854/pdf/Myanmar-Living-Condition-Survey-2017-Report-3-Poverty-Report.pdf>); Socio-Economic Report, 2020, CSO, WBG, UNDP (<http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/151001580754918086/pdf/Myanmar-Living-Conditions-Survey-2017-Socio-Economic-Report.pdf>)

<sup>76</sup> MIMU website 2018

<sup>77</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/map/myanmar/myanmar-idp-sites-kachin-and-northern-shan-states-30-june-2020>

<sup>78</sup> OCHA, Kachin NNS Snapshot June 2020

In recent years, land grabbing by agribusinesses to produce rubber and Chinese banana tissue culture plantations have created further displacement and taken a toll on the environment. Experiences of displacement are traumatic as people flee into the jungle, lose livelihoods and property, and are subject to violence and discrimination. Protracted displacement perpetuates existing trauma and hardship. Emerging issues exacerbate these realities, such as the widespread fear among internally displaced people of losing their land of origin.<sup>79</sup>

Although northern Shan State shares a number of challenges that are found in other parts of Myanmar, several unique and complex dynamics exist.

Northern Shan is characterised by its high level of ethnic diversity that includes Shan, Ta'ang, Bamar, Kachin, Chinese, Lahu, Lisu and Wa ethnic groups. There are a high number of ethnic armed organisations (EAOs) operating within the area.

Northern Shan State sees a different displacement pattern than elsewhere in Myanmar. Compared to Kachin State, the number of internally displaced people is relatively low, with 9,743 in northern Shan State compared to approximately 95,500 in Kachin. However, this number is somewhat misleading as most of the displacement is dynamic in northern Shan involving multiple, short duration displacements. This creates different challenges for those seeking to accurately account for the needs of conflict-affected populations or develop strategies to support host communities who are often directly responsible for the emergency response multiple times a year.

The lack of livelihood opportunities is a major challenge for internally displaced people in camps and for host communities in government- and non-government-controlled areas. Several communities rely solely on humanitarian and development aid to survive. This perpetuates a lack of food security and increased protection risks as internally displaced people take greater risks seeking work and access to food markets. Livelihood challenges are a significant problem in Kachin State and are closely related to many other social problems.

Kachin ranked fourth among all states in a vulnerability index developed following a countrywide review of census data by the Myanmar Information Management Unit (MIMU) and the Humanitarian Assistance and Resilience Program (HARP) in June 2018. An estimated 988,300 persons, or 60 per cent of the population in Kachin State, had some form of vulnerability related to housing materials, education/educational attainment, safe sanitation, drinking water, child dependency, availability of identification cards and/or direct exposure to conflict.

While many parts of Kachin State fare comparatively well in terms of development indicators, according to the *Myanmar Living Conditions Survey*, Kachin State is the second from worst state or region in terms of labour force participation as a share of population and has the highest unemployment rates of all of Myanmar's states and regions. The most viable way to earn money for many people is either through illegal businesses, including opium cultivation and narcotics trafficking, or through working in mines or trading areas where drug use is rampant.

<sup>80 81</sup>

High levels of chronic undernutrition in Myanmar appear to be substantially worse in remote and conflict-affected areas of Kachin and northern Shan. Stunting and wasting rates in Kachin have been estimated at 24.4 per cent and 3 per cent respectively,<sup>82</sup> although these figures mask disparities at township and more local levels. According to data from a 2019 inter-census survey, the disability prevalence rate in Kachin State was approximately 8.9 per cent.<sup>83</sup> According to the Government's maternal health index (2017), the northern part of Shan State has the highest inequality in terms of maternal health service coverage, with five out of 20 townships falling under the 'satisfactory' level of 0.7. As of 2015, stunting and wasting rates were estimated at 30 per cent and 2 per cent respectively, although again these figures mask disparities at township and more local levels, and malnutrition rates may be significantly higher, due to conflict and other factors. This represents not just an ongoing health crisis but also a major obstacle to the achievement of long-term sustainable livelihoods for internally displaced people and their host communities.

The situation in the north and north-east of Myanmar presents both serious challenges and potential opportunities. In Kachin State, where more than 95,000 internally displaced people have been in camps since 2011, new armed conflict or displacement has been limited since August 2018, potentially providing opportunities for increased dialogue around durable solutions. However, significant obstacles remain.

A lack of sustained access to livelihood opportunities, compounded by insecurity and the presence of landmines and other explosive remnants of war, continues to compromise efforts for transition out of displacement.

Complex housing, land and property rights also pose serious challenges to the attainment of durable solutions to displacement. While the situation in Kachin State is therefore not yet conducive to the realisation of large-scale solutions, small-scale solutions to displacement have emerged for a few thousand internally displaced people in recent years.

The Government is looking into the realisation of durable solutions, as part of its recently adopted *National Strategy on Resettlement of Internally Displaced Persons and Closure of Internally Displaced People Camps*. At the end of 2020, the humanitarian community was engaging with the Government and local actors to identify possible areas of cooperation to promote the realisation of solutions to displacement that are voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable, in line with international standards.

## COVID-19

Kachin and northern Shan State are among the most vulnerable regions to COVID-19 given their close proximity and heavy dependence on China for cross-border trade and employment. Before the travel restrictions and border closure, total bilateral trade through the Muse border checkpoint alone was worth USD 4.9 billion annually and it was estimated that approximately 20,000 Myanmar nationals crossed the border each day to work in China.<sup>84</sup> Tens of thousands of Myanmar migrants are known to work in China without legal status.

<sup>79</sup> Displaced and Dispossessed – conflict-affected communities and their land of origin in Kachin State, Durable Peace Programme, May 2018

<sup>80</sup> Exploring complexities: A Systemic Analysis of Social Cohesion in Kachin State, RAFT, November 2018

<sup>81</sup> RAFT Conflict assessment of NNS-Draft, 2019

<sup>82</sup> Myanmar Demographic and Health Survey, 2015-16 (<https://mohs.gov.mm/cat/MDHS>)

<sup>83</sup> [http://themimu.info/Census\\_2014\\_SR\\_dashboard](http://themimu.info/Census_2014_SR_dashboard)

<sup>84</sup> <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/myanmar-negotiates-china-sending-workers.html>

By the end of June, 36,280 migrants had returned from China,<sup>85</sup> predominantly through Lweje and Muse border checkpoints. Metta Development Foundation initially described the return process as “chaotic and poorly managed” but substantial efforts coordinated by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Joint Strategy Team<sup>86</sup> led to some improvements.

In early March, the Union Government with township authorities across the States requested suspension of all group activities. Measures were gradually increased, finally resulting in a ban on visiting public places, strong requests to stay at home, suspension of public transport and travel bans.

Economic impacts of the bans were immediate in the region. Year to year comparisons demonstrate that the border trade plummeted from USD 479 million in 2019 to USD 270 million in 2020.<sup>87</sup>

The Tatmadaw<sup>88</sup> Commander in Chief announced a unilateral ceasefire throughout the country in May, exempting Rakhine State. The Brotherhood Alliance extended its unilateral ceasefire, explicitly citing the need to focus on the COVID-19 outbreak.<sup>89</sup> Large-scale conflicts did not occur during the first half of 2020 in Kachin.

The pandemic unfolded against a backdrop of decreasing levels of active conflict between the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and the Tatmadaw. There were also promising signs of improved relations between ethnic minority groups. However, conflict risks remain high in neighbouring northern Shan State. Kachin State is ground zero for geopolitical struggles and domestic debates about the influence of China. The convergence and intersection of broader foreign strategies with local conflict dynamics affects both the pandemic response and conflict resolution efforts.<sup>90</sup>

By June 2020, no cases of COVID-19 were reported in camps in Kachin or northern Shan State. By the end of 2020, according to Ministry of Health and Sports (MoHS) records, in government-controlled areas of Kachin there were 620 positive cases recorded and in government-controlled areas of northern Shan State there were 214 cases.

Internally displaced people are not equipped to cope with the consequences of the disease as they lack access to the necessary resources and health care, and it was highly likely that if the virus entered camps it would spread rapidly and affect the entire population. Given the constraints that communities of internally displaced people already face, they are highly vulnerable to disruptions to market access, food shortages, restrictions of movement and reduced livelihood opportunities that were seen, or expected, in response to COVID-19. Good nutrition and adequate diet for adolescent girls, mothers and their children, and the wider population is challenging because of poverty, lack of income, rapid price rises and limited access to markets.

<sup>85</sup> IOM, Myanmar COVID19 Response Situation report 9, July 2020

<sup>86</sup> The Joint Strategy Team for Humanitarian Response in Kachin and northern Shan (JST) is a collaborative effort by nine local humanitarian agencies involved in the humanitarian response to internally displaced persons in Kachin State.

<sup>87</sup> [https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/myanmar-china-border-trade-drops-us200-m-amid-coronavirus-outbreak.html#:~:text=The%20value%20of%20border%20trade,and%](https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/myanmar-china-border-trade-drops-us200-m-amid-coronavirus-outbreak.html#:~:text=The%20value%20of%20border%20trade,and%20)

<sup>88</sup> The Armed Forces of Myanmar

<sup>89</sup> <https://www.arakanarmy.net/post/emergency-press-release-of-the-three-brotherhood-alliance-in-the-time-of-the-spread-of-covid-19>

<sup>90</sup> How COVID 19 and conflict intersect in Kachin State. The Asia Foundation, October 2020.

Some of the biggest health gaps in Kachin camps prior to the COVID-19 situation related to hygiene promotion, access to handwashing stations and menstrual hygiene. People’s psychological well-being was already vulnerable due to the lack of meaningful occupations, lack of privacy, and their prolonged stay in camps, and can be associated with an increase in violence and the risk of human trafficking.<sup>91</sup>

As the COVID-19 crisis escalates in Myanmar, the health system’s limited capacity to address the issue is likely to result in insufficient efforts to reduce transmission and a high mortality rate; especially in areas where clashes between government forces and ethnic armed organisations do not allow for normal provision of services. Reports indicate that COVID-19 prevention in non-government-controlled areas is particularly weak due to the lack of resources.

In Kachin, the state-level COVID-19 response is led by the Kachin State Working Committee of Prevention/Control & Treatment on COVID-19 and the State Health Department. The COVID-19 Task Force is co-led by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the World Health Organization (WHO). In northern Shan State, the Government formed the State COVID-19 Control and Emergency Response Committee in early March. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) leads the COVID-19 Task Force Team for northern Shan.

Ethnic armed groups, the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO), the Ta’ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) and the Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS) took a range of steps to protect populations under their control from COVID-19. They closed many illegal crossings for people and goods along the borders with China. Most groups conducted awareness campaigns, and some enforced quarantine measures and introduced travel restrictions. The groups set up checkpoints where they checked travellers’ temperatures and provided them with health information. Overall, these measures are likely to have helped protect the region, at least to some degree, but the capacity of ethnic armed groups to respond to COVID-19 remains limited. To date, efforts on cooperation between the Ministry of Health and Sports and armed groups’ health systems have been limited.

*A Rapid Assessment on COVID-19 & the Humanitarian Situation Connected with COVID-19 in KIO Controlled Areas (KCA)* conducted by the Joint Strategy Team in Kachin, highlights a dramatic deterioration of food security, with almost all households experiencing a decrease in income, insufficient access to WASH services, difficulties maintaining social distances in crowded camps, insufficient provision of hygiene items, increased domestic and gender-based violence and a lack of livelihood opportunities, especially for returning migrants.

In November 2020, Community Partners International conducted a series of interviews with communities in non-government-controlled areas. Kachin Development Group (KDG), explained that in non-government-controlled areas of Kachin State, the lives of people living in their community and those displaced by conflict and living in camps are increasingly similar. Both face significant difficulties meeting their basic needs. Many community members have lost access to their farms due to conflict and landmines make these areas unsafe. People are now mostly working as day labourers or leaving their communities to become

<sup>91</sup> Multi-Sector Early Recovery Assessment of Kachin and NSS, UNDP & KMSS, Dec 2015

migrant workers in order to survive. Meanwhile, people living in camps, who have lost their homes as well as their property, have survived by doing odd jobs or by crossing the border into China to seek work. During the COVID-19 crisis, many people working in China were sent back and border trading was suspended, with the consequence that many faced difficulties supporting their families.

The local government established a COVID-19 Response Committee in early February 2020 to work closely with humanitarian organisations. They provided health education on COVID-19 by sharing public health information, orders and instructions to the community in local languages through local television and social media. They distributed basic prevention supplies such as masks and hand sanitiser to communities, including camps, and provided handwashing facilities in public areas such as markets. From April 2020, they established entry checkpoints for people coming from government-controlled areas and opened quarantine centres.

The main challenges they are facing in their COVID-19 response are limited human and material resources, technical skills, medicines, and testing and treating facilities. The only way to test the suspected cases is to send swab samples to China. As of November 2020, they had not recorded any confirmed COVID-19 cases in their areas.

Sustainable political solutions to systemic issues seem unachievable in northern Myanmar and the work of assisting people in Kachin and northern Shan State has fallen on community networks and organisations that have for years suffered from insufficient resources. Faced with a global pandemic, they run the risk of being overwhelmed.<sup>92</sup>

#### **LIFT Kachin and Northern Shan Programme and MEAL framework 2019-2023**

The Kachin and Northern Shan Programme was developed through a series of calls for proposals issued in 2018 and 2019. The programme comprises a package of integrated interventions that work in government- and non-government-controlled areas with relevant government and non-government service providers and creates synergies with existing humanitarian and peace building initiatives within the nexus<sup>93</sup> space. Under the programme, LIFT, together with partners, is exploring, identifying and pursuing opportunities for coordinated research and advocacy to support policy development and amplify civil society voices. As the relationship between vulnerability, nutrition, resilience, protection, food security and indebtedness is not linear, a better understanding of the causes of vulnerability is needed to inform an integrated programme across implementing partners that responds to the multiple pathways that lead to vulnerability, and reduces the complex vulnerability risk factors.

LIFT's programme provides an overall framework for integration to guide the implementation of projects and ensure that synergies, complementarities and coordination between them are effectively leveraged to maximise the impact on the target population's resilience.

During the first half of 2020, LIFT finalised the programme's monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL) framework that includes

an integrated programme theory of change, a set of programme-level policy and learning objectives and associated plan, programme-level indicators, and a structured approach to programme-level cross-learning and adaptation. The overall MEAL approach was refined in collaboration with implementing partners and relevant stakeholders.

In line with LIFT's 2019-2023 strategy, the Kachin and Northern Shan Programme is focused on contributing to enhanced resilience and sustainable livelihoods of the poor and vulnerable in Myanmar. It aims to achieve this through increasing income and assets, improving nutritional status and reducing vulnerability through interventions at the household, system and policy levels.

In doing so, the programme places particular emphasis on:

- » Conflict/social cohesion
- » Internally displaced people and camp closure<sup>94</sup>
- » Land issues
- » Working within the Nexus modality
- » Gender and inclusion

Policy and systemic change objectives for the programme were developed through consultative processes involving LIFT's Fund Management Office and implementing partners. A preliminary set of six policy change domains were selected through a reflection on LIFT's comparative advantage with respect to a broader mapping of key policy issues in the context. These are:

- » Land and natural resource management/governance
- » Camp closures and internally displaced persons
- » Labour and migration issues
- » Nutrition
- » Livelihoods and food systems
- » Women and youth

A learning and innovation agenda was also developed in collaboration with the partners and indicates the key areas where LIFT, together with implementing partners, expect to contribute valuable knowledge and evidence.

The geographic programme-level MEAL draws and builds on the thematic and project-level MEAL frameworks. It is primarily focused on synthesising the evidence produced through projects' MEAL frameworks and creating opportunities for learning, knowledge sharing and enabling the generation and use of evidence to contribute to programme-level policy and systemic change objectives.

LIFT had agreed to support the Department of Social Welfare's Maternal and Child Cash Transfer (MCCT) Programme in Kachin, starting in the fiscal year 2020-21 with the implementation of the baseline survey on nutrition indicators. In 2020, LIFT worked with the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) to strengthen DSW's monitoring and evaluation capacities.

<sup>92</sup> How COVID 19 and conflict intersect in Kachin State. The Asia Foundation, October 2020.

<sup>93</sup> The term 'nexus' is increasingly being used to refer to 'the work needed to coherently address people's vulnerability before, during and after crises.' It is concerned with the intersection of humanitarian, peace and development initiatives, which have traditionally operated in a fragmented/uncoordinated manner, resulting in results that are widely recognised to be unsatisfactory. For further details refer to: [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/dp-humanitarian-development-peace-nexus-260619-en\\_0.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/dp-humanitarian-development-peace-nexus-260619-en_0.pdf)

<sup>94</sup> Camp closure work is mainly in Kachin State

To support a government response to COVID-19, LIFT agreed to fund DSW for a cash transfer programme for internally displaced people in Kachin, northern Shan, Rakhine and Kayin States. The one-off cash transfer to approximately 61,000 households of internally displaced people in the four states, was planned for disbursement in early 2021, to build resilience to the socio-economic impacts resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. In Kachin and northern Shan State the programme was designed to cover approximately 20,000 households with the cash delivered through DSW platforms with the support of the Joint Strategy Team in non-government-controlled areas.

Finally, LIFT planned to continue its support to the Multi-Sector National Plan of Action on Nutrition (MS-NPAN), and its implementation at the sub-national level. Kachin State was prioritised for this process with work expected to start in early- 2021. The coup of February 2021 has meant changes to these government-support plans, which are outlined in the 'Looking Ahead' section of this chapter.

## HIGHLIGHTS

### LIFT responds to COVID-19 in Kachin and northern Shan State

In Kachin and northern Shan, LIFT utilised existing resources through on-going projects to deliver immediate actions related to COVID-19.

LIFT approved budget adjustments with Save the Children, KMSS, World Concern, Shalom, Health Poverty Action (HPA) and Swiss Aid for the delivery of activities to people in villages and camps for internally displaced people in Kachin and northern Shan. IOM received approval for an additional USD 450,000 in funding to assist stranded vulnerable migrants and victims of trafficking to return from China.

All implementing partners worked closely with different levels of government, specifically the State Health Department, the Department of Public Health, the General Administration Department (GAD) and the Department of Social Welfare (DSW). In the non-government controlled areas of Kachin State, LIFT's partners, through local implementing partners, worked with ethnic health organisations such as the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) Health Department. The main activities related to risk communication and community engagement, WASH, and support to health systems, including the provision of protective equipment and refurbishment of quarantine facilities.

In Kachin, LIFT's support reached 34,266 people (50 per cent women) in 12 townships. In northern Shan State, LIFT has reached 59,320 people (59 per cent women) in 14 townships.

The objectives of LIFT's COVID-19 programmatic response for internally displaced people and host communities were:

- » Prevent the spread of COVID-19 among vulnerable internally displaced people populations, and host communities through providing sufficient information on COVID-19 and how people could protect themselves, the health care services available, and the production and provision of personal protective equipment (PPE). LIFT also supported mechanisms to prevent increases in gender-based violence.

- » Improve infection prevention and control in camps through WASH activities, adhering to Sphere standards<sup>95</sup>, to enable more frequent hand washing and apply proven behaviour changes approaches.
- » Provide nutrition support to vulnerable groups. Essential nutrition interventions were prioritised along with health and WASH interventions in an integrated approach that adapted existing nutrition activities.
- » Enhance the provision of health services to vulnerable groups, including expanded mobile outreach and PPE for health workers, and the establishment and improvement of quarantine facilities, complementing the support provided by Access To Health Fund partners.
- » Mitigate the social and economic impacts of COVID-19 on vulnerable populations experiencing a loss of livelihood and income. Additional financial safety nets were needed through cash transfers to provide support to those who had lost access to income because of the decline in trade and loss of employment. Mixed interventions addressed households' access to basic needs and support required for small businesses' continuity and recovery.

Some lessons from the COVID-19 response in these settings include:

- » Prioritising short-term pandemic responses over longer-term interventions is likely to dilute the impact of both in contexts as complex as Kachin and northern Shan. For this reason it is important that LIFT partners maintain their presence and continue to adapt to meet the medium- and long-term goals of their programmes.
- » The assistance provided by the community-led COVID-19 Concern and Response Committee of Kachin, local civil society organisations, churches, and humanitarian organisations have tended to make one-off deliveries of essential items. Missing so far is a coordinated assessment of who is being left out of the various relief and support efforts. Civic networks are the main actors carrying out work at the community level; donor interventions should support, rather than overburden their already stretched capacity.
- » Any new initiative in response to COVID-19 in Kachin State and northern Shan must prioritise gender-based needs. Women's rights groups report that the government has no gender guidelines for quarantine centres. Cases of gender-based violence have been reported.
- » Across the north of Myanmar, the most profound impact of the pandemic response — largely due to the closure of the border with China, the lockdown, and the restrictions on movement — has been on livelihoods and, at times, food security. Prices of rice, pulses and oil had returned to normal by the end of the year according to market monitoring by the World Food Programme, but the initial spike demonstrates the volatility connected to pandemic-related disruptions.<sup>96</sup>

For farmers, selling their produce became a challenge. Routes to important Chinese markets, which represent a huge portion of trade into and out of Kachin State, remain vulnerable to sudden closure, as has happened several times since January 2020.

<sup>95</sup> The Sphere standards are a set of principles and minimum humanitarian standards in four technical areas of humanitarian response: WASH, food security and nutrition, shelter and settlement and health.

<sup>96</sup> WFP market monitor May 2020

### The Upland Township Fund

In 2020, the Upland Township Fund (UTF) adjusted its funding mechanisms and delivered grants to 11 CSOs in Kachin, and to 10 CSOs in northern Shan, to implement COVID-19 related activities covering six townships and approximately 400 villages in the two states.

Since March 2020, CSOs receiving grants from the UTF quickly undertook local actions to respond to COVID-19 in their communities, including risk communication and community engagement, infection prevention and control, provision of emergency food, non-food items, seeds and fertilisers and acting to broadcast vulnerable people's concerns to decision makers. The UTF identified characteristics of CSOs that enabled them to be so effective and efficient in delivering COVID-19 responses: CSOs have strong contextual knowledge, can effectively mobilise local resources and people, are innovative, seeks alternative entry point for engagement, establish connections for bigger and wider action, can help shape policy and practices and act inclusively to reach the most vulnerable.

#### Conflict sensitivity support to partners

Conflict sensitivity is a way of working and requires organisations to understand the context they are operating in, understand how the programme interacts with the context, monitor the context and develop options.

During 2020, RAFT completed the first round of capacity building on conflict sensitivity with all LIFT IPs working in Kachin and northern Shan State. A consolidated report titled *Conflict Sensitivity and Impact Options Review (CSIOR) for Kachin* was produced that detailed negative and positive trends related to conflict sensitivity and social cohesion opportunities in the Kachin context.

RAFT found that in 2020 tensions, grievances, suspicions and inequalities increased in Kachin due to a number of factors:

- » As the November 2020 elections approached elections were cancelled in some townships and people were suspicious this was politically motivated. Competition between supporters of different political parties continued to divide communities and communities objected to election campaigning going ahead when shops were closed and religious and cultural events were banned due to COVID-19.
- » The negative impacts of COVID-19 on livelihoods and well-being led to increased tension, suspicion and inequality. Travel restrictions and border closures caused social and economic difficulties for many and disruption to supply chains led to increased prices for goods.
- » Fear and mistrust of outsiders increased as employers and communities feared COVID-19 transmission. New migrant workers from Rakhine State raised concerns. Suspicion of outsiders is already high in Kachin due to perceptions of 'spying' by people affiliated with armed groups.
- » Tensions and suspicions related to displacement issues increased. In overcrowded camps for internally displaced people, where access to health services is limited, the fear of COVID-19 transmission was high. Internally displaced people from conflict-prone villages feared it may not be safe to return because of landmines and intimidation by armed groups. People who did return were treated with suspicion as 'outsiders'.

Implementing partner	Project Name	Main activities	Duration	Geographic coverage
ADRA Myanmar	Vocational Education to Support Internally Displaced People and Host Communities (VESI) in Kachin and NSS - Sustainably Enhancing Decent Work Opportunities and Bridging the Gap between Youth from Internally Displaced People and Vulnerable Host Communities	TVET, Decent Work	Jul 2019 – Jun 2022	NSS and Kachin
HPA-Health Poverty Action	Improve nutrition status of the vulnerable population in conflict-affected Kachin and Northern Shan	Nutrition	Jan 2020 – Dec 2022	NSS and Kachin
International Organization for Migration (IOM)	Supporting Conflict-Affected Women and Youth with Nutrition and Employment (SAFEWAY NET)	Migration and Decent Work	Jul 2019 – Jun 2022	Kachin State - Bhamo, Mansi, Momauk, Myitkyina and Waingmaw townships NSS - Hopong, Kunlong, Kutkai, Manton, Mongmit, Muse, Namhsan, Namkhan, Namtu and Tangyan townships
Karuna Mission Social Solidarity (KMSS)	Supporting Conflict-Affected Women and Youth with Nutrition and Employment (SAFEWAY NET)	Nutrition	Jul 2019 – Jun 2022	Kachin State - Myitkyina, Waingmaw, Moegaung, Hpakant, Bhamo, Mansi, and Momauk Townships NSS - Hsenwi, Kutkhai, and Muse townships
Save the Children	Building Resilience In Conflict affected areas of Northern Shan States (BRICKS)	Nutrition and Social Protection	Jul 2019 – Jun 2022	NSS - Kutkai, Namkham, Kyaukme and Namtu Townships Kachin State - Mansi, and Momauk townships
Shalom Nyein Foundation	Supporting Nutrition and Livelihoods through SGH in Kachin State, Myanmar	Nutrition, Livelihoods supporting access to decent work opportunities for Internally Displaced People, Self Help groups	Jan 2020 – Dec 2021	Kachin State
Swissaid, Metta, GRET	Upland Township Fund (UTF) for Civil Society	Livelihoods - small grants for CSOs	Jan 2019- Jun 2021	Chin, Kachin, Shan and Kayah States (16 townships)
World Concern	Improving the nutrition outcomes of conflict-affected people in Kachin State	Nutrition and Nutrition- Sensitive Agriculture	Jan 2020 – Dec 2022	Kachin State
World Vision International	SHE - Myanmar Supporting Inclusive and Transformative Livelihoods for Internally Displaced People and Host Communities in Kachin	TVET and Decent Work	Jul 2019 – Jun 2022	Kachin State, Chipwe, Bahmo, Mansi, and Momauk townships
Metta Foundation and Gret	Ring Chying	Land	Jul 2020 – Jun 2023	Kachin and NSS
BadeidhaMoe (BDM)	Strengthening Legal Resilience of Internally Displaced People and their Original Communities in Kachin and NSS	Agriculture and Land	Jul 2020 – Jun 2023	Kachin and NSS

Table 5.2: LIFT projects and partners in Kachin and northern Shan State (NSS)

- » Armed conflict contributed to tensions throughout the year. Fighting between the Tatmadaw and Kachin Independence Army (KIA) increased in the last few months of 2020. Communities were concerned about increased Tatmadaw mobilisations. Forced recruitment by ethnic armed organisations is another source of tension in Kachin communities.
- » Tensions increased around livelihoods and employment issues. Specific issues were exploitation of mining workers paid extremely low wages, land use grievances against large businesses, and tensions between Waingmaw tissue banana plantation and factories in Myitkyina and their workers.

On the positive side, trust, collaboration and interdependence related to shared interests in COVID-19 prevention and response increased. By the end of the year there was an increased recognition of the need to work together to be able to live with COVID-19 and create a 'new normal'. Shared concerns about COVID-19 led to community-led initiatives and collaborations. The Ministry of Health and Sports (MoHS) began collaborating and sharing information about the COVID-19 response with the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO).

Having identified trends in the Kachin context in 2020, RAFT provided a set of learnings and recommendations to partners working in Kachin. In relation to COVID-19 RAFT advised:

The use of phone and internet to reach beneficiaries has generally alleviated the challenges imposed by COVID-19 restrictions, but these approaches exclude people who do not have access to phones or internet coverage either as a result of geography, socio-economic status or cultural or gender norms.

A shift towards mainstreaming the COVID-19 response into livelihoods and food security programming has been effective at meeting and building acceptance of communities and governance stakeholders.

Partners need to adapt to the 'new normal' of COVID-19 and find a balance between not putting communities at risk by having people enter their communities, and ensuring access to health and livelihoods assistance and services provided by implementing organisations. Special attention must be paid to vulnerable groups.

Information sharing about COVID-19 risks is important to avoid unwarranted fears and conspiracy theories. These efforts will be more effective if communication can be translated into all local languages.

It is important to be sensitive to the market effects of COVID-19 and armed conflict and how these affect programming and target communities' financial and economic situation.

Implementing agencies should try to mitigate access restrictions by increased engagement with local actors, information sharing and coordination. Work with or through CSOs to increase access, trust and conflict sensitivity. Robust conflict sensitivity/Do No Harm vetting, especially when working in ethnically and religiously diverse communities, and meaningful capacity building are essential success factors for local partnerships.

On displacement, RAFT advised partners:

- » Micro-level analysis of the conflict-related stresses and sources of tension among displaced communities are needed. For example, in some cases, cash may be needed (e.g. to repair houses), in other cases cash handouts might increase tensions, particularly when this is perceived to threaten power dynamics within the homes. This analysis needs to be participatory, gender responsive and inclusive of local stakeholders, communities and vulnerable groups.
- » It is fundamental for the return and relocation process for internally displaced people in Kachin to take place in a safe and dignified way. Land in and around relocation sites must be safe and uncontaminated from landmines. Advocacy around landmines should be informed by a conflict sensitivity/do no harm analysis due to the political nature of the issue.
- » It is critical to be aware of, and sensitive to, the extremely precarious position of internally displaced people who have been displaced for so long that their claims to the land in their place of origin are at risk of expiring and/or being taken over by tissue banana plantation companies. It is important not only to ensure that displaced people have sufficient access to land-based livelihoods in the area where they have resettled, but also that they have access to legal information about the relevant rights and processes related to land use and registration.
- » The second wave of COVID-19 in Myanmar halted significant efforts to return and resettle people in Kachin State. Providing support to Kachin civil society and faith-based institutions, and carefully managing the complex political factors that characterise the multi-faceted return and resettlement responses remain essential practices.
- » It is clear that issues with the government-planned relocation site exist and need to be addressed through a participatory process that allows affected communities and local stakeholders to express their concerns and contribute their suggestions into the planning and design of the government-led return and resettlement process. Having different initiatives, funded and implemented by different agencies, is clearly necessary given the scale of the crisis, but the lack of coordination between the government-led and Kachin Humanitarian Concern Committee-led initiatives creates scope for misunderstandings, inefficiencies and possibly tensions, which may both affect, and be affected by broader conflict dynamics.

In mid-March 2020, over 100 representatives of civil society groups, local and international non-governmental organisations, the United Nations, Western embassies and other international agencies met in Myitkyina at a conference hosted by the Kachin Humanitarian Concern Committee and Joint Strategy Team. The purpose was to discuss government plans to close the camps that house over 100,000 civilians who have been displaced from their homes since the resumption of conflict after 17 years of ceasefire between the government and Kachin Independence Organisation in June 2011. Discussions were wide-ranging. Concerns were deeply expressed by local participants about the continuing conflict, the vulnerability and insecurity of internally displaced people, the loss of land and homes and the problematic legal framework, the dangers from landmines, and the lack of inclusive political and economic reform. There was also anxiety in local communities about the threat of the COVID-19 virus for which people were not prepared. On every level, internally displaced people are in a very challenging position after many

years of conflict and displacement. A clear outcome of discussions was that if effective and meaningful solutions are to be found IDPs need to be full participants at the centre of discussions and decisions that will affect their lives.<sup>97</sup>

### Strengthening child protection in northern Shan State

The child protection component of Save the Children's project in northern Shan State focuses on three elements at the community level: 1) Youth and adolescent capacity building in child protection issues through partners, 2) Strengthening community-based youth and child protection mechanisms, and 3) Strengthening access to case management services by girls, boys and youth including support and referral.

Awareness raising activities play a key role in improving children's cognitive abilities to deal with child protection issues, human trafficking incidents, safe migration, and the consequences of early marriage. In 2020, 230 awareness raising sessions on child protection, child rights, anti-trafficking and safe migration were conducted in 48 villages and attended by 3,204 participants (49 per cent girls). In border areas, out-of-school children usually cross the border to work for family income. During 2020, these children could not travel to work because of COVID-19 restrictions. The project created a cartoon storybook with child-friendly guidelines on minimising conflicts between children and parents while staying at home.

In September 2020, the project conducted two information campaigns along the Chinese border on forced and early marriage and anti-trafficking. In November, the project organised a campaign on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child with small groups of people in the villages as well as virtual meetings with the northern Shan State child protection cluster. More than 6,000 children and 638 adults participated in this event. Save the Children recruited and trained volunteers from targeted communities to become community social workers to expand the child protection response mechanisms in their local areas. Community social workers link vulnerable children with local leaders and those who are able to provide community support. They identify children who require basic case management, carry out basic assessments, provide psychosocial support, mobilise community support, make timely and child-friendly referrals and close cases when the child is safe and protected.

Community social workers are expected to work with communities and families to respond to identified needs and protect children who are experiencing, or who are at risk of experiencing, violence, abuse, exploitation or neglect. They support children and families whose needs are not considered to be complex and in accordance with the national Case Management Standard Operating Procedures. Children and families with more complex needs are referred to NGO case workers or the Department of Social Welfare's case managers.

In 2020, 193 cases were managed by Save the Children and partners. Cases included children who were not receiving appropriate care by a parent, who experienced sexual violence, had disabilities and children who were living in a quarantine centre. Half of the cases were identified by community social workers, 10 per cent of the cases were self-identified by children, families and their relatives, 20 per

cent were reported by the community and the remaining 20 per cent were referred by other organisations working in the Northern Shan State Child Protection Working Group. The project responded to all cases with needs assessments, planning, psychosocial support, and appropriate follow-up. When medical treatment was required in sexual violence cases, transportation costs and food assistance for the child and parent were provided by the project. Save the Children engaged the Department of Social Welfare to provide support to three children living in quarantine centres and engaged with World Vision Myanmar to support child soldier cases. The International Committee of the Red Cross assisted a child with a disability to obtain prosthetics.

## LOOKING AHEAD

Despite the challenges of COVID-19 in 2020, LIFT's Kachin and Northern Shan Programme consolidated and focussed on reducing poverty and vulnerability of internally displaced people and host communities affected by conflict through improved nutrition, enhanced skills and access to productive assets (including land) as well as to financial services that support increased livelihood options and future human productivity.

The programme and its associated MEAL plan provide an overall framework for integration to guide the implementation of projects and ensure that synergies, complementarities and coordination between them are effectively leveraged to maximise impact. The implementing partner coordination mechanisms place particular emphasis on conflict-sensitive ways of working and the implementation of LIFT's conflict-sensitivity principles. RAFT continues to provide technical assistance to implementing partners on conflict sensitivity programming.

LIFT has engaged with the state governments, but appropriate mechanisms of engagement with other non-state actors need to be strengthened, giving due consideration to the ongoing conflict dynamics and their implications for inclusion and participation of all stakeholders. Two LIFT national coordinators are now in place, based in Lashio and Myitkyina, and they will manage coordination mechanisms and represent LIFT in engagements with the different stakeholders, including humanitarian agencies, in the two states.

### The military coup in February 2021 dramatically changed the situation in Kachin and northern Shan.

Since mid-February, clashes between the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and the Tatmadaw have occurred almost daily in northern Shan State. Fighting erupted in four townships of Kachin State on March 11 and around 5,800 people were displaced. By May 2021, 5,000 remained displaced. In northern Shan State, the volatile security situation and clashes, mostly involving ethnic armed organisations, displaced about 11,000 people since January.

The high levels of violence against anti-coup protests in towns in Kachin State appears to have been the trigger for the KIA attacks on the Tatmadaw. Frequent attacks on police stations and military bases and seizing weapons and supplies also implies KIA is stocking up for a long fight. Fighting around Hpakant's jade mines shows the importance of resources to the conflict. Newly escalated armed conflict will have an impact on the large numbers of migrants there. As in Karen State, retaking bases that were previously in ethnic armed organisations' territory is likely to lead to a response from the Tatmadaw and lead to

<sup>97</sup> The cycles of conflict and displacement must be brought to an end": The IDP crisis in northeast Myanmar  
A Commentary by Lahpai Seng Raw TNI March 2020



more displacement and casualties.

In Kachin, pro-KIO/KIA rallies took place in at least three townships since 12 March, including in the state capital, and have been attended by people from diverse ethnic groups. Apologies to ethnic minorities have proliferated on social media, while calls are growing for the establishment of a federal army to protect the people and overthrow the military regime. Resistance to the coup has brought ethnic nationalities' decades-long struggles for self-determination in line with the desires of the larger population, including the Bamar majority, to topple the junta. The Tatmadaw unilateral ceasefire extension has not been reciprocated by the Brotherhood Alliance for the first time since December 2020.

Humanitarian assistance and protection services in conflict-affected areas continue despite the impact of the political crisis on operations and pre-existing access challenges. The escalation of violence in parts of Myanmar increases threats to the safety of humanitarian operations and compounds existing access challenges.<sup>98</sup>

The return and resettlement process of internally displaced people seems to have been completely upended by the coup and the internally displaced are in a more precarious situation now due to armed conflict and socio-economic fallout of the coup. The KIO and Kachin civil society saw a ceasefire with the Tatmadaw as a necessary condition for return and resettlement. The recent escalation is indicative that they have little hope for large scale returns and may be willing to accept more displacement to resist the coup.

It is critical that these emerging humanitarian needs are addressed by urgent support to local civil society and ethnic service providers in a way that is flexible, risk-sensitive and (temporarily) requires minimal reporting or compliance requirements.

Novel and innovative funding modalities will be needed especially for CSOs and it is important that any attempts to scale-up these informal approaches to receiving and transferring funding are subject to a robust Do No Harm and risk assessment to ensure that pre-existing structures are not undermined or overwhelmed.

LIFT's partners in Kachin and northern Shan State will need to strengthen mechanisms of coordination with humanitarian funds to support delivery of humanitarian assistance while strengthening communities' resilience, livelihood and food security.



# THE SOUTH-EAST

## CONFLICT-AFFECTED AREAS

# 5.3

## THE SOUTH-EAST

### CONTEXT

The South-East of Myanmar includes Bago and Tanintharyi Divisions, and Mon, Karen, Kayah and southern Shan States. The South-East has seen a complex shift in village, district and state/regional-level dynamics since bilateral ceasefire agreements were signed between the Karen National Union (KNU), the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) and Myanmar's Union Government in 2012. The Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) process added momentum to the peace process that began bilaterally, though the perceived lack of progress on implementing the NCA introduced a new level of uncertainty. In addition to the KNU and KNPP, other armed groups hold authority over some areas in the South-East. Some of them are now affiliated with the Tatmadaw and have been renamed as Border Guard Forces.

### The peace process

Hopes for rapid progress towards sustainable peace since 2012 have not yet been realised.

While ceasefires have generally been upheld, progress in implementing the interim arrangements outlined in the NCA has been slow. In 2019, the KNU initially withdrew its full participation, but in 2020 appeared to be re-engaging with the aim of ensuring there was continuity beyond the November 2020 election. Shifts in the political dynamics affecting the KNPP and its engagement with the peace process also have an impact on the South-East.

The lack of clarity on the implementation of the interim arrangements fuels uncertainty for local populations, creating parallel governance structures in areas of mixed control, and potentially adding to the fragility and vulnerability of communities. The issues of taxation, citizenship registration and land ownership and usage are all affected by this dynamic.

There is a close association between the political contest between conflicting parties, the associated military struggle, and the economic opportunities presented by extending control over natural resources and managing access to livelihood opportunities. The changes at the political level have a direct effect on people living in communities, especially those under the control or influence of EAOs or affected by military activity.

The peace agreements have had a mixed effect on the context. Restrictions on movement have been lifted in several areas opening opportunities to travel between villages and districts. Levels of violence and intimidation have decreased, including reduced civilian abuse, and specifically a reduction in levels of violence targeting women. Increased participation of civil society groups in development processes and civic engagement by local populations have also increased, taking advantage of the space that was opened by the NCA. This has led to improvements in transparency and accountability regarding human rights abuses and the exploitation of local populations. There are now also opportunities for improved social services and for addressing the longer term needs of refugees and people internally displaced.

New communications technologies and transport infrastructure have served as connectors between communities, adding impetus to the peace process. The potential for new investment opportunities, for access to natural resources and for new livelihood opportunities, including in agribusiness and non-agricultural sectors has increased.

These developments have been welcomed by many, including state and non-state actors. But in the absence of a strong rule of law and in the face of weak governance mechanisms, the changes in relationships between stakeholders, and the competition to gain leverage over resources could also escalate tensions.

### Population displacement

Conflict has generated repeated, long-term displacement within Myanmar's borders and into neighbouring countries. Large-scale land acquisitions and developments continue to generate further displacement across the South-East. The expansion of extractive industries, commercial agriculture and road construction into ethnic territories during the ceasefire period exacerbated deforestation. Watershed areas in the South-East appear to have become more prone to flooding and landslides as a result. It has been estimated that over 38,000 people in communities affected by the conflict have been displaced by natural disasters during the past five years in the South-East.

At least 162,000 people are estimated to remain internally displaced in the rural areas of 26 townships across the South-East.<sup>99</sup>

By December 2020, 91,803 refugees were living in nine refugee camps in Thailand.<sup>100</sup> Since June 2013, UNHCR has piloted a system to assess spontaneous returns to south-east Myanmar, a process that started in the absence of an organised voluntary repatriation operation. By the end of 2018, more than 4,000 refugees and almost 11,500 internally displaced people had returned to more than 400 villages. During 2019, 2,575 people returned to Myanmar, 2,999 departed for third

country resettlement, and around 1,555 people left the camps to seek alternatives in Thailand.<sup>101</sup> With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the fifth facilitated voluntary return scheduled for the end of February was postponed indefinitely. In the initial planning for 2020, it was assumed that the population would decrease by 7 per cent during the year. Instead the camp population increased due to newborns and people returning from working outside. Preparations for safe and informed returns continued throughout the first half of the year. Prior to the pandemic, four 'go-and-see' visits took place. The visits paid close attention to key factors including: suitability and availability of land for livelihoods; accessibility and availability of water year-round for consumption and farming including animal husbandry; soil fertility for agricultural production; year-round accessibility and road condition; and cooperation from host communities and local authorities. However, due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, crossing the Thailand-Myanmar border is currently only permitted for nationals returning to their own country.<sup>102</sup>

During 2020, the fourth session of the Union Peace Conference was held with representation from 10 Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) signatories in attendance. An agreement on continuing the formal peace talks after the general elections was reached. However, Myanmar's Armed Forces were increasingly belligerent and the prospects of substantive progress remained bleak.

In Karen communities, Tatmadaw militarisation, including indiscriminate heavy artillery attacks, displaced over 4,000 civilians and restricted access to fields in Hpapun Township and neighbouring Kyaukkyi.

In Karenni communities, armed hostilities resumed between the Tatmadaw and Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) in northern Shadaw. Increased mobilisation of Tatmadaw troops was also reported in eastern Deemoso, eastern Hpruso and western Hpasawng Townships, which increased tensions.

Different interpretations of the NCA's Article 25 about socio-economic development in conflict-affected areas continued to frustrate coordination between the government and ethnic armed organisations (EAO). While the Tatmadaw insisted that ceasefire areas needed to be demarcated prior to the implementation of interim arrangements, the KNU and other EAOs propose an issue-based approach to build confidence and experience in democratic federalism.

### Vulnerability

Overall, the South-East of Myanmar can be characterised by relatively high rates of vulnerability. According to a vulnerability analysis developed by HARP and MIMU,<sup>103</sup> Kayin and Tanintharyi rank amongst the most vulnerable states/regions in Myanmar. These findings are corroborated by the World Bank's Multidimensional Deprivation Index (MDI)<sup>104</sup> that ranks Kayin and Tanintharyi as the third and fourth most deprived states/regions in the country (following Rakhine and Ayeyarwady). The rankings do not reflect notable variation within regions, with selected townships faring much better than others.

<sup>99</sup> TBC(2018). Human Security in South Easter Myanmar

<sup>100</sup> UNHCR data December 2020

<sup>101</sup> TBC Annual report 2019

<sup>102</sup> TBC annual report 2020

<sup>103</sup> HARP-MIMU (2018) Vulnerability in Myanmar a secondary data review of needs, coverage and gaps

<sup>104</sup> WB and MoLIP (2018) Multidimensional Welfare in Myanmar

<sup>105</sup> MoHS (2018) Myanmar Micronutrient and Food Consumption Survey

Poverty and food insecurity remain prevalent across the South-East, and are particularly concentrated in rural, upland and more remote areas. Data from the *Myanmar Micronutrient and Food Consumption Survey*<sup>105</sup> reported the highest rates of food security in Mon (86 per cent of households) and Tanintharyi (77 per cent of households) and the lowest in Kayah (21 per cent of households) and Kayin (37 per cent). A similar pattern exists for Household Dietary Diversity Scores (HDDS), with Kayin faring the worst (68 per cent of households having a HDDS score below six, followed by Kayah (53 per cent of households). In terms of poverty in the South-East, Tanintharyi has the lowest proportion of households falling below the poverty line at 13 per cent. This is followed by Mon (19 per cent), Kayin (24 per cent) and Kayah (32 per cent).<sup>106</sup>

### COVID-19

While community transmissions of COVID-19 have not been reported in remote areas of south-east Myanmar, the return of over 100,000 migrant workers from Thailand<sup>107</sup> heightened the importance of prevention, protection and control measures. These restrictions disrupted markets, limited access to fields and led to inflationary pressures.

LIFT's partners postponed most activities and re-allocated budget lines to support the distribution of personal protective equipment (PPE) to health workers, provide emergency responses to food shortages in government, non-government and mixed-controlled areas and to conduct activities around risk education and community engagement.

Ethnic armed organisations played a large role in COVID-19 prevention through screening at checkpoints and the management of community-based quarantine facilities.

The KNU issued a statement on 15 May. While it characterised the peace process as "constantly slowed down and stuck", as well as suspended due to COVID-19, it also sought to collaborate with the Government on the COVID-19 response through "prevention, control and treatment ... through online video conferencing and other communication means".

Karen EAOs formed an Ethnic Health Organisation Committee (EHOC) for COVID-19 prevention. The committee includes Border Guard Forces, the Karen National Liberation Army-Peace Council, KNU, the Karen National Police Force and the Karen Department of Health and Welfare (KDHW).

In March, the KDHW sent instructions for preventative measures based on World Health Organization guidelines to all townships under its control, as well as its armed units. The KNU's preventative measures included establishing over 50 screening points in the seven districts under its control. Each of these health checkpoints was supplied with WHO-recommended health packages that included temperature testers, gloves, face masks and high-quality hand gel.

EAOs supported government efforts to close the border from mid-April through May and to restrict travel and enforce quarantine measures after that. Despite the announcement of a ceasefire and public displays of government collaboration with EAOs, at least six COVID-19 screening posts managed by KNU and New Mon State Party (NMSP) were dismantled or coerced to close by government officers and Tatmadaw troops. An opportunity to unite against a common public health enemy was wasted and vulnerabilities were instead exacerbated.

<sup>105</sup> MoHS (2018) Myanmar Micronutrient and Food Consumption Survey

<sup>106</sup> WB (2018) Myanmar Living Conditions Survey 2017: Report 3, Nay Pyi Taw and Yangon, Myanmar: WB.

<sup>107</sup> TBC annual report 2020

### LIFT's South-East Programme

LIFT developed the programme framework for the South-East during August-November, 2019, informed by a literature review, in-depth discussions within LIFT's Fund Management Office, with the Fund Board and a scoping mission that covered Kayin, Mon and Kayah States and Tanintharyi Region. During the scoping mission, consultations were held with a wide range of actors representing the Government, ethnic armed organisations, international and local NGOs, civil society organisations, ethnic service providers, private sector actors and selected beneficiaries of LIFT interventions.

The overall focus of the programme is: Operating within the interim arrangements in a conflict-sensitive manner, LIFT's programme in the South-East of Myanmar aims to lay the groundwork for, and catalyse where possible, inclusive, climate-resilient and sustainable development in the region that addresses food, nutrition and livelihood security of the most vulnerable. This includes a specific focus on internally displaced persons, returnees, women, youth and those at risk of labour exploitation.

A call for concept notes was launched in November, 2019. During the first half of 2020, LIFT's Fund Management Office selected the partners and co-developed full project proposals that were expected to be contracted during the second half of 2020.

When concept notes were reviewed and partners selected, the COVID-19 crisis started to affect Myanmar, and the original budget allocation to the programme had to be reduced to reserve resources for the immediate response as well as for later mitigation and recovery plans. Fewer projects than the FMO proposed were approved by the Fund Board, based on their relevance to the LIFT Strategy 2019-2023 and to the COVID-19 pandemic. The initial components of the programme framework were revised and sized down and it was decided that LIFT's South-East Programme 2020-2023 would focus on:

- » Support government-led maternal and child cash transfers (MCCT) with social behaviour change (SBC) for nutrition approaches in Kayah and Kayin States
- » Upland agriculture, natural resources management and land rights
- » Decent work and labour mobility

## HIGHLIGHTS

### LIFT's COVID-19 response in the South-East

Like in Kachin and northern Shan, LIFT's implementing partners in the South-East pivoted existing project budgets to provide immediate responses to COVID-19 in collaboration with government authorities and EAOs, especially the Karen National Union (KNU).

The Border Consortium's partners quickly recalibrated plans and budgets to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 in four main ways during the second quarter of 2020. The initial responses focused on risk communications and community engagement to raise awareness and promote behavioural change in regard to social distancing, regular hand washing and wearing of face masks. This was complemented by the distribution of personal protective equipment (PPE) including face masks, infra-red thermometers and handwash basins to community

health workers. The physical presence of ethnic service providers and CSOs at screening posts and quarantine centres was essential to the management of returning migrants as restrictions became more prevalent. The STAND UP project supported the Karen Department of Health and Welfare, the Mon National Health Committee and the Karenni National Mobile Health Committee who managed over 100 COVID-19 screening posts and 12 quarantine centres between them.

As restrictions on access to markets and fields exacerbated food insecurity in conflict-affected communities, the targeted distribution of food assistance and cash transfers also became more prominent.

While the reach of public awareness raising campaigns is difficult to quantify, partners indicate that 200,000 people were informed about preventative measures and/or provided with protective equipment to reduce exposure to COVID-19 during this time. Approximately 10,000 people were identified with food shortages, and were assisted with food and/or cash transfers.

CDN-ZOA with local partners, Taungoo Thandawn Bwe Moh Bwa Karen Baptist Association, Taungoo Kehko Kehbah Karen Baptist Association, Taungoo Paku Karen Baptist Association and Karuna Myanmar Social Services (KMSS) conducted awareness activities, distribution of hygiene kits, support to check points and KNU quarantine centres reaching approximately 72,000 people (50 per cent women) in 130 villages in north Kayin State. The project team sought active collaboration with the authorities from both sides. The partners distributed printed materials promoting COVID-19 awareness in 101 villages, including 42 health centres in Thandaunggyi Township. They also distributed 35,060 face masks to 7,102 households and supported quarantine centres with training and basic materials such as hygiene kits, mosquito nets, PPE and masks for staff and patients. Additionally, 610 cloth masks were distributed to two KNU schools and a community centre. Three hundred hygiene kits were distributed to the Karen Education Department for students returning to school. Reusable cloth masks (5,000), disposable surgical masks (200), hand sanitiser (200 bottles), PPE (30), and infrared thermometers (4) were distributed to the Thandaunggyi Township COVID-19 Response Committee and 1,500 hygiene kits to the KNU for household distribution.

The Department of Social Welfare (DSW) was supported financially by LIFT to provide a one-time lump sum cash transfer of MMK 30,000 (USD 22) to all beneficiaries of the maternal and child cash transfer (MCCT) programme, to mitigate the impact of the expected reduction in income opportunities, as well as increased costs of food and other items in Kayah and Kayin States. Cash transfers were accompanied by messaging on COVID-19 infection prevention. The distribution reached around 64,000 pregnant women and mothers with children aged under two in the two states.

### Gender

It is hard to understate the importance of gender dynamics and social exclusion on the economic impact of COVID-19. According to the Karen Women's Empowerment Group, who work to support the growth and development of women, children, village-based self-help groups and women-led organisations in Karen State, the different ways in which men and women were impacted by the pandemic are shaped by gender inequality, unequal roles, responsibilities and expectations. The livelihoods of communities in northern Karen State are largely driven by agricultural work and remittances from migrant labour. In the monsoon season, during which the COVID-19 crisis unfolded, communities often rely on trading seasonal crops, collecting and selling

edible plants, and cutting timber. Lockdown measures weakened local markets, interrupted transport routes and drove down crop prices due to declining market access. Instead of selling crops for income, many families used their harvests to barter with neighbours for goods they needed. Day labourers working on farms outside their home villages were unable to travel, and farm owners prioritised hiring people in their immediate area. In areas of mixed Government/KNU control people had to navigate overlapping and sometimes contradictory COVID-19 restrictions. This worsened people's access to jobs, farms and markets during critical harvest periods and heightened fears of being detained or charged.

In the second week of December 2020, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and the Karenni National Women's Organization conducted gender-based violence assessments in 30 villages (14 non-government-controlled villages and 16 government-controlled villages) located in three townships of Kayah State: Loikaw, Demoso and Shadaw. More than 3,000 households representing 16,217 people (49 per cent girls and women) were assessed. The assessment sought to understand the existing gender norms, roles of women and men within the communities and the needs of women and girls. The assessment informed the design and implementation of gender-based violence prevention and response interventions in Kayah State. Key findings were:

- » Women face difficulties accessing health services due to distance, limited finances and because there are no private and confidential safe spaces for women and girls at rural health services.
- » Emotional violence, sexual violence, and domestic violence are major issues in Kayah State.
- » Girls are at risk of forced marriage and early marriage.
- » Women and girls report that the places where they feel least safe and fear violence are 'on the road to work' and at water points.
- » Women and girls feel there are no safe spaces to report violence or receive regular, up-to-date information. Social restrictions and community perception also lead to underreporting of violence. If violence is reported it is usually reported to family members or village leaders.
- » Gender-based violence is underreported due to social restrictions, community perceptions and operational barriers such as distance, transportation and lack of service availability information.
- » There are limited services for gender-based violence case management and psychosocial support.
- » Few organisations focus on gender-based violence prevention and response programming.
- » There is a lack of the quality formal legal aid services for survivors.
- » Gender stereotypes and social norms position women and girls at high risk of gender-based violence.

The findings of the GBV assessment will be discussed with all project partners in February 2021 and will guide the implementation of project activities.

## LOOKING AHEAD

Implementation of LIFT’s programme for the South-East began in the second half of 2020, and will continue up to 2023. In 2021, LIFT will develop a geographic MEAL framework in collaboration with the selected partners and will establish coordination mechanisms at the township- and state-levels. LIFT has already conducted extensive consultations with a wide range of stakeholders in the South-East during the scoping mission for the design of the programme, and a presentation of the programme is planned for early-2021.

The newly contracted projects have included adaptations to the new COVID-19 situation and will work towards mitigating the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable populations. For example, all partners have re-designed training and other activities with COVID-19 sensitive approaches, and have developed COVID-19 contingency plans for international and local partners.

The Communities Partners International (CPI) and International Rescue Committee (IRC) projects in support of the Department of Social Welfare’s MCCT programme, are integrated with projects funded by Access to Health to the same partners, and are also designed to respond to changing needs among communities, and the effects of COVID-19 on the underlying factors that contribute to undernutrition. This includes the impact on health systems and the economy that influence care practices and household food security. For the two states, which have among the highest rates of stunting in the country, this investment in COVID-19 recovery is especially important. The projects will also prioritise enhanced hygiene promotion, access to WASH facilities, and the scale up of gender-based violence response services, which the pandemic highlighted were deficient.

Taking into consideration the risk of an interruption to MoHS’s nutrition programming, particularly if there is a significant shift in the health workforce to focus on COVID-19 case management, the partners’ response plans focus on ensuring continuity of ongoing programming, and boosting programming where possible.

WASH activities planned under these projects are more necessary than ever. It is difficult for communities who faced water and sanitation needs prior to COVID-19 to follow guidance for enhanced personal hygiene. Prioritising household-level water and sanitation interventions in the two states is critical to prevent communicable diseases. The community-led hygiene and sanitation interventions and access to WASH services are responsive to immediate needs identified due to COVID-19 as well as persistent WASH needs in target communities.

Finally, partnerships with civil society organisations and ethnic service providers have proven essential and the most effective mechanisms for the delivery of the first response for prevention and control of COVID-19 in conflict-affected areas. The new South-East Programme engages with a wide range of these groups and will be able to reach the most remote and vulnerable communities and enhance the services available there.

Implementing partner	Project Name	Main activities	Duration	Geographic coverage
<b>Department of Social Welfare (DSW) of Ministry of Social Welfare, relief and resettlement (MoSWRR)</b>	Support to DSW MCCT programme in Kayin State	Operational grant in support of MCCT programme. Coordination, monitoring, SBCC	Feb 2019 – Dec 2020	Kayin State
<b>Department of Social Welfare (DSW) of Ministry of Social Welfare, relief and resettlement (MoSWRR)</b>	Support to DSW MCCT programme in Kayah State	Operational grant in support of MCCT programme. Coordination, monitoring, SBCC	Feb 2019 – Dec 2020	Kayah State
<b>Karen Development Network (KDN)</b>	Enhanced Livelihood for Displaced People (ELDP)	TVET, construction of community training centre, social protection, natural resources management	Jun 2016 – Sep 2020	Tanintharyi Region
<b>Stitching ZOA, The Netherlands , registered as Consortium of Dutch NGOs (CDN) in Myanmar</b>	Improving the incomes and nutrition outcomes of rural poor in Northern Kayin State	Nutrition, WASH, agriculture, value chain, social protection, disaster risk reduction, small infrastructures	Jun 2016 – Sep 2020	Thandaunggyi Township, north Kayin State
<b>Swissaid, Metta, GRET</b>	Uplands Township Fund for Civil Society (UTF)	Small grants for CSOs-livelihood	Jan 2019- Jun 2021	Kayah State
<b>The Border Consortium (TBC)</b>	Sustainable Transformation of Agriculture, Nutrition and Development for Uplands PHASTUP -phase 2	Natural resource management including land rights, nutrition, WASH, social protection, capacity building for local stakeholders (CSOs and ESPs)	Sep 2019 – Aug 2022	Kayah, Kayin, Mon States and Tanintharyi Region
<b>Community Partners International (CPI)</b> in partnership with Karen Department of Health & Welfare, Karen Ethnic Health Organization Consortium, Yoma Social Development Association and the Committee for Internally Displaced Karen People	Nourish: Empowering Populations in South-East Myanmar through Improved Nutrition, WASH and Livelihood	Nutrition, WASH, women’s empowerment, support to DSW MCCT in Kayin State	Sep. 2020 - Aug 2023	Kayin State, all townships
<b>IRC</b> in partnership with the Community Health Development Network and the Karenni Network of Women’s Organizations	Kayah Integrated Nutrition (KIN)	Nutrition, WASH, women’s empowerment, protection, support to DSW MCCT in Kayah State	Aug 2020 – Jul 2023	Kayah State, all townships

Implementing partner	Project Name	Main activities	Duration	Geographic coverage
<b>Forest Trends</b> in partnership with Karen Environmental and Social Network, TRIP NET, MATA and Karenni Evergreen	Towards Sustainable Peace in South-eastern Myanmar: Building Subnational Capacity to Strengthen Tenure Security and Livelihood Resiliency	Land rights, natural resource management, research	Sep 2020 – Jul 2023	Kayin, Kayah and Tanintharyi
<b>Tharthi Myay Foundation</b>	Access to land and sustainable livelihoods in post-COVID South-East Myanmar	Small grants for CSOs for Land rights, natural resource management, local livelihood	Sep 2020 – Aug 2023	Kayin Mon and Tanintharyi
<b>IOM</b> in partnership with Mon Women's Organization, Committee for Internally Displaced Karen People, IJM, LCM	Myanmar to Thailand and back again: New Infrastructure for Migration opportunities and Empowerment of Migrants on the South-East Borderline	Support to safe migration	Sep 2020 – Aug 2023	Kayin, Mon
<b>Gender Equality Network (GEN)</b>	Improving support and opportunities for deported migrants and returnees	Support to deported migrants, safe migration and livelihood	Sep 2020 – Aug 2023	Kayin, Mon

**Table 5.3:** LIFT projects and partners in the South-East

Myanmar's military coup in February 2021 has dramatically changed the situation in the South-East and a strategic reset will be needed in the new context.

Since late March 2021, south-eastern Myanmar has witnessed a dramatic escalation in conflict between the Karen National Union and the Tatmadaw. The origins of this recent escalation of conflict do not stem entirely from the February coup; tensions between the KNU and the Tatmadaw were escalating throughout 2020 due to the perceived failure of the Myanmar peace process. Thus far, since late-March 2021 at least 50,000 individuals<sup>108</sup> (with some estimates up to 100,000)<sup>109</sup> have been displaced. Many have fled to the jungles near their villages, but many have also fled to the Thai border. Local CSOs note that food and access to cash is a critical need. A first needs assessment conducted by IRC and its partners in Kayah state highlighted a deteriorating situation in terms of food and nutrition security and availability and affordability of nutritious food in the markets.

There is considerable local capacity to respond to the crisis in south-east Myanmar. Numerous local humanitarian organisations<sup>110</sup> respond to crises across Karen areas, typically with leadership provided by the Committee for Internally Displaced Karen People (CIDKP), Karen Women's Organization (KWO) Karen Office of Relief and Development (KORD) and/or the Karen Environmental and Social Action Network (KESAN).

LIFT has been coordinating and supporting The Border Consortium (TBC) and its partners for a first response in support of the newly displaced population. Other partners under the new South-East programme are also partnering with ethnic CSOs and service providers for the first humanitarian response in support of the displaced population.

LIFT supported the operational costs of the MCCT programme in Kayah and Kayin up to the end of 2020. After the coup in February, LIFT cancelled this support and IRC and CPI projects are conducting assessments and consultations with a view to resetting their programmes in the new context, in line with LIFT's revised nutrition strategy.

As in Kachin and northern Shan State, LIFT's support to the MS-NPAN was planned to continue for another year and implementation in Kayin State was to be piloted at the sub-national level. The LIFT team has now developed an alternative multisectoral plan building on the work carried out so far, but with different implementation modalities, and through non-government service providers.

<sup>108</sup> MoHS (2018) Myanmar Micronutrient and Food Consumption Survey

<sup>109</sup> WB (2018) Myanmar Living Conditions Survey 2017: Report 3, Nay Pyi Taw and Yangon, Myanmar: WB.

<sup>110</sup> TBC annual report 2020

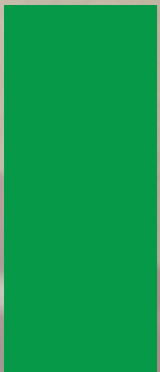
# CROSS- CUTTING AREAS

# 06

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## POLICY

CROSS-CUTTING  
AREAS

## 6.1

## POLICY

**Policy Indicators**

In 2020, LIFT and its implementing partners convened 100 policy events and produced 80 policy publications. There were 12 policy/programme changes and two government budget allocation/spending changes. Most of the events and changes occurred in the first half of 2020.

Policy activities were implemented as scheduled in the first quarter of 2020. The first wave of COVID-19 disrupted activities in April and May when some events were postponed or canceled. LIFT, IPs and government partners adjusted quickly to online platforms and by July/August many activities resumed. For example, the REAL Dev consortium working on land reallocation convened a workshop in Nay Pyi Taw with Union-level and Magway regional officials to review progress in programme implementation. LIFT was even able to conduct a field visit to Magway during this time. However, the second wave of COVID-19 meant that most activities slowed or came to a halt during the fourth quarter of the year. Some planned interactions with members of parliament could not take place and travel restrictions grounded project field visits from mid-March to June, and then from September through December, which prevented LIFT and IPs from interacting more with state/regional and local authorities as planned at the beginning of the year. Parliament was not in session during much of the second half of the year because of COVID-19 restrictions and the national election in early November.

Overall, 55 per cent of the policy events that occurred and 90 per cent of publications produced can be attributed to partners. LIFT's FMO organised 45 per cent of the policy events in 2020 and produced 10 per cent of the policy publications.

In the thematic areas of Decent Work and Labour Mobility and Agriculture, Markets and Food Systems IPs organised about three-quarters of the policy events. Some of LIFT's partners are primarily or solely implementing policy-oriented projects. For example, the Agriculture

Value Chain Development project (AVCD) implemented by Michigan State University (MSU) and the REAL DEV land reallocation project are primarily concerned with policy and account for a great deal of activity within the Agriculture, Markets and Food Systems thematic area. Similarly, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and International Organization for Migration (IOM) projects are also primarily oriented toward policy and account for a great deal of policy activity within the Decent Work and Labour Mobility Programme.

COVID-19 actually generated considerable policy activity in several areas. One example of this is the telephone survey that the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) initiated to track the impact of COVID-19 on agriculture production, the rural economy and food security. These surveys generated several publications as well as online events to disseminate survey results to key stakeholders. The MSU project generated two policy publications providing recommendations for how MoALI might consider responding to COVID-19.

In LIFT's thematic programme areas of Financial Inclusion and Nutrition it was LIFT's Fund Management Office (FMO) that organised the majority of policy events. LIFT's FMO directly supports the Multisectoral National Plan of Action on Nutrition (MS-NPAN) and the Policy Unit regularly organises high-level policy events in Nay Pyi Taw and Yangon. LIFT's Financial Inclusion Programme worked closely with policymakers to adjust policy directions in response to COVID-19 that adversely affected microfinance operations. These are presented in 4.2 Financial Inclusion of this report.

It is inherently difficult to discern a direct line connecting policy events and publications to policy and budget changes. The challenges associated with attribution involve many factors, including time, stakeholder relationships and interests, public awareness, and contextual and institutional dynamics. In certain cases, policy and spending changes occur only after an extended period of programming and policy engagement, while in other instances they may occur more quickly. It is important to consider other factors that influence or affect policy change, in addition to LIFT's input, and also that certain policy areas, such as land tenure, are exceptionally conflicted, while others such as social protection are less so. Certain policy issues also require considerable effort to raise awareness on the part of government officials and the public before a demand for change crystallises. Two examples of this are policies around migrant worker rights and gender-based violence.

### **Policy engagement with Government**

Policy engagement in Nay Pyi Taw got off to a good start early in 2020. Committees from the Lower House of Parliament received the MS-NPAN core team on 19 February 2020. The purpose of the meeting was to provide the core team with an opportunity to update the relevant committees on the progress of MS-NPAN planning and implementation. The meeting was part of a broader strategy concerning resource mobilisation to support the longer-term sustainability of the MS-NPAN efforts. In the meeting, the MS-NPAN team presented the national and regional structure of the MS-NPAN committees as well as the implementation plan and activities. The chairpersons from Agriculture, Livestocks and Rural Development Committee, Women and Children Committee, Health and Sports Committee and Farmer and Worker Affairs Committee, and committee members attended the presentation and actively engaged in discussions with representatives from the National Nutrition Center (NNC) of the Ministry of Health and Sports (MoHS) and other MS-NPAN core team members. As a result of this event, a member of parliament raised a question related to the MS-NPAN during a parliamentary session in July 2020.

A parliamentary field visit to Kayah State was also arranged to support better policy engagement between union- and state-levels of government. The visit took place on 14 March 2020 and was organised in collaboration with the Westminster Foundation for Democracy from the UK. The chairman and six members of the Pyithu Hluttaw Agriculture, Livestock, and Rural Development Committee participated in the field trip. They visited the Agro-Input and Farm Services Uplands Project that is implemented through a partnership between the government, private sector and the International Fertilizer Development Center (IFDC), funded by LIFT. They also visited two village sites of the Maternal and Child Cash Transfer (MCCT) Programme implemented by the Department of Social Welfare (DSW), which LIFT is supporting with an operational grant. The Union members of parliament (MPs) met with the State Chief Minister, farmers groups and state MPs to discuss their findings and observations from the trip. The committee also met with the Department of Agriculture, Department of Social Welfare and Department of Public Health for further discussions on access to water and finance. The Chief Minister of Kayah State indicated he would look into the state budget allocations to mitigate water shortages. He also expressed strong interest in the MCCT programme and committed to continued support for the programme. The Rural Development Committee indicated they would discuss issues raised during the trip and report to the speaker of the house. Reports of key findings were submitted to LIFT's FMO and Fund Board.

Following this successful initial parliamentary field visit, LIFT and the Westminster Foundation for Democracy planned a more ambitious series of field visits to LIFT projects when Parliament was in session. Ideas included a visit to Shan State to observe LIFT-supported labour migration and decent work projects, a visit to Kanpalet in Chin State to visit MCCT programming, and a visit to the Dry Zone to visit disabilities programming. These ideas reflected LIFT's strategic thinking about broadening the range of parliamentary committees with which LIFT engages, and to engage more actively at the state/regional level. However, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and related government prevention and mitigation measures in March 2020, prevented any of these field visits from being implemented.

The COVID-19 measures, including restrictions on movement and lockdowns, prevented the Policy Unit from organising the planned Policy Community of Practice event with policy implementing partners. Also put on hold were workshop activities pertaining to land tenure, disabilities, and good agricultural practices. The preparation of policy briefs concerning land tenure, disabilities, and social protection were set aside as the Policy Unit pivoted in the direction of COVID-19 response activities. Research concerning customary land tenure did take place as originally planned at the beginning of the year.

### **Knowledge and evidence management**

Strengthening institutional capacities for generating knowledge products with policy-specific applications enables LIFT to better inform policy engagement and advocacy. Key sources of knowledge and evidence are lessons learned from project implementation, monitoring reports, survey work and research findings. In 2020, LIFT's FMO and IPs produced 91 publications in the form of reports, briefs and other documentation.

LIFT usually disseminates information through in-person workshops and presentations to key stakeholders. For example, LIFT convened two meetings in early 2020 with members of parliament to provide them with information about nutrition in Myanmar and the MS-NPAN. However, as a result of COVID-19 and the impact of restrictions on travel

and public meetings, LIFT, partners and other key stakeholders had to transition to online platforms. The methodologies and approaches for collecting data also had to change as a result of COVID-19. Two good examples of this are the telephone survey work that IFPRI conducted during the second half of the year concerning COVID-19 impacts on the rural economy and the post-distribution monitoring phone survey on LIFT's social protection cash transfer response to COVID-19.

In addition to a significant number of publications, MSU and IFPRI convened a series of online workshops to disseminate key findings from the telephone surveys. The online workshop participants included MoALI government officials, development partners, LIFT donors, NGOs and civil society organisations.

A key challenge for LIFT continues to be translating knowledge and evidence from programme implementation and research into policy tools such as briefs, research summaries, technical presentations and other forms of communication, such as videos, podcasts, and blogs. A key component of the Policy Unit's 2020 work plan focused on increasing coordination and collaboration across LIFT's thematic and cross-cutting teams. This objective was partly achieved as LIFT pivoted to provide a strong COVID-19 response that involved coordination across LIFT's programme and policy teams, including social protection, nutrition, decent work and labour mobility, and Rakhine.

Some of the most significant lessons learned in 2020 related to adaptations to using online platforms. LIFT and partners quickly developed good online communication skills. One interesting innovation that emerged during the year was the 'virtual field visit'. Several national programme officers conducted field visits online and others conducted mid-term and end-term reviews online.

### **Partnerships and Collaboration**

A great deal of LIFT's policy work is undertaken by its implementing partners and civil society strategic partners and they are a critical component of LIFT's Policy Engagement Strategy. LIFT's ability to effectively influence policy depends largely on the strengths and capacities of its partnership networks.

Partners capacities for effective policy engagement vary across LIFT's programming portfolio. A key objective for LIFT therefore is to help strengthen partners policy engagement capacities and practices, including monitoring and reporting. One important approach since late-2016 has been to convene regular community of practice (CoP) workshops that bring partners, including CSO partners, and government partners together to share lessons learned from their respective policy experiences. Between 2017-2019, LIFT FMO convened two Policy CoPs each year. However, as a result of LIFT's pivot to a strong COVID-19 response during 2020, the Policy Unit was unable to convene CoPs as planned. The work plan for 2021 includes at least one general policy CoP as well as CoPs for specific thematic areas.

Another 2020 work plan objective for LIFT was to strengthen policy engagement at the sub-national level. In this regard, partnerships with local CSOs become increasingly important. Of particular importance are the Small Grants Funds that support local CSOs at community and township level for community organising and advocacy. This approach to supporting engagement at the local level is especially relevant in conflict-affected areas. For example, one notable achievement in terms of strengthening partnerships at the sub-national level in conflict-affected areas concerns LIFT's engagement with Forest Trends as an implementing partner in the South-East (discussed further below).

During 2020, LIFT continued to establish new relationships and partnerships. The relationship with the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) was established toward the end of 2019 and resulted in a parliamentary visit to LIFT project sites in Kayah State during March 2020. During the latter part of 2020, LIFT initiated discussions with the FAO Investment Centre about a possible collaboration with MoALI on agriculture trade. This project referred to as 'Market Connectivity' is discussed in more detail below.

### **Lessons Learned**

Strong partnerships are the foundation for effective collaboration, especially in emergency situations that require rapid adaptations in programming and administration. LIFT's ability to rapidly pivot toward a wide range of effective COVID-19 response measures was largely a function of its strong partnerships with government, donors, implementing partners, and strategic CSO partners. Indeed, LIFT's approach toward establishing and maintaining effective partnerships can serve as a model for other organisations that also rely on partner collaboration for programming and policy engagement.

As with the previous year, the events of 2020 remind everyone that three-year project implementation cycles are rarely in sync with policy and budget cycles. As part of its efforts to build partners' capacities for policy engagement, LIFT's FMO needs to continue to help strengthen their practical and strategic understanding of policy and budget cycles.

### **Internal Communication and Coordination**

Improving communication and policy coordination across LIFT as well as between LIFT's Fund Board and the Fund Management Office (FMO) provides meaningful opportunities for strengthening LIFT's capacity to inform and influence policy in line with the policy vision set out in the 2019-2023 strategy.

One approach for improving communication and coordination is to clarify LIFT's policy objectives. As the socio-economic and geo-political contexts are highly dynamic, policy objectives and approaches are likely to evolve over time. A second approach is for the FMO to have a better understanding of the policy objectives of its Fund Board members to help ensure a greater complementarity of effort.

LIFT made good progress at the beginning of 2020 in some of these areas. The collaborative scoping mission exercise for the South-East took place in early 2020 and provided a good opportunity for programme and policy teams, along with Fund Board members, to jointly assess and then eventually design the South-East Programme. The introduction of strategic learning questions into the design of the South-East and North-East Programmes also helped improve internal communication and coordination between programme and policy teams.

Attention was diverted from policy objective reviews and policy discussions with Fund Board members once LIFT pivoted resources to COVID-19 responses. The policy team will conduct policy reviews during the first half of 2021.

### **COVID-19 response actions**

The Policy Unit played an active role in supporting LIFT's social protection response to COVID-19. The policy team collaborated with Nutrition Programme team members to draft the social protection concept note and budget that was approved by the Fund Board in mid-March. This note outlined a collaboration with the Department of Social Welfare to

provide MCCT and social pension beneficiary households with a one-off lump sum cash transfer of MMK 30,000 (USD 22). The total budget for this effort was USD 9 million, including USD 4.9 million for MCCT beneficiary households and USD 4.1 million for social pension beneficiary households. The cash transfers were distributed in June 2020 along with COVID-19 prevention and mitigation information to 242,000 MCCT beneficiaries and more than 200,000 social pension beneficiaries. When all household members are included, it is estimated that approximately 1.8 million people benefitted from the cash transfers. The policy team also contributed to LIFT's efforts to deliver cash transfers to internally displaced people in collaboration with DSW and CSO partners.

One of the most significant challenges concerning the design of the social protection interventions for vulnerable groups in society was the distribution of the cash transfers. The justification for targeting MCCT and social pension households was twofold. First, both MCCT and social pension beneficiaries represent some of the more vulnerable groups in society to the adverse effects of COVID-19 on livelihoods and health. Second, the MCCT and social pensions distribution platforms were already in place and could be activated in a relatively short period of time. A key lesson learned from this experience is that it is more effective and efficient to work through distribution mechanisms that are already in place and functioning reasonably well.

Another important challenge that LIFT's Fund Management Office and DSW faced concerned the actual contracting arrangements. The rules and regulations concerning contracting on both sides proved to be very complex and required considerable time and effort in internal and external discussions. A key lesson from this experience was the need for a high degree of capacity for adaptive and flexible management. Another lesson concerned the important role that cordial and professional relationships between the two sides played in bringing contract negotiations to a successful conclusion. These relationships are in turn characterised by a high degree of trust that has been built over the past several years of ongoing close collaboration.

A third challenge that the FMO and DSW faced concerned the design and implementation of a post-distribution monitoring (PDM) mechanism to verify the timely distribution of the cash transfers and assess their impact on recipient households. A related challenge was assessing the degree to which LIFT's COVID-19 response had influenced policy and programming on the part of government, development partners, and other actors such as CSOs. LIFT was able to collaborate effectively with DSW to design and implement a PDM exercise of cash transfers to beneficiary households. LIFT's international and national M&E consultants worked closely with DSW staff on the technical design of the PDM and an online training module for DSW case managers. The implementation of a PDM mechanism for the social pension beneficiary households was even more challenging as monitoring mechanisms for social pension delivery are not yet fully developed.

The design and implementation of the COVID-19 social protection PDM mechanism was also facilitated by a DSW staff member undertaking field practice with LIFT for her Master of Social Work studies at Washington University. DSW requested LIFT to oversee the candidate's fieldwork as her original fieldwork placement in Kenya could not proceed because of COVID-19. LIFT's Policy Specialist holds a Master of Social Work degree and was able to oversee the fieldwork, which included survey design, training field surveyors, and overseeing data collection and analysis. The candidate also played an important role in facilitating communication between LIFT and DSW.

Two important lessons have emerged from LIFT's experience with the post-distribution monitoring design and implementation. First, it is important to consider monitoring from the outset of the intervention design and implementation. The second lesson concerns the need to accelerate the development of a sustainable monitoring mechanism for social pensions. This is an effort that can be supported by HelpAge International in the course of implementing its Shock Response Capacity Building project with DSW. LIFT's M&E consultants may also be able to contribute to this effort.

In June, the Policy Unit, including the Social Protection Officer, developed a concept note and budget for cash transfers to people with disabilities. Over the past three years, DSW has made a one-time annual cash transfer to approximately 162,000 beneficiaries. As a result, DSW has a distribution system in place to reach people with disabilities. However, questions arose over the targeting of beneficiaries as there are far more than 162,000 people with disabilities in Myanmar. The selection criteria is important for transparency and accountability. DSW eventually decided to provide cash transfers to people with disabilities and requested LIFT to focus its resources on cash transfers to people who are internally displaced.

COVID-19 response actions: Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation (MoALI) LIFT initiated four COVID-19 response interventions with MoALI. Two interventions were financed with the remaining balance of funds allocated to MoALI by the Fund Board in 2017. The total allocation was USD 4.1 million. USD 2.9 million had been allocated to the REAL Dev land tenure project and USD 1.2 million remained. A cash-for-work project was selected to focus on strengthening seed farm infrastructure in the Ayeyarwady Region. The project's budget is USD 995,000 and is described in more detail in the Agriculture and Rural Markets Programme section of this report.

The second project responds to a specific request from the Department of Planning (DoP) for technical assistance to help develop a funding proposal that MoALI could use to secure financing from international



Partner	Project name	Main activities	Project duration	Geographic coverage
Metta	Small Grants Fund	COVID-19 prevention and recovery Emergency assistance Organisational development	Jul 2020 – Nov 2021	All townships in Rakhine State
Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)	Vocational Training and Livelihood Opportunities for Youth in and out of camps in Rakhine State – Phase II	Vocational skills training	Jan 2019 – Dec 2020	Sittwe, Maungdaw townships
International Labour Organization (ILO)	Skills for Improvement of Livelihoods, Economic Opportunities and Security	Inclusive TVET policy development in Rakhine Development and implementation of a diversified and flexible approach to skills development	Jul 2017 – Sep 2020	Sittwe, Kyaukphyu, Thandwe, Gwa, Buthidaung, Maungdaw townships
International Rescue Committee (IRC) <sup>73</sup>	Tat Lan Sustainable Food Security and Livelihoods Programme Phase II	Agriculture technical support Mother-to-Mother support Groups WASH infrastructure and hygiene promotion	Jan 2016 – Oct 2020	Myebon, Minbya townships
PATH <sup>74</sup>	Introduction of Fortified Rice in Myanmar	Introduction of fortified rice in Myanmar	Oct 2013– Jun 2020	Sittwe, Kyauktaw townships
UNOPS/LIFT	Rakhine Communication Hub (RCH)	Communication with local communities, media and Civil Society Organisations Media production training	Jul 2019 – Jun 2021	Rakhine State
Relief International (RI)	Response Mechanism for Addressing Protracted Displacement in Rakhine State, Myebon and Mrauk U	Strengthening Livelihoods and Social Cohesion Service delivery to support the resettlement process Protection monitoring and mechanisms	Jan 2019 – Dec 2021	Myebon and Mrauk-U townships
Save the Children (SCI)	Tat Lan Plus	Improved nutrition security for men, women, girls and boys in targeted households across all communities Strengthened health and nutrition services and WASH commodities	Jan 2019 – Jun 2021	Sittwe, Pauktaw townships
Vision Fund Myanmar (VFM)	Financial Inclusion in Central Rakhine	Provision of sustainable and Inclusive Financial Services in central Rakhine communities	Sep 2018 – Sep 2021	Sittwe, Mrauk-U, Kyauktaw, Kyaukphyu, Rameree townships
World Food Programme (WFP)	Scaling up fortified rice production and consumption through Myanmar	Distribution of fortified rice to crisis affected people through the emergency/relief programme.	Aug 2017 – Sep 2020	Sittwe Township
Yoma Bank	Yoma Bank Agri-Business Finance Program (Yoma Bank AFP)	Hire purchase of agriculture machinery	Dec 2015 – Jun 2020	Countrywide including Rakhine State
United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF)	Leaving no one behind	Strengthening MFIs through technical assistance and financing Financial Inclusion	Dec 2019 – Dec 2022	Countrywide including Rakhine State

Partner	Project name	Main activities	Project duration	Geographic coverage
Pact Global Microfinance Fund (PGMF)	Livelihood Improvement in Vulnerable Environment (LIVE)	Access to financial services	Oct 2019 – Jun 2022	Countrywide including Rakhine State
Microfinance Delta International Company Limited (MIFIDA)	Microfinance Capital Market Development Programme	Supporting MFIs access affordable funding Allowing MFIs to continue to grow their capacity and funds available for individual borrowers	Feb 2020 – Jan 2024	Countrywide including Rakhine State

Table 5.1: LIFT-supported projects in Rakhine

financial organisations. The DoP refers to this project as 'Market Connectivity' and has a budget of USD 250,000. LIFT's role was to procure the services of an international firm to work closely with MoALI to develop the proposal. A ToR was developed and endorsed by MoALI. In November 2020, the Policy Unit initiated discussions with the FAO Investment Centre to take on this project.

A third initiative was financial support for a series of phone surveys conducted by IFPRI. As the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the rural economy and agriculture production became increasingly apparent, MoALI and development partners quickly recognised a need to systematically monitor the impacts the pandemic was having on the rural economy and agriculture production, as well as livelihoods, food security, and nutrition. With additional funding from LIFT, IFPRI conducted a series of telephone surveys beginning in June 2020. IFPRI completed six phone surveys and produced a series of working papers and policy notes during the second half of 2020. Between July and November 2020, the project also conducted monthly webinars based on findings of these surveys. The webinars were led by IFPRI, in collaboration with MoALI and other ministries, development partners, NGOs and the private sector. The members of the Agriculture and Rural Development Sector Coordination Group and other interested individuals were invited to participate in these webinars. LIFT's Fund Director was invited to facilitate two of the webinars.

The fourth initiative concerned financial support for the procurement of personal protective equipment (PPE) for the Department of Agriculture's field personnel nationwide, a total of 7,500 staff members. The PPE included surgical masks, hand sanitiser, infrared non-contact thermometers, rubber long gloves, and disposable gloves. These materials are delivered to MoALI in Nay Pyi Taw and then distributed by DoA nationwide.

### Policy engagement with Government

#### Agriculture Value Chain Development Project in Myanmar (AVCD)

The AVCD is jointly funded by LIFT and USAID and implemented by Michigan State University (MSU) and the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI). The overall goal of the project is to promote inclusive agricultural productivity growth, improved nutritional outcomes, and enhanced livelihood resilience for men and women through an improved policy enabling environment. In the past, the

project conducted a wide range of research on agri-food value chains and household and community livelihoods and food security. In 2020, the project received a costed extension for another two years with a modified scope of work focusing on the three work streams.

**Workstream 1:** Agricultural and Food System Analysis as a foundation for effective policy engagement with new Union and Regional Governments in 2021

During 2020, the project focused on developing an agricultural and food system policy analysis paper for the new leadership, which was expected to take up office in 2021. This paper provided policy analysis and actionable recommendations for the new leaders on Myanmar's agriculture sector. On 18 March 2020, the project conducted an induction and consultation meeting in Yangon with LIFT Fund Management Office and Fund Board, which guided the project to include agriculture in conflict-affected areas in the analysis paper.

The implementation of Workstream 1 was delayed due to the COVID-19 crisis. However, an initial working draft was completed in early January 2021 and shared with a group of LIFT focal officers, MoALI officers, Yezin Agricultural University academics, private sector and NGO actors for review and comments. This paper was scheduled to be finalised in English and Myanmar Languages and shared with MoALI by the end of March 2021 in time for MoALI to present early in the new parliamentary session.

**Workstream 2:** Preparation of an agricultural research and extension reform masterplan

MoALI recognises the need for an agricultural research and extension reform masterplan to enable Myanmar farmers and agribusinesses to access the technologies needed to adapt to climate change, as well as to respond to new market opportunities for high nutritional quality and high value enterprises. Since 2018, the AVCD Project has worked closely with the Department of Agriculture Research (DAR) to support the development of the masterplan.

During 2020, the project provided an international consultant to technically support DAR's seven working groups in developing a 20-year national plan focused on building agricultural research capacity, especially that of DAR. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the working groups and the masterplan coordinating committee had to postpone the completion date until the end of May 2021. The project completed a draft organisational reform for the national agricultural research system and distributed it to all departmental heads in MoALI for their review and input.

**Workstream 3:** Capacity building for applied policy research and analysis by Yezin Agricultural University and MoALI

Capacity for agricultural research and applied policy research is limited and highly fragmented within MoALI. The units with relative strength are the Department of Agricultural Economics at Yezin Agricultural University and the DoP, which houses the fledgling Agriculture Policy Unit. Besides these two, the DoA and the DAR each have a few agricultural economics graduates. Rather than pushing for major organisational changes late in the political cycle, this workstream focuses on strengthening the capacity of MoALI analysts to prepare clear policy or investment programme recommendations that increase the demand from decision makers for evidence-based advice. The workstream is implemented in coordination with advisers funded by the European Union in the areas of land policy/land administration and nutrition. The workstream strengthens this

network of analysts and improves the quality of teaching and research.

Prior to COVID-19, project staff were able to design and teach a course for one of the two planned semesters in 2020. The project aimed to initiate a second semester course in December, assuming Yezin Agricultural University re-opened, and incorporate the results of surveys and analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on agri-food systems and the rural economy conducted with additional funding agreed by LIFT. This would allow graduates to be better equipped to help government, private sector and civil society employers in the post-COVID-19 agri-food system.

**Completion of research reports using data collected in 2019 and dataset publication**

The project team completed the final two reports of research conducted during the second half of 2019. The research focused on: (1) the maize and pigeon pea production in Southern Shan State, and (2) the livestock sector (poultry and pork) linked to large urban centres. Seventeen datasets were made public on Harvard Dataverse during 2020.

Information on the AVCD project is also included in Annex 6: Policy Engagement of this report.

**Reallocation and Development of Unused Concession Land Project (REAL DEV)**

The implementation of the REAL DEV land project commenced in October 2019. The project is implemented by three consortium members: Network Activities Group (NAG), Land Core Group (LCG) and the Centre for Development and Environment (CDE). NAG is the lead of the consortium and is a local NGOs as well as one of LIFT's strategic partners. They have a proven track record in project implementation of livelihoods, agriculture, climate change, crop value chains promotion, as well as fisheries and forestry management. The role of NAG for the REAL DEV project is coordinating implementation at the field level in collaboration with LCG and CDE who are leading on the land tenure component of the project. NAG is fully responsible for the implementation of the agricultural component of the project. LCG is also one of LIFT's strategic partners and plays a leading local role in supporting land governance reform in Myanmar. CDE is an interdisciplinary research center of excellence of the University of Bern, Switzerland. The CDE has strong technical skills and expertise on land spatial data management and land cadastral mapping. In partnership with MoALI, CDE helped establish the National Land Information Management System under the One-Map Myanmar project.

The six-month inception phase was completed in March 2020. The first year of project implementation was then initiated despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the first year of project implementation, the project completed staff recruitment and finalised its MEAL plan with LIFT FMO support. The REAL DEV field team established an office in the regional government compound in Magway. During 2020, the project team completed the following activities:

The project team organised consultation meetings in 15 villages that were attended by 971 villagers, including 41 per cent women and 6.5 per cent minority ethnic groups. Three consultations were also organised with key civil society organisations in Magway Region. Representatives of 10 CSOs participated in these consultations, providing their concerns and suggestions on the land reallocation process. A total of 36 people, including 6 women, participated in the consultative workshops. Two ad-

hoc steering committee meetings were convened by the Magway Region Agriculture Minister.

A systematic review of Myanmar's land related laws and policies was finalised. This review considered the status of present policies and legislative instruments and identified gaps in the land reallocation process.

Land reallocation process guidelines were presented at a multi-stakeholder workshop with different levels of government, ranging from the Chief Minister to village leaders. After further consultations, the process guidelines will be revised.

Three applications were developed to collect and analyse data relevant to land use and they were tested in the field. The applications include field data collection, farm plot delineation, and flight planning for drones.

Systematic data on agriculture land use and land claims were collected, and initial analysis on land claims was carried out. This will be validated after Kwin mapping is completed.

The preliminary assessment on land use land cover change (LULC) was carried out using GIS and remote sensing from 1990 to 2020.

The existing farming land and land claims in the concession area were also analysed. The data shows farmers from another township, Ngape Township, also claim some of the land. A total of 676 households claim tenure rights in the concession area. A total of 154 households in the concession area already received Form 7, covering 1,002 acres. Data shows that 122 farmers are already cultivating in the concession area.

The project facilitated the formation of 12 village level Land Management and Development Committees.

A complaints and beneficiaries feedback mechanism was established and basic principles on conflict management were stipulated.

LIFT FMO conducted a field visit to monitor the REAL DEV project site in August, just before the second COVID-19 wave. FMO staff participated in a project update workshop in Nay Pyi Taw on 18 August along with senior government officials from MoALI. As a result of this workshop and follow-up virtual meetings with MoALI, it was agreed that vacant, fallow and virgin (VFV) land use certificates (Form 11) would be initially granted for the REAL DEV land reallocation process. Farmland Use Certificates (Form 7) would then be issued after one cropping season, thus converting the land status of VFV lands into farmlands. Despite the agreement to use Form 11 for the sake of project implementation, the project team suggested it was not clear that the land in the REAL DEV project site fell under the VFV land category rather than farmland, as there were about 100 farmers who already possessed Form 7s.

During the first year of the project's implementation, the REAL DEV project team identified that their key challenge was an inconsistent commitment to the project across various departments. For example, the implementation of land mapping exercises at the field level were not yet approved. LIFT's FMO has played an active role in negotiating with union-level officials for permission to initiate the land mapping exercise.

This issue suggests the need for a more rigorous initial assessment of institutional dynamics and inter-departmental relationships within MoALI. LIFT assumed that the full endorsement from the Union MoALI minister and DoP was sufficient for successful project implementation.

An important lesson from the project is that more consideration of institutional dynamics within the Ministry would have helped the FMO better understand processes and commitments while the REAL DEV project was being designed.

Information on the REAL-DEV project is also included in Annex 6: Policy Engagement of this report.

#### **Monitoring and Documentation Mechanism (MADM)**

During the call for proposals of the REAL DEV programme, several organisations contacted LIFT with their concerns over the relationship between the REAL DEV Programme and the *VFV Land Law*. In response, LIFT conducted several consultations with concerned organisations and held a public consultation. One of the key recommendations that emerged from the consultations concerned the engagement of a third party to monitor and document the implementation of the REAL DEV land tenure component. As a result, LIFT created the monitoring and documentation mechanism (MADM) during the inception phase of the REAL DEV project. MADM is an innovative approach to learning and documentation designed to complement LIFT's traditional MEAL plan approach to M&E. Specifically, the MADM will assess and report on the extent to which the core principles of the project are adhered to during the implementation of the land tenure component, while the REAL DEV team will be responsible for the M&E tasks of the measurement plan and project indicators. The core principles identified for the land tenure component are: 1) Inclusive, participatory and streamlined processes, 2) Conflict-sensitivity (Do-no-harm), 3) Transparency, 4) Gender-sensitivity and 5) Pro-poor.

The contract for this assignment was awarded to GRET, a French INGO that has worked in Myanmar for more than a decade. They have a proven track record and a long working relationship with LIFT working on livelihoods, agriculture and land tenure strengthening. GRET undertook a desk-review of the REAL DEV programme plan and conducted their first field visit to Magway and Minhla Township in August 2020 where they met relevant stakeholders and documented implementation challenges. They provided recommendations for improving communication strategies, capacity building for staff, as well as engagement with government departments, CSOs and communities according to the core principles of the land tenure component.

During 2020, the REAL DEV consortium members reallocated some of the project budget to support a COVID-19 response in Magway. The project supported 76 temporary quarantine centres in seven townships, benefiting more than 3,000 households (60 per cent women). The project also provided cash to 390 vulnerable families (disabled, elderly and chronically ill), including 270 female-headed families. A total of MMK 27.3 million (USD 19,600) was distributed to households that had lost their daily wages because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### **Forest Trends**

Implementation of the Forest Trends project began in September 2020. The project is titled: Toward the Sustainable Peace in Southern Myanmar: Building Sub-National Level Government, EAOs and CSOs Capacity to Strengthen Tenure and Livelihoods.

Forest Trends is an international non-profit organisation that works with communities, governments, and businesses to help embed conservation into economic activities and prevent the destruction that comes from poorly planned, unsustainable resource allocation and development. Forest Trends has worked in Myanmar on forest and land governance reform since 2011.

The overall project objective is to enhance natural resource management and land tenure security by improving the capacity of local government and authorities at the sub-national level. It will promote and assist the development of ethnic land policy and strengthen the accountability and transparency of natural resource management governance. The project primarily works in Tanintharyi, Mon, Kayah and Kayin States, although its activities will help inform the entire land and natural resource management system of Myanmar.

#### Multi-Sector National Plan of Action for Nutrition (MS-NPAN)

In addition to the two Parliamentary events referred to above, LIFT's Fund Director and policy team met with the Minister of Health and Sports on 28 August. The main purpose of the meeting was to further engage the Minister on LIFT's support for the MS-NPAN and highlight relevant challenges. The main focus of the discussion was to request state and regional leadership of the MS-NPAN and resource mobilisation. The sub-national State and Regional Nutrition Promotion Committees require technical and operational support in order to operate as an effective coordination and decision-making authority. However, the committees are not yet functional. Sector-specific resource allocation had not yet been incorporated into departmental budgets in order to adequately fund the prioritised interventions and human resources needed to achieve the targets set out in the MS-NPAN. The FY 2020/2022 budgets are now targeted to include the MS-NPAN prioritised interventions, and support is needed to galvanise efforts.

In December 2020, FMO and the MS-NPAN core team invited the Chairmen of Health and Sports committees from both Upper House and Lower House of Parliaments to attend the third Nutrition Promotion Steering Committee (NPSC) meeting, marking the first ever participation of respective parliamentary committees. The ministry and committee also agreed to have a presentation of the micronutrients survey at the parliament.

In 2021, LIFT's Fund Management Office is resetting policy objectives and activities in light of Myanmar's contextual changes since 1 February 2021. Policy engagement will be reoriented to focus on non-state stakeholders, including donors/embassies, CSOs and NGOs, and private sector actors, as well as ethnic armed service providers. A policy paper on poverty and Myanmar's food insecurity crisis was prepared in 2021 and presents a detailed analysis of the current situation and recommends ways that donors and implementing partners can respond to the crisis.

LIFT's four main policy indicators will be redefined as part of the policy reset.





# 6.2

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## LOCALISATION

The essence of localisation is a shift of power from international to local development actors. Through a localisation agenda, LIFT aims to proactively contribute to a strong civil society in Myanmar where civic engagement and development activities are locally led and sustained. LIFT recognises that:

- » Local organisations have extensive local knowledge and maintain long-lasting relationships and trust with communities.
- » Local groups can work at different levels of the country (grassroots, township, state/regional and the national level). In many countries, including Myanmar, local groups can travel to and around areas that many international organisations cannot reach.
- » In times of crisis, they are quick to reach affected communities and always provide the first frontline response. In the context of COVID-19, local organisations did not experience the same disruption, discontinuity or costs as international organisations.
- » The unit costs for local organisations are generally less than international organisations and offer donors leaner implementation costs and good results.

In 2020, 31 per cent of LIFT's funding directly reached local CSOs.

### COVID-19 response of local civic actors

Local civic actors were key to LIFT's COVID-19 response and their reach was extraordinary. LIFT's local civil society partners reached 64 per cent of the 2.9 million total beneficiaries during the COVID-19 emergency response, with LIFT's strategic partners reaching over half of these people.

Fifty-six per cent of the beneficiaries were women, 6 per cent were aged 60 years and over and 1 per cent were people with disabilities.

With LIFT's emergency response funding, 285 organisations provided support during 2020 and 260 (91 per cent) of these were local or national organisations. These organisations shared 20 per cent (USD

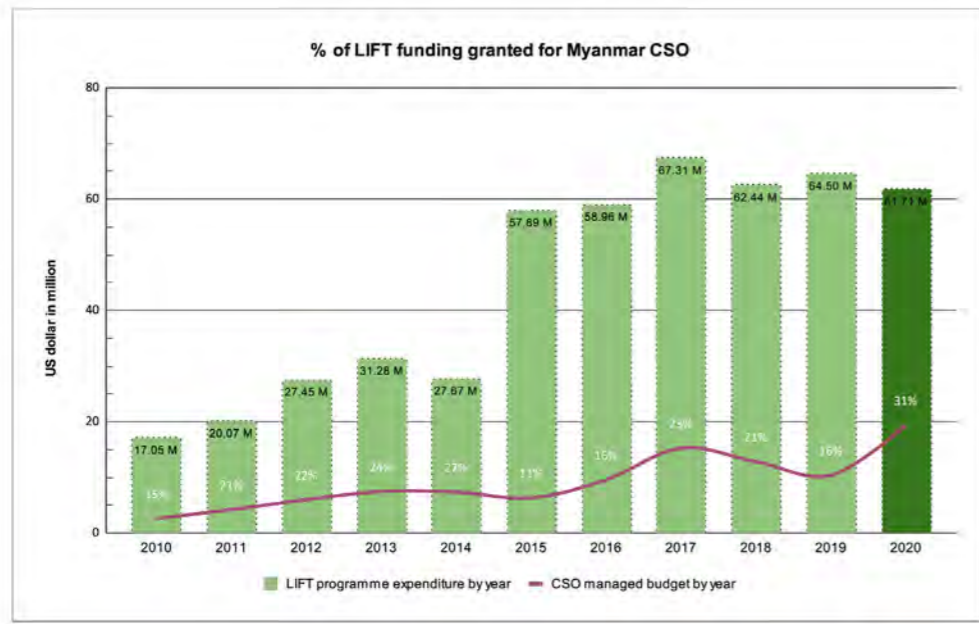


Figure 5.1 Percentage of LIFT funding granted for Myanmar CSOs

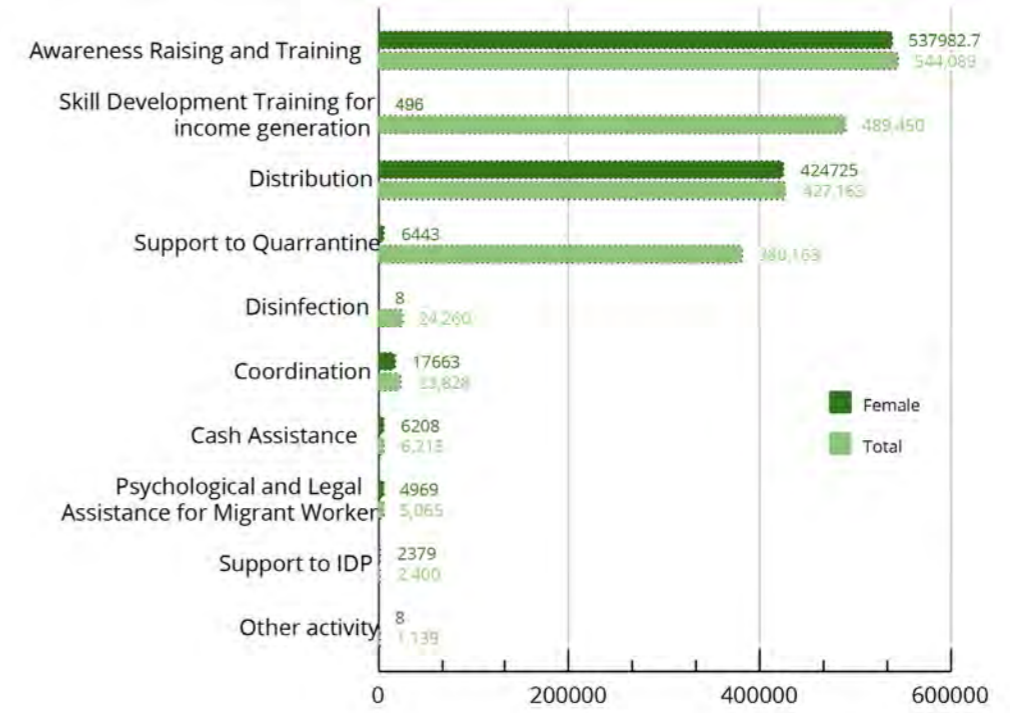


Figure 5.4: COVID-19 response activities of local CSOs

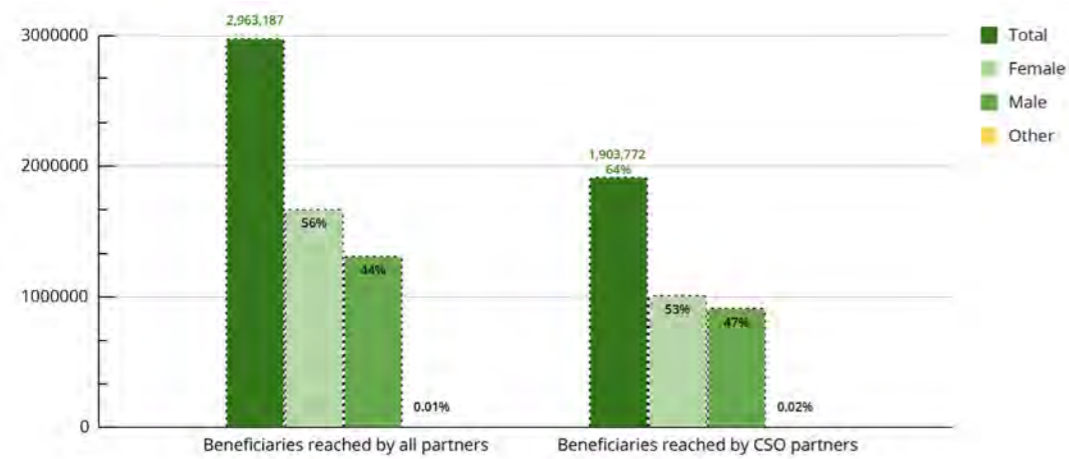


Figure 5.2: Number of beneficiaries reached by LIFT's COVID-19 Response

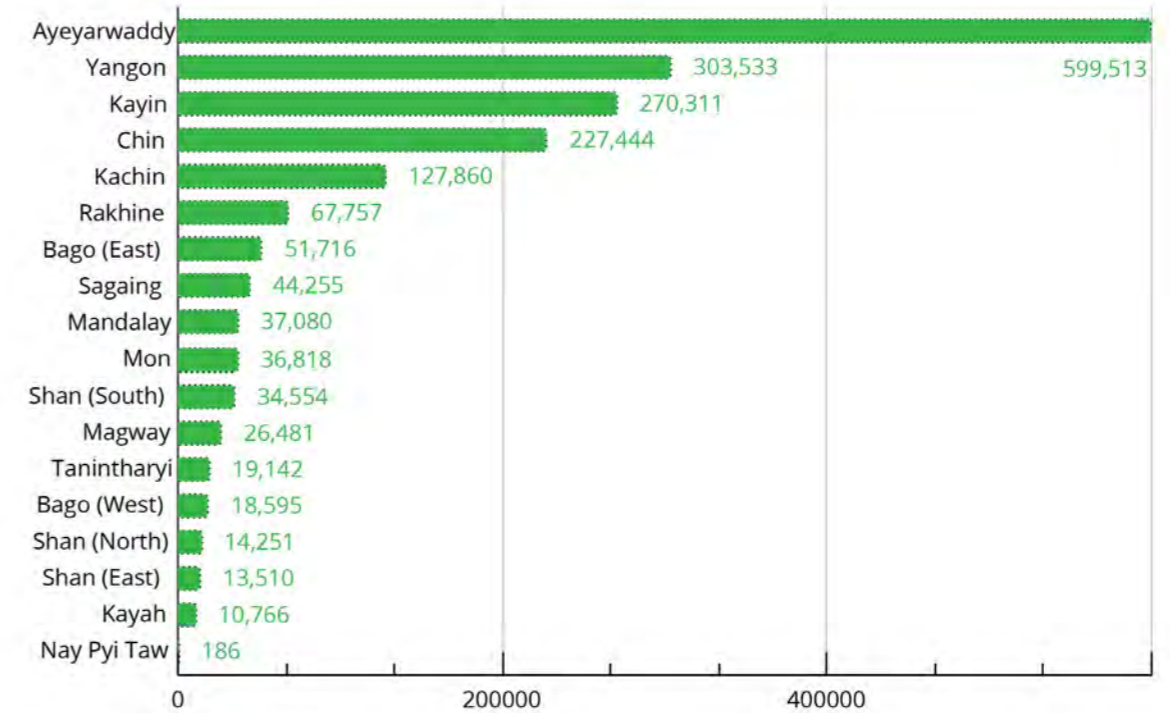


Figure 5.3: Beneficiaries reached by civil society partners in the States and Regions

5.27 million) of the total USD 25.5 million that LIFT committed to a COVID-19 response. An additional USD 1.5 million was allocated for LIFT strategic partners' COVID response.

In these different regions and states, LIFT civil society partners implemented several COVID-19 response activities and majority is the prevention and protection activities through awareness raising and training, followed by distribution of preventive items such as hand gel, masks, and gloves.

Through 23 local partners, Land Core Group's COVID-19 awareness raising activities covered 861 villages in 48 townships of six states and regions: Bago, Magway, Mon, Kayin, Ayeyarwady, and Sagaing.

The COVID-19 awareness raising activities of LIFT's civil society partners had a great impact on communities adjusting their behaviours to comply with COVID-19 safe practices. In some cases, awareness raising led to communities organising their own prevention activities. In Mon State, people helped the Karen National Union (KNU) implement a lockdown in their area. In Sagaing, village administrators and volunteers implemented lockdowns. In Ayeyarwady, people compiled lists of people coming back from other areas. In Mon and Ayeyarwaddy, COVID-19 response committees, consisting of village administrators, village elders, and volunteers, formed and circulated Ministry of Health and Sports (MoHS) information among their communities. Mask campaigns were carried out in markets and crowded places in Bago Region and Kayin State.

#### Cash grant support

Metta gave cash grants to internally displaced people in the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO)-controlled areas through WPN, a Kachin humanitarian NGO, and other members of the Joint Strategy Team, to reduce the economic burden of the COVID-19 pandemic. WPN provided cash support to 1,510 internally displaced households in Pa Kahtawng, Lana Zupja and Bum Tsit Pa camps. WPN developed cash distribution guidelines and worked closely with camp leaders for the distribution.

Between March and September, the Network Activities Group (NAG) provided cash to 731 families (55 per cent women) who were vulnerable during the pandemic or had an infected family member. The amount was small, but sufficient to cover basic household expenses for two months, and most of the families used the cash for food or medical expenses. NAG worked with the community-based organisations and Village Development Committees to identify the most vulnerable households in need of assistance and support. Families were ranked on a vulnerability scale to ensure that the most vulnerable families were reached.

#### Support to quarantine facilities and health centres

Most quarantine centres were operated with the help of volunteers and the available facilities became insufficient to meet communities' needs. The Government extended its support, and donors, CSOs, religious groups and communities played important roles in filling the gaps.

KMSS worked with government health officials to convert church facilities across Myanmar into quarantine centres. KMSS volunteers worked with the Township Health Departments to manage quarantine centres and provided food and beds for quarantined people and volunteers, WASH and hygiene facilities, and PPE to frontline workers. In Kachin, Kayin and Kayah State, they worked with ethnic armed organisations to implement the lockdowns ordered by the state governments. KMSS support

reached 54 quarantine facilities. This included 38 facilities managed by the government, 13 facilities offered by the Catholic Church and three facilities jointly managed by KIO and the Catholic Church. Support provided to the quarantine facilities included personal protective equipment, handwashing facilities, personal hygiene kits, beds, toilet and bathroom accessories, wheelchairs and information, education and communication materials about COVID-19 prevention.

NAG distributed 22 types of COVID-19 prevention items to 6,626 beneficiaries in 212 camps/quarantine centres. LCG provided COVID-19 prevention materials to 20 health centres in Magway, Ayeyarwady and Bago, and to government departments, COVID-19 response committees, orphanages and an aging centre. LCG also supported 164 quarantine centres in 26 townships of Ayeyarwaddy, Bago, Kayin and Magway.

In 2020, KMSS in collaboration with other CSOs identified 120 suspected COVID-19 cases and referred the cases to the medical units as instructed by governments.

#### Studies on COVID-19 and its economic impact

NAG conducted a study, *COVID-19 Impacts on the Fishery Sector in Ayeyarwady Region*, in June 2020 and the report was completed in July. The research aimed to understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the fisheries sector in the Ayeyarwady Region, covering six townships where the pandemic affected fisheries-based livelihoods. The study focused on small-scale/artisanal fishers and their related businesses, including fish collectors, processors, and aquaculture farmers. Specifically, the study identified issues related to the productivity of small-scale fisheries, availability of the fishery resources, processing of fishery products, market operations and how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted on people's livelihoods and how they coped.

The Community Food System Framework was used to analyse the data. The findings of the assessments contributed to the development of LIFT's strategic partners' concept note for a COVID-19 second wave response.

A content analysis was undertaken to review the information collected from the key informants and case studies. NAG also developed an SME evaluation report in 2020 to understand the effective practices and the challenges of SME businesses and to explore the impacts of the pandemic on SMEs.

#### Policy advocacy

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic disrupting many of LIFT's civil society partners' planned activities either because of restrictions or because resources were pivoted to the COVID-19 response, several partners managed to adapt and still make good progress on policy objectives.

In 2020, the *Protection of Violence Against Women (PoVAW) law* was drafted and when the bill was announced with requests for submissions to parliament the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement (MoSWRR) recognised the efforts of the Gender Equality Network (GEN) in supporting the legislation's development.

With GEN members, UN agencies and other CSOs, GEN formed the PoVAW Law Advocacy Working Group to prepare submissions to parliament on the law. GEN met with the Chairpersons of the Bill Committee and Women and Child Rights Committee from the Amyotha Hluttaw, and 10 members of parliament (MPs) and presented suggestions and recommendations related to the bill. MPs agreed with most of the

suggestions. On behalf of the Law Advocacy Working Group, GEN sent a letter to the Chairperson of the Parliament on 29 June encouraging amendments to the draft *PoVAW law*. COVID-19 restrictions delayed the law's enactment in 2020.

In 2020, GEN also initiated discussion with the LGBT Rights Network on amendment of Penal Code 377, which prohibits sexual relationships of LGBTQ+ people and includes penalties up to life imprisonment. GEN helped the network develop a policy brief that will be used in future advocacy work.

The Land Core Group (LCG) continued to make significant contributions to the development of a *National Land Law* through engagement with the National Land Law Formulation and Law Harmonisation Working Committee, under the National Land Use Council. Throughout, LCG has emphasised the need for transparency and public consultation. In 2020, the Union Attorney General's Office made commitments that a zero draft would not be used and that the law would be drafted through a process of consultation, and that CSO representatives would be included in the development of the *National Land Law* road map. The draft work plan was released for public comment.

LCG conducted a series of capacity building workshops with the Department of Agriculture Land Management and Statistics (DALMS) which appeared to result in improvements to internal governance that are necessary for enabling DALMS to contribute to improved land governance.

Through LCG's engagement with the One Map Myanmar (OMM) spatial land data portal there is increased transparency and inclusiveness in all processes. Three seats in the OMM Working Committee are now reserved for CSOs, there is greater CSO engagement in pilot initiatives in Tanintharyi, an effective consultation process has been incorporated in the concept of policy formulation, and there is more effective interaction in inter-departmental processes.

LCG made some progress in developing their engagement around land and peace. In addition to holding a seminar on federal land governance, LCG met twice with Karen National Union (KNU) leaders and twice with the Covenant Foundation that is developing a partnership with the Kaw Lah Foundation on peace work.

In 2020, Ayeyarwady fishers experienced the benefits of three policies and laws enacted in 2018 and 2019, to which the Network Activities Group (NAG) made a substantial contribution. The *Under 40 Lakhs Tender Allocation Policy*, the *Ayeyarwady Freshwater Fishery Law*, and the *Ayeyarwady Freshwater Fishery By-laws* promote small-scale fishers' access to fishing rights including rights to form community fishery associations and establish internal rules and by-laws to operate community fisheries in the region. Fishery communities who are accessing the fishing grounds are encouraged to participate in resource conservation, balanced with production. Since the new policy, fishery tax revenues have slightly decreased, but the tax reforms have improved the equity of access to fishing grounds. According to the report from Department of Fisheries (DoF), user conflict between fishery communities and illegal fishers significantly decreased in 2020 following law awareness activities that were carried out by DoF together with Ayeyarwady Regional Fisher Network (ARFN) and supported by NAG.

The allocation of lease and tender to fishery groups was facilitated by the Fisher Development Associations (FDA) and 133 leases, 44 tenders and three open fishing grounds were allocated to fishery groups within

the 19 project townships of NAG.

### **Alleviating COVID-19 economic hardships**

Fishers and their households in the 19 townships covered by NAG's project experienced significant declines in incomes as a result of the pandemic. Small-scale fishers had to discontinue lucrative nighttime fishing because of COVID-19 social distancing restrictions. They could continue daytime fishing until April 2020 because fewer people are required to fish during the day, but the incomes earned were substantially reduced. When the fishing season finished in May/June, fishers and their households needed alternative work but COVID-19 restrictions had closed factories and job opportunities were scarce. The pandemic also resulted in disruption in the flow of goods and suspension of fish buying operations by the collectors. Many people working in the fisheries sector faced serious economic hardships.

In April, the government distributed rice, oil, onions, and financial support for elderly people, which provided fishing households with some relief.

NAG worked in collaboration with Ayeyarwady Regional Fisher Network (ARFN), Fisher Development Associations and the Myanmar Economic Bank (MEB) to launch microfinance loans targeting the fishing community.

Three loan types were devised to support fishers with their operations: leasehold loans, tender loans and open fishing ground loans. The NAG team worked with MEB on details of the loan programme and helped small-scale fishers in the Ayeyarwady Region to formally and systematically access loans.

In August 2020, a workshop was held to develop MEB's loan manual guidelines with ARFN, followed by a survey to identify people's needs. In October 2020, meetings were conducted in three villages: Hlay Seik and A Kyaw Villages in Danuphyu Township, Mintasu Village in Pantanaw Township and at the DoF office in Pantanaw Township to introduce the MEB loan programme and collect proposals for loans. In November 2020, loan proposals were reviewed and finalised by MEB with ARFN. Clients were selected carefully based on the criteria established in August/September. This is MEB's first experience providing loans and services to fishery groups and NAG will continue to support the programme to ensure that loan repayment schedules take into account the seasonality of fishing incomes and clients' ability to repay.

### **Networking among local civic actors**

Networking or connectivity is one of the key factors in building a stronger civil society and LIFT's civil society partners use this approach as one of their policy advocacy tools and in widening and strengthening their civic space.

In 2020, LIFT's five strategic partners (Karuna Mission Social Solidarity, Land Core Group, Network Activities Group, Metta and the Gender Equality Network) collaborated frequently and effectively on COVID-19 responses. One of the collective efforts of LIFT's strategic partners was the development of the CSO-COVID App for CSO information sharing. The App includes a dashboard of COVID-19 daily updates. The data serves as a supplementary information source for governments and other partners.

Through mentoring of two CSOs in Bago Region, LCG helped them become more effective in their work with communities. In particular, Yae Kyi San moved from implementing NGO-style projects to supporting community mobilisation on land issues. Several communities in Bago

began to advocate strongly for their land rights as a result of engagement by LCG. A vacant, fallow and virgin land campaign started in Bago, in which CSOs participated and supported farmers' own advocacy.

LCG established a platform for Ayeyarwady-based CSOs to engage in the *National Land Law* process – a series of online CSO forums. A member of the National Land Law Formulation and Law Harmonization Working Committee who had previously shared little information with CSOs used one of these online forums to share information about the *National Land Law* process. He then organised three public consultations for the drafting committee. The CSOs also began to prepare for selection of external stakeholder representatives for the regional Land Use Committee, which they assumed would play an important role in the *National Land Law* process.

NAG organised experience-sharing workshops among fishery associations in different regions and states. The workshops were held twice in 2020 through an online platform and were attended by fishing partnerships from Rakhine and Mon States and Bago, Tanintharyi and Ayeyarwady Regions. These events enabled participants from coastal and delta fishery associations to discuss issues and challenges and collectively devise solutions.

In 2020, NAG also initiated the formation of a National Small-Scale Fishers Network that will serve as a national advocacy platform for representatives of small-scale fishers to lobby for their rights and protection. A working committee was set up with representatives of NGOs/INGOs and CSOs and has developed terms of reference for the committee and a six-month work plan.

GEN strengthened its engagement within and outside its network in 2020 with the goal of persuading people in Myanmar and outside to engage on gender issues in Myanmar. GEN accepted the position of chair of the Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process and participated in seminars on the roles of parliament and women in the peace process and political dialogue. As a panelist at the seminars, attended by Union-level members of parliament, GEN highlighted why inclusivity and ensuring no-one is left behind in building durable peace is important.

GEN participated as a panelist at Information Communication and Technology (ICT) Day at the Yangon University of Education to empower girls' and women's participation in Myanmar's ICT sector. GEN also engaged with the Business Coalition for Gender Equality as a speaker in a webinar about gender mainstreaming in the post-COVID-19 economic recovery.

GEN joined the Beijing +25 Virtual Summit launched jointly by The Rockefeller Foundation Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security and former United States Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton. The virtual summit was attended by 25 former presidents, foreign ministers, and leading activists and declared bold recommendations to accelerate progress for women and girls worldwide.

Another of LIFT's strategic partners, Karuna Mission Social Solidarity (KMSS), worked with 71 CSOs on COVID-19 responses. Harnessing the CSO networks meant KMSS could reach targeted communities more quickly to disseminate COVID-19 messages and provide handwashing stations. For example, KMSS Patheingyi networked with Padommar Development Organization, Metta and Catholic FM stations such as Radio Veritas Asia and Office for Social Communication (OSC) to reproduce COVID-19 messages and video clips in Pwo and Sakaw Kayin languages.

Similarly, KMSS Mawlamyine networked with Candle Light and Pale Yaung Sin local organisations to coordinate and share information with the government.

### Gender and localisation

All LIFT's local partners place an emphasis on gender inclusion in their project implementation activities.

GEN continued its public awareness activities on gender issues in 2020, participating in International Women's Day, Myanmar Women's Day, LGBT Pride Month, and 16 Days of Activism against gender-based violence. Some of the public awareness activities were presented online and through media organisations due to COVID-19 restrictions on people gathering.

In 2020, NAG ensured that women achieved 15 per cent of representation in their Fisher Development Associations in 19 townships in the Ayeyarwady Region. Thirteen per cent of the Ayeyarwady Regional Fishers Network's 38 members are women and the network views women as crucial for the functioning, problem solving and coordination in their villages.

Among the series of programmes initiated by NAG, small- and medium-sized enterprise (SME) activities are the most significant when it comes to promoting women in leadership positions. This is expected to bring more balance in the Fishery Development Associations, in which committees are increasingly led by the women who are taking on responsibilities of financing, managing committees and promoting market linkages. Five SMEs have specific intentions for women's income generation and have systematic review processes in place for reviewing SME business proposals submitted by women followed by a capacity needs assessment by technical experts to assess the women's ability to operate the businesses. SMEs supported have promoted local products such as fish paste, fish sauce, dried fish and ready-to-eat dried fish that have been produced using good harvesting and preservation practices that avoid the use of chemicals in the production cycle in order to meet consumer food safety standards. One of the SMEs, Thin Mat Production Business, has been creating job opportunities for women and around 100 women now receive incomes of approximately MMK 70,000 (USD 50) per month from the initiative. In the current phase of the project, there is an emphasis on women's participation and strengthening their skills through training on SME management and value chain awareness.

The COVID-19 responses considered the different needs of women, men and children in the short- and medium-term recovery actions. In strengthening communities' capacity, the project team paid special attention to women's participation. In addition, the Community COVID-19 Response Committees undertook briefings in community quarantine centres on gender-based violence, harmful gender norms and discriminatory practices and inequalities. The briefings were intended to ensure the quarantine centres were safe places for women. In the distribution of hygiene and sanitation items at the camps and quarantine centres, the specific needs of women were considered. Women-headed households were one of the main target groups in the selection of beneficiaries for cash grant support.

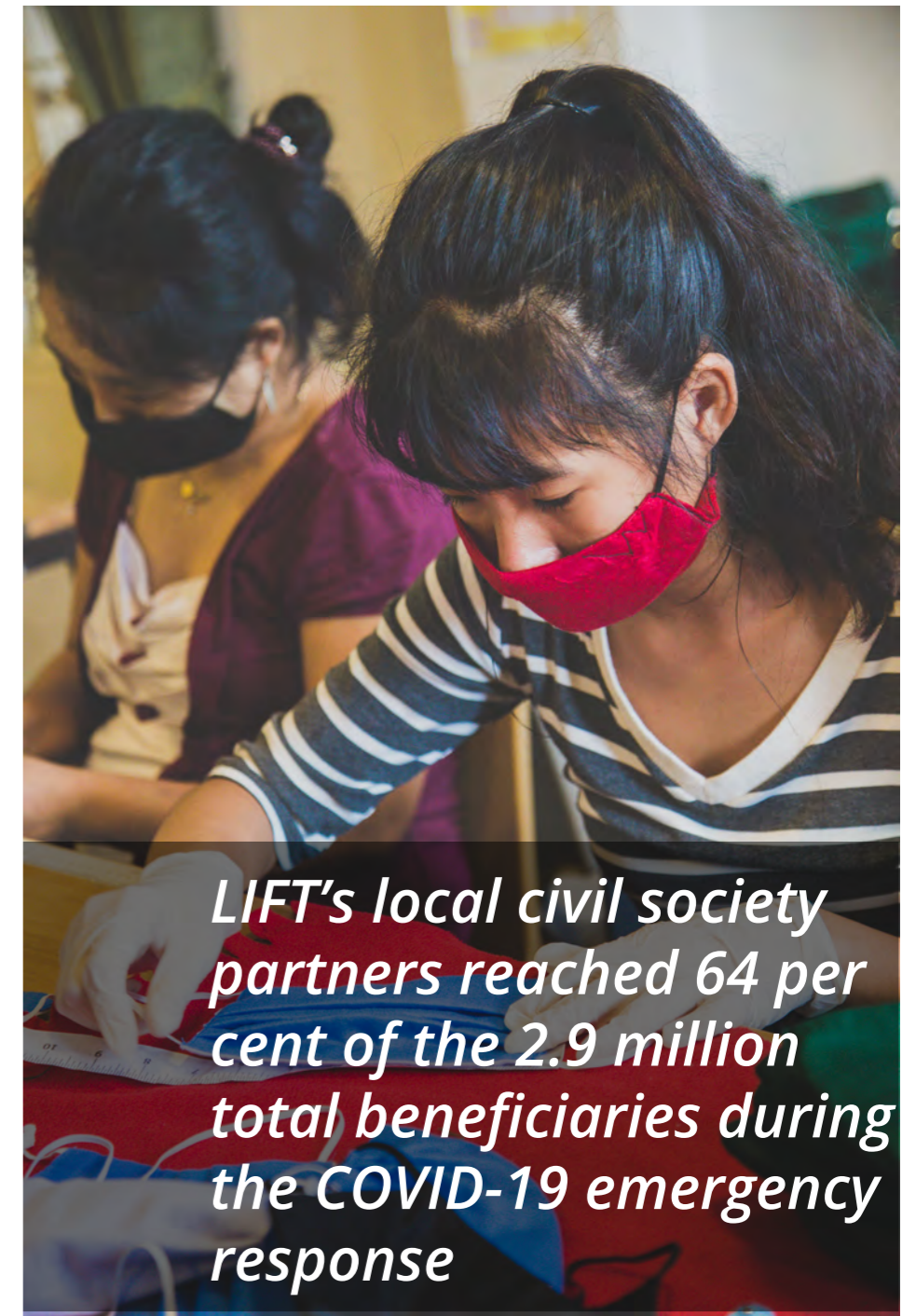
Implementing partner	Project Name	Main activities	Duration	Geographic coverage
ADRA Myanmar	Vocational Education to Support Internally Displaced People and Host Communities (VESI) in Kachin and NSS - Sustainably Enhancing Decent Work Opportunities and Bridging the Gap between Youth from Internally Displaced People and Vulnerable Host Communities	TVET, Decent Work	Jul 2019 – Jun 2022	NSS and Kachin
HPA-Health Poverty Action	Improve nutrition status of the vulnerable population in conflict-affected Kachin and Northern Shan	Nutrition	Jan 2020 – Dec 2022	NSS and Kachin
International Organization for Migration (IOM)	Supporting Conflict-Affected Women and Youth with Nutrition and Employment (SAFEWAY NET)	Migration and Decent Work	Jul 2019 – Jun 2022	Kachin State - Bhamo, Mansi, Momauk, Myitkyina and Waingmaw townships NSS - Hopong, Kunlong, Kutkai, Manton, Mongmit, Muse, Namhsan, Namkhan, Namtu and Tangyan townships
Karuna Mission Social Solidarity (KMSS)	Supporting Conflict-Affected Women and Youth with Nutrition and Employment (SAFEWAY NET)	Nutrition	Jul 2019 – Jun 2022	Kachin State - Myitkyina, Waingmaw, Moegaung, Hpakant, Bhamo, Mansi, and Momauk Townships NSS - Hsenwi, Kutkhai, and Muse townships
Save the Children	Building Resilience In Conflict affected areas of Northern Shan States (BRICKS)	Nutrition and Social Protection	Jul 2019 – Jun 2022	NSS - Kutkai, Namkham, Kyaukme and Namtu Townships Kachin State - Mansi, and Momauk townships
Shalom Nyein Foundation	Supporting Nutrition and Livelihoods through SGH in Kachin State, Myanmar	Nutrition, Livelihoods supporting access to decent work opportunities for Internally Displaced People, Self Help groups	Jan 2020 – Dec 2021	Kachin State
Swissaid, Metta, GRET	Upland Township Fund (UTF) for Civil Society	Livelihoods - small grants for CSOs	Jan 2019- Jun 2021	Chin, Kachin, Shan and Kayah States (16 townships)
World Concern	Improving the nutrition outcomes of conflict-affected people in Kachin State	Nutrition and Nutrition- Sensitive Agriculture	Jan 2020 – Dec 2022	Kachin State
World Vision International	SHE - Myanmar Supporting Inclusive and Transformative Livelihoods for Internally Displaced People and Host Communities in Kachin	TVET and Decent Work	Jul 2019 – Jun 2022	Kachin State, Chipwe, Bahmo, Mansi, and Momauk townships
Metta Foundation and Gret	Ring Chying	Land	Jul 2020 – Jun 2023	Kachin and NSS
BadeidhaMoe (BDM)	Strengthening Legal Resilience of Internally Displaced People and their Original Communities in Kachin and NSS	Agriculture and Land	Jul 2020 – Jun 2023	Kachin and NSS

Table 5.2: LIFT projects and partners in Kachin and northern Shan State (NSS)

### Developing local capacities

LIFT's strategic partners conduct capacity building training within their organisations and with governments, other CSOs and communities.

At the end of 2020, LIFT's partners capacity strengthening trainings has reached 621,880 beneficiaries, among them 56 per cent women.



**LIFT's local civil society partners reached 64 per cent of the 2.9 million total beneficiaries during the COVID-19 emergency response**

# SOCIAL PROTECTION



## CROSS-CUTTING AREAS

# 6.3

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## SOCIAL PROTECTION

### CONTEXT

LIFT's programming for social protection is well aligned with the LIFT Strategy 2019-2023. The social protection programme focuses on addressing the needs of vulnerable people and communities, including the elderly and people with disabilities. As well as other vulnerable groups: women, children, internally displaced people and returnees.

LIFT's social protection programming also focuses on strengthening the capacity of governments to respond to the needs of vulnerable households and communities. The disabilities and social pensions programmes work closely with all levels of government to address the needs of people with disabilities and the elderly. LIFT also supports technical assistance to strengthen institutional and human resource capacities at the Union level. Lastly, there is a strong policy orientation to LIFT's social protection programming that is informed by project implementation experience and research.

In 2020, in response to COVID-19, LIFT scaled-up existing social protection programmes (cash transfers, food assistance programmes, social insurance programmes and child benefits) to support families affected by the pandemic. LIFT's cash transfer support is based on global evidence that identifies cash transfers for vulnerable people and communities as one of the most effective interventions that governments can take to mitigate the effects of COVID-19.

### COVID-19 response and impact

A key component of LIFT's response to COVID-19 in Myanmar was the rapid mobilisation of funding to support cash transfers to households vulnerable to the adverse effects of COVID-19.

LIFT's cash-based programmes in response to the pandemic included:

- » Maternal and child cash transfers (MCCT): MMK 30,000 (USD 22) one-time payment for pregnant women and mothers of children under the age of two as a 'top-up' to the on-going MCCT programme distributed in May/June.
- » Social pensions: MMK 30,000 (USD 22) one-time payment to people over the age of 85 as a 'top up' to the on-going social pensions programme distributed in May/June.
- » Internally displaced people: MMK 65,000 (USD 47) one-time payment per household for 64,785 households (325,664 people).
- » Cash for work programme: An average pay of MMK 5,000 (USD 3.60)/day for an average of 70 days' work for about 1,435 people in the Ayeyarwady Region.
- » Emergency cash: A substitute for lost income, providing the equivalent of MMK 120,000 (USD 86) monthly salary for three months for 753 garment workers at two Yangon factories was distributed in May/June.
- » Peri-urban migrant workers: A total of 7,655 garment workers who had lost their employment received cash transfers of up to MMK 50,000 (USD 36) in Shwe Pyi Thar and Hlaing Thar Yar to cover immediate needs between April and September. An additional 500 vulnerable female sex workers in Yangon received MMK 72,000 (USD 52) in a one-time cash transfer, distributed through a sex worker association. Cash transfers of up to MMK 240,000 (USD 173) were also provided to 1,458 unemployed factory workers, informal sector workers, people with disabilities and people living with HIV in Yangon.
- » Beginning in March 2020, LIFT collaborated with the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) to plan for cash 'top ups' to MCCT and social pension beneficiary households using the distribution mechanisms already in place for reaching pregnant women and mothers with children aged under two and people aged 85 years and older. The total budget for this effort was USD 9 million: USD 4.9 million for MCCT beneficiary households and USD 4.1 million for social pension beneficiary households.
- » The cash transfers were distributed along with COVID-19 prevention and mitigation information, to 238,410 pregnant women and women with children under two years, and nearly 200,000 people aged 85 years and older. When all household members are included, LIFT estimates that approximately 1.8 million people benefitted from the cash transfers. Post-distribution monitoring mechanisms were developed to better understand the reach and impact of LIFT's cash transfer response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### The MCCT cash transfer

DSW distributed cash transfers to pregnant women and mothers of children aged below age in five areas where the MCCT programme operates: Chin, Kayah, Kayin, and Rakhine States and the Naga Self-Administered Zone. In May and June 2020, DSW delivered the COVID-19 one-off top-up MCCT payment of MMK 30,000 (USD 22) to 238,410 pregnant women and mothers of children aged under two.

Following the payments, a joint LIFT-DSW team surveyed 399 households in early September to understand the impact of COVID-19 on households, their coping strategies, and how they used the cash that they received. The post-distribution monitoring survey was not possible in Rakhine State due to travel restrictions following the increase in COVID-19 cases and a deterioration in the security situation. All households surveyed reported receiving the COVID-19 cash transfer, and all but one household reported receiving the entire amount of cash. Sixty-three per cent of the people felt the cash transfer was "useful", while 37 per cent felt it was "very useful".

#### Challenges and coping strategies

The three main challenges households faced as a result of COVID-19 were income loss (87 per cent), stress or fear of virus infection (86 per cent), and a lack of access to markets (39 per cent). The lack of access to markets was closely followed by a lack of access to healthcare facilities. Income losses and lack of access to markets and healthcare facilities were largely the result of lockdown measures that restricted mobility as a key strategy for preventing the spread of COVID-19.

Households surveyed adopted varied coping strategies to address challenges encountered during the COVID-19 outbreak. For example, for those who lost income, 33 per cent saved money by cutting back on expenses, 20 per cent borrowed money and 10 per cent depended on help from relatives. Of the people who borrowed money or depended on help from relatives, 30 per cent incurred debt or some type of social obligation. Additionally, 7 per cent sold assets or food. Both can have implications for these households' long-term resilience.

Of the women who said they were fearful of contracting COVID-19, 85 per cent said they adhered to COVID-19 health guidelines. Of the women who identified market access as a significant challenge, 43 per cent stocked up on food, 22 per cent said they followed health guidelines at markets and 13 per cent said a person was designated to shop on behalf of the community.

#### Collection of COVID-19 cash transfer and use of cash

Ninety-one per cent of the women who received the cash transfers said they made the decisions about how it was used themselves; 6 per cent of the recipients said they made the decisions jointly with their husbands.

Most people used at least some of the cash to provide food for their families (61 per cent) and to pay for healthcare (46 per cent). Sixteen per cent bought clothing and this was mostly for newborns. These results accord well with the main objectives of the cash transfers to help meet the food security, livelihood and health needs of vulnerable households during COVID-19.

#### Knowledge about COVID-19 prevention and mitigation measures

All beneficiaries received information about COVID-19 prevention and mitigation measures. According to the survey, 96 per cent of people received information about hand washing, 93 per cent mentioned face masks and 85 per cent were reminded about social distancing.

#### Communication channels for COVID-19 prevention and mitigation measures

The most prominent channel for messaging about COVID-19 prevention and mitigation measures was via mobile loudspeakers - an effective means of communicating with people in a variety of settings. Radio and TV along with talks with healthcare staff were mentioned by 47



per cent of people as a source of information on how to protect from COVID-19. Printed material was mentioned by 42 per cent of women. Mobile phones were another effective tool for providing information. Because of its technical role and extensive reach in providing health services across the country, the Ministry of Health and Sports (MoHS) was identified as the most recognised institution that disseminated information about COVID-19 prevention and mitigation measures across the four geographic areas. When combined with DSW, the Government of Myanmar was the most significant source of COVID-19 information for those surveyed. Civil society organisations (CSO) and non-governmental organisations (NGO) were also frequently identified as communicators of COVID-19 information underscoring the importance of coordinating consistent messaging and information. CSOs and NGOs disseminated information developed and approved by MoHS.

### Additional support required

Across the four geographic areas, 83 per cent of women indicated they needed additional support following the COVID-19 one-time top up, 80 per cent of these women said they needed more cash and 51 per cent requested food aid. Over one-third of those in need of more support mentioned personal protective equipment (PPE) and medicine.

### Cash transfers to social pension recipients

In July and August 2020, DSW delivered the COVID-19 one-off top-up social pension payment of MMK 30,000 (USD 22) to 197,508 people aged 85 and older. All eligible elderly people in Myanmar received the top-up allowance, except in conflict-affected areas where DSW does not have institutional reach. Due to fluctuations in the exchange rate, LIFT's investment of USD 4.1 million reached a total of 176,138 direct beneficiaries, and DSW made up the difference by providing top-up payments to the remaining 21,370 people. LIFT collaborated with the HelpAge and DSW survey team who visited Bago and Yangon Regions and Kayah and Shan States to determine the impact of the cash transfers on households before the second wave of COVID-19 prevented further fieldwork. The team visited 20 older people, including six widows, six widowers, and four couples. On 13 of the visits, the elderly made specific reference to the COVID-19 payment. While a small sample of the overall social pension recipient population, their experiences provide an insight into how COVID-19 has affected those aged over 85 and how they used the cash.

### Impact of COVID-19 on day-to-day life

Radio and television were the main sources of information about COVID-19 cited by the social pension recipients. COVID-19 information leaflets accompanying the payment were also important sources of information. Some people said they were not afraid of COVID-19 but still followed the risk mitigation guidelines, staying at home and avoiding crowded places when they went out. One widow had stopped visiting the monastery since the crisis began. Several elderly people said they wore masks when they went out and washed their hands after returning home; one person even washed her clothes after being outside. Many of those who stayed at home took up gardening or engaged in household chores. Two widowers reported listening to sermons and meditating, and one elderly couple was "retraining" to be more active at home. However, others felt downhearted and afraid, bored and lonely while staying at home.

### Use and impact of the cash

Nine people used at least some of the extra allowance for donations, and two widowers gave some or all of the money to children or grandchildren. Other uses included food and medicine, as well as

clothes and household items. Importantly, the payments had a positive impact on people's sense of self-esteem. For several older people, social pensions represented an acknowledgement that they were important and worthy of attention. Additionally, several widowers felt a greater sense of independence thanks to the social pension. All of the recipients said they appreciated the social pension payments, including the top-up. Some people would like to have received more, including one widower who said, "I'd be delighted if the amount of money increases so that I can contribute more to people in need with my own money before death".

The story of Daw Khin Hla Gyi: Daw Khin Hla Gyi, 96, from Yangon Region used some money from the social pension to make food offerings at the pagoda. Whenever the bird sellers came to her street, she bought the whole cage and freed all the birds as she liked the freedom. Every time she met children with disabilities on the roadside asking for money, she gave them money from her social pension. Such actions represent a kind of social redistribution of the cash transfers, including the COVID-19 top-up.

### Cash transfers for internally displaced people

In June, LIFT allocated USD 3.2 million for cash transfers to support internally displaced households in Rakhine, Chin, Kayin, Kachin and northern Shan State. A one-off payment of MMK 65,000 (USD 47) was designed to help people living in camps cope with COVID-induced shocks.

The World Food Programme provides MMK 15,000 (USD 11) cash payments to internally displaced people living in camps, which is considered sufficient to cover the average monthly calorie needs and partial nutrient needs of an adult. LIFT's cash payments were intended to complement this support and increase the capacity of people to cover essential needs, such as food, hygiene, health and PPE.

To ensure the support is inclusive and reaches as many internally displaced households as possible across the country, the distribution of support was planned as follows:

- » The Department of Social Welfare to support 54,774 households (272,683 people) in Kachin and northern Shan (government-controlled areas), Kayin, Rakhine and Chin States
- » The Joint Strategic Team (JST) to support 8,994 households (45,000 people) in Kachin & Shan (government- and non-government-controlled areas)
- » An existing LIFT implementing partner to support 1,732 unregistered households (8,679 people) in Rakhine

The challenges and risks in providing cash in such settings must be taken into account at the design stage in order to develop mitigation strategies, design a good monitoring and evaluation system, and consult with a wide range of stakeholders. These consultations, including discussions about the use of mobile/digital solutions, were ongoing during the fourth quarter of 2020. The cash transfers were originally planned to occur in November/December of 2020, however, the distribution schedule was delayed due to the National Elections scheduled in early November and then subsequently by complex contracting modalities between LIFT and DSW. The cash distributions were rescheduled to take place during the first quarter of 2021.

### Cash transfers to garment workers in peri-urban Yangon

In cooperation with LIFT, Save the Children designed a social protection intervention in Yangon's Shwe Pyi Thar Township, aiming to identify and support workers who lost their jobs with no severance pay when their

employers fled the country. The mechanism was designed to provide workers with a defined minimum salary for the garment industry of MMK 120,000 (USD 86) to support households' access to food, accommodation and other basic needs, and to prevent households becoming over-indebted as they faced unprecedented loss of income.

**Mobile money was used to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission and for efficient delivery of cash.**

To capture the effectiveness and impact of the support, post-distribution monitoring was conducted approximately 30 days after the transfer. The surveys were conducted by telephone with 100 beneficiaries. Seventy-one per cent were migrant workers and 88 per cent were women. On average, their households had five members, and 87 per cent lived in rented apartments, houses or workers' hostels.

The average age of the beneficiaries was 26. While three-quarters of the beneficiaries are the primary income earners in their family, only 29 per cent considered themselves the head of their household and less than half (43 per cent) said they decided how the cash transfer was used. Purchasing food was the primary use of the cash; 85 per cent said the cash was spent on food. Other uses mentioned were housing and rent (59 per cent), loan/debt repayment (24 per cent) and medical costs (15 per cent). Most families said they were managing to maintain their basic food needs and the survey's Household Hunger Scale data showed that 88 per cent reported little to no hunger. But 12 per cent reported moderate hunger and were struggling to buy enough food for their household even after receiving the cash transfer.

One-quarter of the respondents said they had found another job since garment factories closed but 75 per cent of these people said their new employment paid significantly less than their previous job.

Debt was reported as a common coping strategy. Combined data indicates that overall debt of the respondents grew by 50 per cent compared to January. The number of people in debt grew as did the size of the average debt. Except for banks, all other forms of debt grew in the first two months of COVID-19 and the most notable growth was in debt to moneylenders (18 per cent). This growth in both prevalence and average amount of indebtedness with money lenders represents one of the most worrying factors in terms of long-term poverty cycle for this population.

**Reflections and learnings**

LIFT met with the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement (MoSWRR), including the Union Minister Dr. Win Myat Aye, for key informant discussions to assess the degree to which LIFT supported or informed the Ministry's broader policy and programming concerning social protection responses to COVID-19.

LIFT, alongside others, was able to provide DSW with information and evidence about the viability and utility of cash transfers employed in other countries while the cash transfer interventions were being conceived and designed. The Ministry drew upon a wide range of information sources to support the design and implementation of Myanmar's responses to COVID-19.

LIFT's support for the MCCT and social pensions top-up transfers played an early and important 'proof of concept' role that demonstrated that cash transfers could be successfully distributed in an emergency context. DSW drew on the experience and lessons derived from this first round of cash transfers to design and implement subsequent cash transfer interventions for vulnerable groups, including transfers to people with disabilities, people aged 80-84 and pregnant women and mothers of children aged under two who live outside the Government's MCCT programming areas.

Earlier exploration and dialogue on digital platforms encouraged DSW's subsequent enrolment of beneficiaries and use of digital cash transfers. These electronic platforms helped deliver support for pregnant women and mothers outside the current MCCT programme areas and for elderly social pension recipients in September 2020, and also helped mitigate the risks associated with in-person cash distribution systems during the pandemic. Along with the adoption of digital payments and digital monitoring approaches, the development of a digital mechanism to receive beneficiary feedback could enable planners to improve adjustments in programme implementation.

For example, the surge in COVID-19 cases and the deteriorating security situation in Rakhine State prevented face-to-face monitoring with beneficiaries there. Recording the telephone numbers of the beneficiaries could facilitate digital monitoring in the future, and the development of a flexible post-distribution monitoring platform for emergency interventions could enable the Government to more effectively implement monitoring in a timely manner.

Design of social protection interventions highlighted the importance of building on existing platforms. The justification for targeting MCCT and social pension households was twofold. MCCT and social pension beneficiaries were among the more vulnerable groups in society to the adverse effects of COVID-19, particularly with regards to their health. Also, the distribution platforms for these groups were already in place. A cash transfer 'top up' could be activated in a relatively short period of time, the distribution mechanisms proved effective and efficient for an emergency response. The design of new cash transfer programmes, for example for internally displaced people and for others that follow, will require a longer time for consultation and development.

Rapid contracting arrangements required flexibility from DSW and LIFT (UNOPS) and relied on the existing trust and relationship. The rules and regulations in both institutions proved complex and required considerable time and effort for discussions and negotiations. Impressive adaptive management capacity was required and was made possible by the professional and trusting relationship built over the years and in prior collaborations.

Monitoring is best considered from the outset of the intervention design and implementation, including ensuring proper financing and staffing. Fortunately, LIFT and DSW were able to collaborate effectively, albeit in haste, to design and implement a post-distribution monitoring of the 'top-up' cash transfers. LIFT's international and national M&E consultants worked closely with DSW staff on the technical design of the PDM and an online training module for DSW case managers. A DSW staff member interning with LIFT for her graduate degree facilitated the monitoring by designing the survey instrument, training field surveyors, and providing oversight of data collection and analysis, as well as fostering communication between LIFT and DSW. An effective and sustainable monitoring mechanism for social pensions will be developed by HelpAge

International and DSW. The design and implementation of monitoring for the cash transfer for internally displaced people will benefit from time to plan the monitoring in advance.

The amount of both MCCT and social pension cash transfers should be reconsidered for additional COVID-19 responses. Cash transfer amounts were based in part on the amount of available resources at the time. All cash transfers, including the ongoing MCCTs, would benefit from a thorough review against the current market prices of food, and in the context of the COVID-19 crisis. Any increases of course would require a broadening of resource mobilisation strategies.

### Social Pension

The LIFT-funded Social Pensions project implemented by HelpAge International (HAI) has provided close technical support to the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement (MoSWRR) for implementing the National Social Pension Programme since 2014. In 2020, the project not only provided ongoing support for social protection but also helped the Ministry implement emergency social protection responses initiated under the COVID-19 Economic Relief Plan (CERP).

Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	Age 80-84 one-off in 2020
Number of beneficiaries	40,862 (age 90+)	168,578 (age 85+)	197,593 (age 85+)	249,241 (age 85+)	292,702 (age 80-84)

The social pension delivery system reached the highest number of beneficiaries with a total of 249,241 people aged 85 years and older during

the peak months of the pandemic. The system was also used to provide additional services, including the delivery of COVID-19 safety public health information to households of pension recipients. The system delivered additional income support of MMK 30,000 (USD 22) to the social pension beneficiaries during the pandemic with funding from LIFT, and delivered another one-off MMK 30,000 (USD 22) cash transfer in September, funded from the Government's budget. The total number of older people who received cash from the regular social pension payment and the one-off payment exceeded 500,000 by December 2020, an increase of more than 60 per cent compared to the pre-pandemic total of 197,593 in December 2019.

A draft National Policy on Ageing and Action Plan was finalised and the by-laws for an Ageing Law were to be submitted to the Cabinet of Ministers following review by the National Committee on Ageing. Action concerning the development of a national Social Assistance Law was also initiated during 2020. This law aims to provide legal guarantees for financial sustainability and a stronger coordination system for cash assistance programmes, including social pensions, maternal child cash transfers and future initiatives such as a disability allowance under the National Strategic Plan for Social Protection and Costed Sectoral Plan for Social Protection. The HelpAge project also supported the translation of the draft law into local languages so it could be circulated within the ministry for initial feedback and suggestions. The Ministry planned to submit the draft law to the new parliament in April 2021. The HelpAge project also provided technical assistance for developing a Social Work Profession Bill; the draft bill will go through further phases of legal review/drafting and formal clearance by the Attorney General of Myanmar and then be submitted to the Cabinet in 2021.

During 2020, HelpAge provided continuous assistance on the overall supervision and management of the National Social Pension 85 years+ programme database. Regular virtual/in-person support to the DSW focal team was ongoing to ensure data accuracy, credibility, and uniformity of the database system in order to produce the final payment on a quarterly basis. The social pension database was planned to be integrated into the Social Management Information System (SMIS) in mid-2021. Once the database is in place, the project plans to support DSW's implementation of the CERP social assistance measures and also the scale-up of social pension payments to people aged 80-84.

A National Social Pension Assessment was finalised during 2020. This assessment explored the potential benefits for programme beneficiaries and their household members, as well as the relationships between communities and the local governments implementing the programme. HelpAge also collaborated with DSW to prepare case studies of social pension recipients and the LIFT-funded one-off emergency cash transfers for older people in Yangon and Bago regions and Shan and Kayah States. The case studies aimed to understand the utilisation of cash assistance for older people and provide a learning-by-doing platform for DSW staff in collecting qualitative information. A third study concerned social protection, conflict and national reconciliation. Findings from this study were disseminated to state and regional Directors and district offices.

DSW gradually expanded its township offices. Three township offices were opened in 2020 reaching a total of 154 sub-national offices (45 district offices and 109 township offices). Additionally, 25 sub-national offices were assigned a dedicated officer to fulfil and adjust the extended functions required for the social cash assistance programmes. HelpAge provided ongoing capacity development support for sub-national DSW staff and local government ward and village tract authorities reporting to the General Administration Department (GAD). Two training modules concerning ageing and social pension were developed with inputs from the DSW in 2020. With the COVID-19 travel restrictions, the pilot delivery training on social pension database management, ageing and social pension were conducted virtually for DSW staff based in Yangon and Nay Pyi Taw. DSW staff from the 23 new sub-national offices also joined the social protection training.

HelpAge also supported increased access to information about COVID-19 targeting social pension beneficiaries nationwide. Three information, education, communications (IEC) materials were developed and distributed. The Ward/Village Tract Authorities were provided with 180,000 copies of the COVID-19 and social pension payments stating the 'Dos and Don'ts' during COVID-19 pandemic. 217,000 copies of Advice for older people – COVID-19 related preventive tips were distributed to DSW sub-national offices, GAD township offices, all local authorities including village tract/ward administrators and 100 household leaders, teachers, and community leaders. Lastly, 1,000 copies of COVID-19 preventive measures for homes for the aged were distributed to all homes for the aged registered with MoSWRR throughout the country. A total of 488,073 households received COVID-19-related IEC materials in 314 of Myanmar's 330 townships (95 per cent of townships nationwide).

During 2020, the project received a costed extension for 11 months to focus on strengthening the shock responsive social protection mechanism implemented by DSW. With the project's support to DSW, the social pension programme's delivery and systems were successfully implemented despite the fact that DSW staff attendance was reduced due to a 50 per cent rotational shift.

**People with disabilities**

LIFT’s disability programming has a twin-track approach of (1) breaking down barriers that result in people with impairments being seen as disabled, and (2) empowering people with disabilities to participate in their communities. During 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated measures impacted on people with disabilities and their households. Loss of livelihoods, employment and reduced access to health care services were the main areas of concern as well as increased prices for basic commodities. LIFT’s four disability projects, built on the foundation that was laid in 2019 in collaboration with local government, including the Department of Social Welfare (DSW), Department of Rural Development (DRD), General Administration Department (GAD) and the Ministry of Health and Sports (MoH), were able to help build community self help groups and community resilience.

The four projects funded under the disability window in 2018 were due to conclude in late 2020. However, all four projects received costed extensions until the end of 2021.

Implementing Partners	Project areas for costed extension
<b>Golden Pearl Organization (GPO)</b>	Lashio, Kyaukme, Hseni Hsipaw, Nawngkhio townships, northern Shan State
<b>Eden Center for Disable Children (ECCD)</b>	Tedim, Falam, Hakha, Thantlang, Matupi, Mindat townships, Chin State
<b>HelpAge International (HAI)</b>	Natogyi, Myingyan townships, Mandalay Region Yaesagyo, Pakokku townships, Magway Region Hpa-Pun Township, Kayin State
<b>Social Policy and Poverty Reduction Group (SPPRG)</b>	Budalin Township, Sagaing Region

**Chin State**

The Eden Center for Disabled Children (ECDC) implements its LIFT-funded project in six townships across Chin State. During 2020, a total of 1,702 people received disability awareness training. A survey conducted by ECDC found that out of 144 respondents, 63 per cent had increased understanding of disability inclusion and the barriers that restrict people with disabilities participating in their communities. ECDC also organised disability mainstreaming workshops with CSOs to prepare disability action plans. This led to an increase in disability inclusive programming by local CSOs. For example, in 11 villages 24 local CSOs were implementing the action plan and integrating it into their programmes and activities.

At the community level, people with disabilities are now participating in more community events and activities. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the self-help groups in Falam Township worked with the township’s COVID-19 response committee to prevent COVID-19 transmissions. People’s participation in community self-help groups also increased; 79 per cent of members were people with disabilities and 65 per cent of people with disabilities were playing lead roles in the self-help groups. The number of self-help group members increased by almost 30 per cent from 2019; there were 1,033 members in 2020. The project provided the proposal writing, bookkeeping and small grants funding to 62 self-help groups attended by 582 people with disabilities. Forty-three of the self-help groups were planning to start their own microfinance activities after the training. Additionally, 129 self-help group members were able to access microfinance support from local microfinance institutions.

Despite the pandemic, 16 people with disabilities successfully completed vocational training in 2020. Since 2018, when the project’s vocational training began, 26 people with disabilities have found employment within six months of completing the training.

**Sagaing Region**

The project implemented by the Social Policy and Poverty Research Group (SPPRG) in Budalin Township is an action research project targeting disability inclusive rural development in DRD’s Mya Sein Yaung (MSY) Project. SPPRG provided two trainings to help reduce the vulnerability of people with disabilities. The training focused on nutrition and health education (including the prevention of disability) for 218 people and livelihood training (plastic basket and velvet slipper making) for 228 people with a disability. According to the mid-term research report, the vulnerability of households with people with a disability decreased from 37 per cent at baseline to 24.5 per cent. The reduction was more significant among households with working aged people who had a disability who were enabled to engage in livelihoods, where the reduction was from 43 per cent to 11 per cent.

To establish community-based disability inclusive groups, the project undertook two initiatives. One included village-level awareness raising activities to mobilise community support for an inclusive approach. The second included the formation of self-help groups, where people with a disability became members of savings and loans groups. The project provided seed funds to specifically address the needs of the people with disabilities and their families. The project enabled 270 people with disabilities access to low-cost loans administered either by the MSY villages, or in non-MSY villages. Access to loans increased from 3.3 per cent prior to the project to 22.1 per cent at mid-term. During 2020, barrier-free access was implemented in 16 villages that enabled better physical access to public buildings, markets and meeting places.

**Northern Shan**

The project implemented by the Golden Pearl Organization (GPO) supported the livelihoods of people with disabilities in three townships of northern Shan State. Before the project was implemented, there was little consideration about the needs of people with a disability and there was no organisation working on disability issues. As a result of GPO’s efforts, the representation of people with disabilities and collaboration with different organisations increased during 2020.

The project continued to focus on disability inclusion at the community level through a series of community awareness and advocacy initiatives with different stakeholders throughout the year. As a result, the awareness of stigma and discrimination and participation in disabilities awareness activities increased. In terms of livelihoods, 27 people with disabilities were provided with livelihood support such as livestock, sewing machines, and grocery shops and 14 people received vocational training. Six of those were able to increase their income following the training.

Psychosocial support was provided to 441 people with disabilities services, which was especially important during the COVID-19 pandemic period when stay-at-home orders were in place in the project areas. Additionally, 57 people with disabilities and their households received basic foodstuff. To prevent disabilities among newborn children, 184 pregnant women received nutrition education and 20 breastfeeding women received nutrition support. The Day Care Center for children with disabilities continued to operate during 2020. Eight children with

disabilities were trained with independent daily living and communication skills. Their family members provided feedback that the learning capacity of the children had improved, and some children started attending pre-school following training in the Day Care Center.

The project also coordinated with different organisations at the local level. The project supported the Township Disability Organizations in Lashio, Kyaukme and Theinni Townships to apply for COVID-19 response grants funded by Access to Health and managed by the Local Resource Center. Additionally, the Lashio Township Disability Organizations received funding from the Upland Programme managed by the METTA Foundation with technical support from the project. The project coordinated with World Vision to increase disability inclusion in livelihoods support. The project also worked with the state disaster management committee for supporting people with disabilities and 48 people received the support in Lashio Township.

### Dry Zone and Kayin State

Help Age International continued implementing the targeted disability inclusive project across five townships in Mandalay and Magway Regions and Kayin State. One of the project's key interventions is the establishment of community-based inclusive self-help groups (ISHGs) at the village level. The ISHGs are the driving force behind social protection services, and a total 4,682 households benefited from these services during 2020. The project also provided seed capital for loan services for 90 ISHGs in 2020. The ISHGs provided two types of loans: interest bearing (2 per cent) and zero interest bearing for medical emergencies. Priority was given to those households with the highest vulnerability ranking. Since the project's inception, a total of 7,057 interest bearing and 89 zero interest loans were provided.

In terms of social assistance, the project piloted electronic cash transfers and provided monthly cash assistance to 5,239 people who are moderately and severely disabled. Those who received cash transfers spent 75 per cent of the transfer on generating income and/or meeting their basic needs such as food, medical-related costs and non-food items. The project also trained volunteers to provide home care in the village. A total of 1,153 people received the home care services in 2020.

Another important initiative concerned access to education by children with disabilities. The creation of a disability friendly environment in schools had resulted in the decrease in the school dropout rate among children with disabilities. Disability-friendly school renovations were made for four schools in Pakokku, Yesagyo by HAI, which enabled 53 children with disabilities to enrol or persist in primary school. Additionally, 51 children with disabilities were provided with school supportive equipment and accessible teaching kits.

The project also provided vocational training to 75 people with disabilities in order to improve their livelihoods and income. Based on follow up with trainees who received livelihood training since the project began, 218 people have established enterprises (61 are people with disabilities) and 145 people report increased incomes.

### Policy Influence

The project implemented by the SPPRG targets key stakeholders for disability inclusion in policy formulation and programme implementation. As a result, the Department of Rural Development included disabilities in the proposed M&E framework for both the CERP and the Mya Sein Yaung Project, as a result of the continuous capacity development on disability inclusion at the local level and policy advocacy at the central level.

As a result of HelpAge's ongoing work with key stakeholders on disability inclusion, the Department of Social Welfare has formally adopted the self-help group model into the Inclusive Self Help Group (ISHG) flagship programme of the National Social Protection Strategic Plan. The project has contributed to the development of an ISHG model that fits with the community structure in Myanmar. The development of an implementation manual was ongoing throughout 2020 and focal staff from DSW were appointed to oversee the ISHG roll-out nationwide. DSW also provided funding to ISHG villages in Myingyan & Natogyi Townships, as per the government's intentions to replicate the ISHG model across the country. This results in a sustainable, resilient and scalable model that will expand nationwide for 800 groups by the end of 2023 (as stated in the strategic plan).

The electronic cash transfer modality piloted by HAI also contributed to the expansion of electronic cash transfers in Myanmar. For example, the Kayin State government is interested in adopting the model for the maternal and child cash transfer programme. Moreover, the implementation experiences, lessons learned and best practices from



the initiative will directly contribute to the policy formulation of the electronic cash transfer for the national social pension programme.

### Lessons Learned

Overall, targeted projects for people with disabilities at the community level helped promote disability inclusion in the project areas of northern Shan, Chin, Kayin, Magway, Mandalay and Sagaing as a result of continuous advocacy with local actors, including government, civil society and the community.

One of the key lessons learnt in 2020 is that the presence of organisations who work primarily on disability issues acts as a bridge between people with disabilities and other organisations working at the local level. For example, in northern Shan State, GPO provided technical assistance to Save the Children, METTA, and World Vision that enabled disability inclusive interventions for the COVID-19 pandemic response. This resulted in increased access to social services, assistance, and livelihood opportunities among people with disabilities and their households.

One of the important changes observed concerned the role of the self-help groups established by the projects at the time of crisis. As a result of capacity building for technical knowledge about disabilities and organisational development, the self-help groups were playing a leading role in providing community awareness about COVID-19. Since the self-help groups are embedded in the local community, they could rapidly provide accurate information about the prevention and protection of COVID-19 to people with disabilities and their families with technical support from local health staff. For instance, self-help groups established by HAI in Mandalay, Magway and Kayin State continued to implement the social protection action plans and 17,661 households reported receiving assistance from self-help groups. Another example is in northern Shan State where the Township Disability Organizations acted as a focal point of contact for providing social assistance to people with disabilities during the COVID-19 crisis. This enabled the most vulnerable people to receive needed assistance.

These key achievements were achieved despite implementation challenges faced by the disability projects as a result of COVID-19 pandemic. While most of the in-person activities were delayed as field staff access to the project villages was restricted, the projects were able to adapt to the guidelines of the MoHS within a short timeframe. For instance, projects adjusted by organising small group discussions and training or using virtual approaches, depending on the local context. As an indirect result, in addition to the project interventions, digital literacy among people with disabilities and their communities was increase



Daw Khin Hla Gyi, 96,

The story of Daw Khin Hla Gyi: Daw Khin Hla Gyi, 96, from Yangon Region used some money from the social pension to make food offerings at the pagoda. Whenever the bird sellers came to her street, she bought the whole cage and freed all the birds as she liked the freedom. Every time she met children with disabilities on the roadside asking for money, she gave them money from her social pension. Such actions represent a kind of social redistribution of the cash transfers, including the COVID-19 top-up.

# GENDER

## CROSS-CUTTING AREAS

# 6.4

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## GENDER

### Gender mainstreaming

Gender responsiveness is a primary objective for LIFT under its 2019-2023 strategy. From 2019, LIFT required a minimum of 20 per cent of project's budgets be allocated to gender mainstreaming to ensure gender mainstreaming in new projects and encourage gender-sensitive project design. In early 2020, the proposals submitted for the South-East Programme were appraised and assessed by the FMO to ensure gender mainstreaming in the proposals. Recommendations were provided to partners before their final revised submissions were submitted to ensure gender considerations were incorporated in the projects' MEAL plans.

The Fund Management Office reviewed the approach to gender budgeting in the new LIFT projects in February 2020. Together with the Gender Specialist, LIFT Programme Officers reviewed project budgets to identify gender-related budget lines and activities and learned about alternative approaches to gender mainstreaming that could be suggested to partners.

The women's empowerment in agriculture index (WEAI) was incorporated into LIFT's logframe in 2019 as part of LIFT's commitment to gender mainstreaming. WEAI data was to be collected as part of LIFT's Household Survey in 2019/2020 but the survey was delayed.

The impact of COVID-19 on gender equality and social inclusion was immense.

LIFT used social media platforms to spread awareness of how COVID-19 affected women and men differently and how the emergency responses were considering gender equality. LIFT also produced simple gender guide notes in local languages for partners to use, ensuring practical gender needs were addressed during the emergency response. It was vital to ensure that the needs of women and men were met; for example,

making sure safe accommodation and bathroom facilities were provided for women in quarantine centres.

In addition, LIFT partners organised tailored awareness raising campaigns, talk shows, multimedia messages and guidelines on gender-based violence for audiences. Gender-based violence increased significantly during the COVID-19 lockdown periods. Partners provided psychosocial support, food, cash support and legal assistance for survivors of gender-based violence as part of the COVID-19 response.

The Gender Equality Network (GEN) is one of LIFT's strategic partners. GEN's activities and achievements in 2020 are detailed in the Localisation chapter of this report.

### Highlights and learnings from projects

Karuna Mission Social Solidarity (KMSS), one of LIFT's strategic partners, was one of the earliest responders to COVID-19 in Myanmar. With LIFT funding, each of KMSS's Dioceses provided emergency personal protective equipment to quarantine centres in their respective areas and included menstrual hygiene supplies for women in quarantine.

The International Fertilizer Development Centre (IFDC) project that provides technical and financial support to agricultural input suppliers in Kayin and Kayah states, 13 women were identified for support. The agricultural input supply business is very male dominated. IFDC applied the Private Sector Empowerment and Private Public Partnership-Led approach and selected, trained and coached women input suppliers from the villages. All of these women reported increases in their customer base, improved relationships with Department of Agriculture extension workers, improved knowledge on agricultural inputs and business management skills, and most importantly, increased income.

The project provided longer-term support and coaching for these women in addition to the regular trainings, loans, grants and demonstration plot support the project provides.

Relief International developed detailed plans and methodology for a gender study and a transformative livelihood programme in Rakhine. After the initial preparations, consultations with global experts, desk reviews and a scoping study, Relief International proposed a model for Rakhine. The model consists of one-year modules on preparedness, skills building, starting a business and connecting empowered women. It planned to organise a workshop in Sittwe to review the findings from the study and proposed methodology, however these consultations were postponed due to the COVID-19 restrictions on travel and gatherings.

Golden Pearl implements a project in northern Shan State targeting people with disabilities and discovered that gender-based violence was an issue affecting beneficiaries. To build the organisation's capacity to respond, Golden Pearl joined the gender network and participated in gender training conducted by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The project team appointed a gender focal point in each of the implementation townships and participated in LIFT training on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse. Golden Pearl conducted regular gender awareness sessions and held discussions on women's empowerment in their target villages with people with disabilities and their families. The project team also cooperated with the Department of Social Welfare and other local NGOs to refer victims of trafficking and gender-based violence to support services. One identified hurdle is that some survivors of gender-based violence are reluctant to engage with the authorities because the perpetrators are relatives living in the same village.

BBC Media Action's project in the Decent Work and Labour Mobility Programme aims to challenge gender stereotypes in their TV, radio and online content. Male and female workers, including migrants, contribute to the creative outputs to normalise women migrating safely for work. In TV episodes on the rights and inclusion of women, panel participants and the audiences include people with disabilities, people identifying as LGBTQI and representatives from sex workers' organisations elevated discussions on social norms that discriminate against women in the national media.





# FUND MANAGEMENT

# 07

## FUND MANAGEMENT

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# FUND MANAGEMENT

## 07

### FUND MANAGEMENT

#### 7.1 LIFT GOVERNANCE

LIFT's main governance document is the Joint Collaboration Arrangement (JCA) which is a legally non-binding document that all LIFT's donors sign. Each donor has a negotiated bilateral funding agreement with UNOPS. The JCA contains three annexes relating to the terms of reference for the Donor Consortium, the Fund Board and the Fund Manager (referred to as the FMO).

##### **Donor Consortium**

The LIFT Donor Consortium did not physically meet in 2020, but met together on 7 April 2021. The agenda included a review of LIFT's progress in 2020 and a discussion of the impact of COVID-19 and the 1 February coup, with the donor consortium providing a steer for LIFT's priorities going forward.

##### **Fund Board**

The Fund Board held three formal meetings in 2020, with a further nine ad-hoc meetings held for decisions. In the formal meetings the Fund Board reviews and decides on a full suite of regular items, including the fund flow and the risk matrix. The ad-hoc meetings are arranged for decisions as required, including for example decisions on Calls for Proposals, a meeting with LIFT's civil society strategic partners, and a meeting on the COVID-19 pandemic.

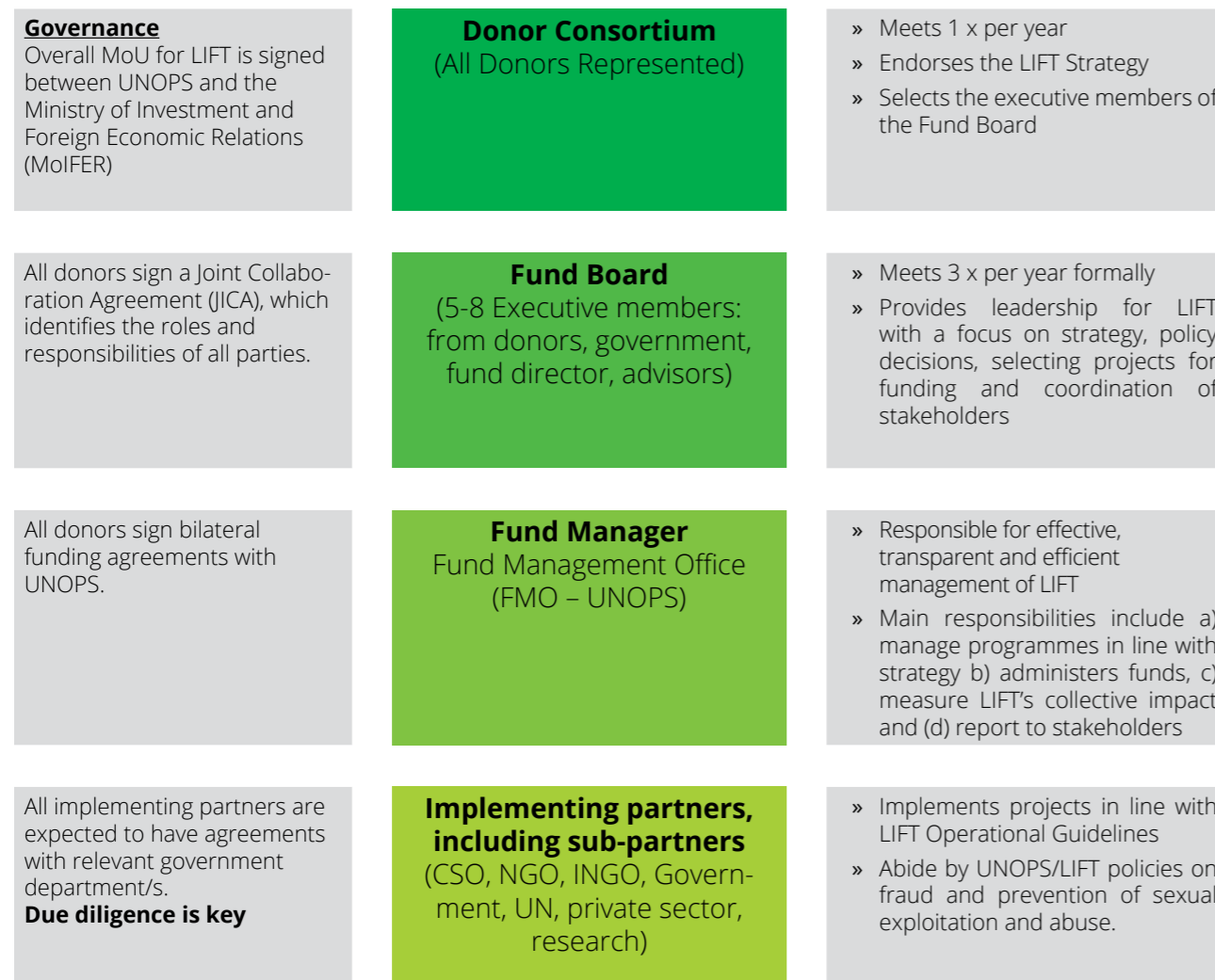
There was a change in governance arrangements in 2020, with the US assuming the chair of the Fund Board and the UK assuming the chair of the Donor Consortium.

Fund Board donors represented in the Fund Board for 2020 continued to be the United Kingdom, European Union, Australia, Switzerland, the United States and Canada. The broader Donor Consortium for LIFT also includes Ireland, and LIFT was pleased to welcome Norway and New Zealand who both signed bilateral funding agreements with LIFT in 2020.

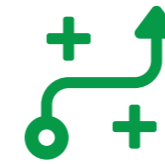
The Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation (MOALI) was represented on the Fund Board through two representatives

(Department of Planning and the Minister's Office). The Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement (MOSWRR) became a fully active member of the Fund Board with the representation of the Director General and Director from the Department of Social Welfare (DSW).

The Fund Board agreed a swift and clear pivot for LIFT funds in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, thereby enabling the fund and partners to provide a timely, relevant and effective role in support of Myanmar's vulnerable groups. A significant volume of additional, unanticipated funding decisions were made and funding disbursed, particularly for large-scale cash transfer programmes. This led to a substantial cash shortage in the fund's cash flow, and the Fund Board needed to make some difficult decisions to terminate other programmes which were anticipated for contracting.



The above diagram depicts LIFT's governance relationships for 2019-2023.



LIFT transitioned to the 2019-2023 strategy

**Fund Management Office**

The Fund Management Office (FMO) finalised some team and staff changes in line with the 2019-2023 strategy.

**Engagement with Government of Myanmar**

LIFT's Fund Management Office (FMO) and the Fund Board maintained good relations across a number of ministries at Union, State and Regional levels. Through its implementing partners, LIFT additionally connects with government at all levels.

**Engagement with actors in conflict-affected areas of Myanmar**

As LIFT transitioned to the 2019-2023 strategy with its emphasis on conflict-affected areas and vulnerable groups, the Fund Board required an associated increase in understanding and relationships in conflict-affected areas, including with civil society organisations, service providers and ethnic armed organisations. As LIFT's programmes were finalised for Kachin, N Shan and the South-East of Myanmar, LIFT further developed its relationships, trust and collaboration with these partners.

**Engagement with Sector Coordination Groups**

Within the Agriculture and Rural Development Sector Coordination Group (ARD-SCG), LIFT continued in 2020 to work closely with the secretariat at MoALI's Department of Planning and support the co-facilitators USAID and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). The policy team supported that function, providing useful insights relevant to LIFT and drawing links across partners and programmes. LIFT also engages in other sector and sub-sector groups, in particular for social protection, nutrition, skills development and microfinance.

**Funding to Government**

The Department of Social Welfare in the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement (MSWRR) no longer relied on LIFT funding for the maternal and child cash transfer (MCCT) programme in Chin State, with the successful transition to the government budget for the monthly cash transfers to every woman in Chin who is pregnant or with a child under the age of two. LIFT's support for operational costs and technical assistance, particularly with regards to monitoring and evaluation, continued in 2020. LIFT's support to DSW and the MCCT programme expanded to Kayah and Kayin States. LIFT also continued to provide technical assistance to the National Nutrition Centre (NNC) in the Ministry of Health and Sports and to the Financial Regulatory Department (FRD) in the Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry.

**Collaboration with Access to Health fund**

In 2020, LIFT continued to strengthen collaboration with the Access to Health Fund. Nutrition continues to be the main area of collaboration, with the funds continuing to share a technical adviser to develop new strategies and programmes in nutrition.

LIFT and Access to Health also co-funded and both benefited from conflict sensitivity technical assistance from RAFT, Myanmar, provided to the implementing partners and the Fund Management Offices.

**Efficiencies through Programme Management Office**

In 2020, UNOPS Myanmar managed three large multi-donor Funds (Joint Peace Fund, Access to Health, and LIFT) as well as the EU-funded Nexus Response Mechanism (NRM). UNOPS is also the Principal



In 2019, LIFT continued to strengthen collaboration with the Access to Health Fund.



In 2020, UNOPS Myanmar managed three large multi-donor Funds

**Raise awareness on Standards of Conduct and Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA).**

Recipient for the Global Fund, and managing the UN Trade Cluster Fund for SECO. Following through on an agreement to streamline the previous individualised programme support units for each of the funds, a Programme Management Office (PMO) was established in 2018. At a minimum, this shared structure provides the four main functions in programme support (grant management, administration and operations, budgeting and reporting, and oversight/audit), in addition to coordinating other tasks in programme management such as risk management, due diligence, performance management, and inter-fund collaboration.

In 2020, UNOPS as a whole moved to a remote working modality in light of COVID-19 restrictions.

A number of online workshops were also facilitated for LIFT's partners to develop grants management capacity and raise awareness on Standards of Conduct and Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA). These workshops contributed to the overall capacity building of partners.

LIFT has robust risk management practices for managing downstream partners including due diligence assessments, downstream partner mapping, annual partner audit/expenditure verification, detailed operational guidelines, fraud and safeguards framework, including protection against sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA), which outlines the case reporting and management. The FMO conducts several workshops each year to build partners' capacity, including on operations level grants and financial management, strategic level fraud, and safeguards, PSEA, communication, and on other topics as needed.

As part of its obligations to donors and in line with our risk management framework, UNOPS Myanmar conducts due diligence assessments on its partners. The purpose of this self-assessment is to evaluate the financial and operational capacity, governance structures, systems, policies and procedures, and commitment to safeguarding and PSEA.

LIFT's best practices and examples were also shared widely across UNOPS offices and were replicated in selected offices such as Bangladesh and Indonesia, in PMO's capacity as Asia Centre for Fund Management.

**7.2 ALLOCATION OF LIFT FUNDS**

LIFT uses certain indicators to track the degree to which funds are allocated in line with Fund Board policies and are accounted for in a transparent manner. The Fund Management Office (FMO) continues to have robust financial and management controls in place and continues to implement them consistently. The annual audit for the LIFT FMO for FY2019 was carried out in May 2020. LIFT received an overall satisfactory rating from the auditors, as well as satisfactory ratings on the various functional areas that were in the scope of the audit, such as finance, procurement and supply chain, human resources and general administration. Project management received a partially satisfactory rating. There was one medium priority audit observation for the FMO this year.

In terms of audits of implementing partners, it was a busy year with 77 projects audited; in only one year since the start of LIFT were there more. In 2019, there were 87 audits. There was a slight decrease in observations of 'high priority', from 14 in the previous year, to two high priority observations for FY2019.

**87** LIFT managed grants in 2020

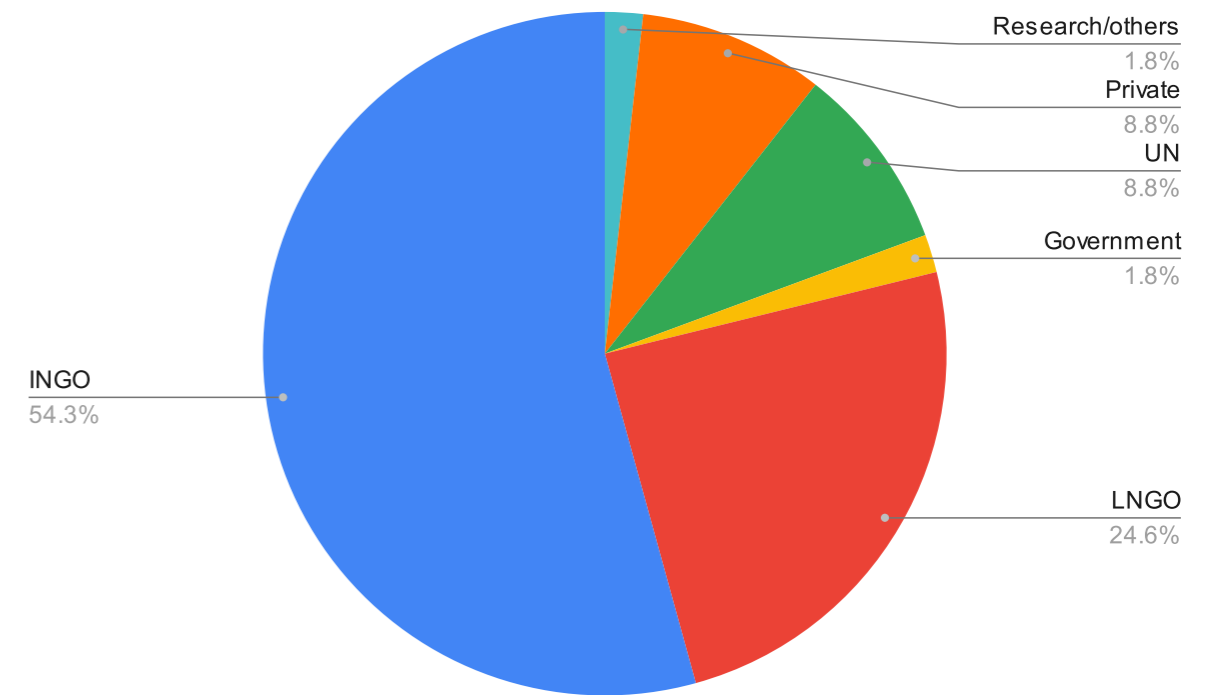


Figure 6.1 Proportion of implementing partners by type in 2020

Indicator	LIFT target 2020 (per cent)	Achieved 2020(per cent)	per cent
% of clear Fund Board (FB) recommendations implemented by Fund Manager (FM) within given deadlines	100	100	100
% and number of audit areas (both FM and IPs) rated 'high priority' by the auditors	0 for all parties	2*	

Table 6.1: Fund Management Office performance indicator

Note: \* There were 2 high priority audit observations for the IPs (out of 164 observations in total). The FMO had one medium observation. The audit of 2020 expenditure will take place in 2021.

In terms of grants management, LIFT managed 87 grants in 2020, of which 28 ended over the course of 2020, including four that ended in December. At the end of December 2020, LIFT had 59 ongoing projects and the FMO continues to manage the closure process for grants that ended over the course of the year. LIFT worked with 57 partners in 2020, and the proportional distribution of partners remains similar to prior years with a slight increase in partners from INGO and private sectors (see figure 6.1).

Old Funding Windows/New Theme	Contracts signed		Projects finished (end of Dec 2020)	Ongoing projects	Contract amendments	
	2019	2020			2019	2020
	A	B			C	D=B-C
Old LIFT	103	103	103	0	190	190
Agriculture, markets and food systems (AG)	25	16	7	9	71	87
Decent Work and Labour Mobility (DWLM)	25	24	5	19	50	80
Financial Inclusion and Private Sector (FI &PS)	20	15	4	11	49	61
Nutrition (NUT)	28	30	11	19	51	77
Others (World Bank/Decent Work)	2	1	0	1	1	2
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>412</b>	<b>497</b>

Table 6.2 Project status by funding window as of end December 2020

Indicator	LIFT target for 2020	Achieved at 2020	Percentage
			achieved
Percentage of funds released by FMO that are in line with IP contracts	87%	98.8% <sup>111</sup>	114%
Percentage of IPs for whom the FMO completes a financial system review	100%	98.1%	98%

Table 6.3 Results for fund flow and implementing partner performance, 2020

<sup>111</sup> This is based on the amount of IP expenditure deemed ineligible as a proportion of total IP expenditure, based on the audit of 2019 expenditure (1% of total expenditure incurred by the IP's).

Indicator	Low risk (Green)		Medium risk (Yellow)		High risk (Red)	
	Threshold	per cent of grants	Threshold	per cent grants	Threshold	per cent of grants
1 Implementation rate	>90% on track	45%	71% - 90% on track	30%	<=70% on track	25%
2 Annual expenditure	>90% spent	34%	71% - 90% spent	47%	<=70% spent	19%
3 Reporting timeliness	0 days late	98%	1-7 days late	2%	>8 days late	0%
4 Report completeness	100% complete	100%	71 - 99% complete	0%	<=70% complete	0%
5 Management controls**	0 open observations	45%	1-3 open observations	42%	>3 open observations	13%

Overall rating \*\*\*

2020	59%	41%	0%
2019	51%	41%	8%
2018	45%	44%	11%
2017	45%	45%	11%
2016	49%	45%	6%
2015	41%	45%	14%
2014	51%	37%	12%
2013	48%	41%	11%
2012	32%	41%	32%

Table 6.4 Summary of project management indicators by 'traffic light' category for 2020

- \* Based on available data as of April 2020; grants to UN are not audited and therefore are not considered for certain indicators. The overall rating is assigned through the weighting of the risk assessment of each of the five indicators.
- \*\* Based on available data as of April 2020 as audits for the fiscal year take place in Q2 of the following year.
- \*\*\* The overall rating is assigned through the weighting of the risk assessment of each of the five indicators.

	Commitments *	total
	USD	
Australia	38,851,207	6.8%
Canada	12,114,270	2.1%
Denmark	9,991,566	1.7%
European Union	143,852,400	25.1%
France	1,319,800	0.2%
Ireland	2,433,805	0.4%
Italy	852,040	0.1%
Luxembourg	1,129,328	0.2%
Mitsubishi	200,000	0.0%
Netherlands	2,950,000	0.5%
New Zealand	5,490,869	1.0%
Norway	1,133,812	0.2%
Sweden	2,725,776	0.5%
Switzerland	40,249,317	7.0%
United Kingdom	281,435,305	49.1%
United States	23,725,000	4.1%
UNDP/ PGMF	4,694,399	0.8%
Total donors' contribution	573,148,894	100%
Interest earned	5,641,038	
<b>Total</b>	<b>578,789,932</b>	

Table 6.5: Cumulative donor contributions up to 31 December 2020 (US\$)

\* Commitments may vary slightly from 2019 figures due to changes in exchange rates.

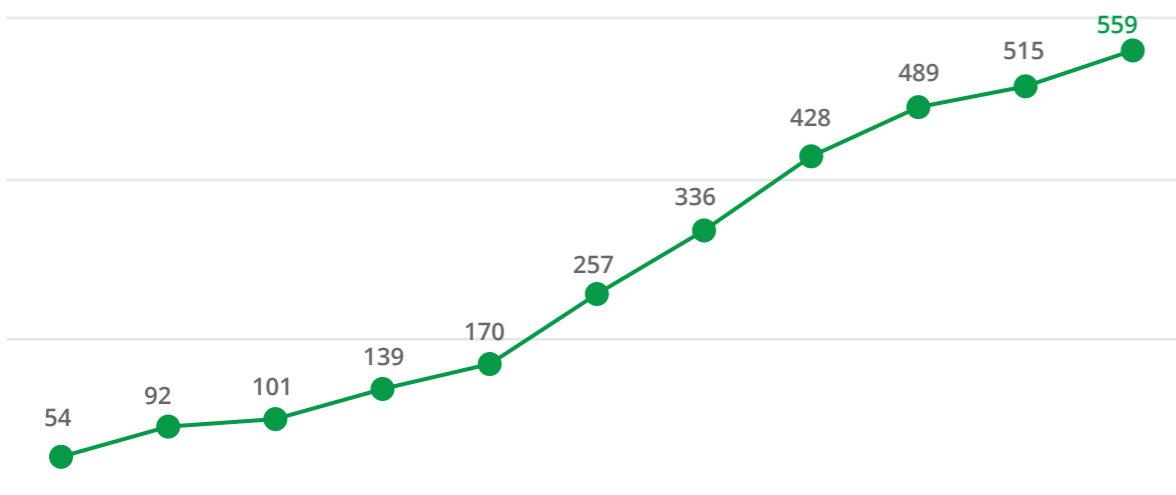


Figure 6.2 Cumulative LIFT donors' contribution received in USD (millions) 2010-2020

Activity	Budget (USD)	Actual (USD)	Over / (under) spent	%
Grants & Supports				
Grants to implementing partners	53,901,006	50,609,672	(3,291,334)	-6%
Non-grant supports	6,539,901	11,107,278	4,567,377	70%
Research	3,798,638	1,249,181	(2,549,457)	-67%
Operation of the Fund Manager's office	6,913,847	5,500,873	(1,412,974)	-20%
Support to the Fund Board	24,630	23,379	(1,251)	-5%
Facilities and administration	1,628,401	1,486,195	(142,206)	-9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>72,806,423</b>	<b>69,976,578</b>	<b>(2,829,845)</b>	<b>-4%</b>

Table 6.6. LIFT expenditure for 2020

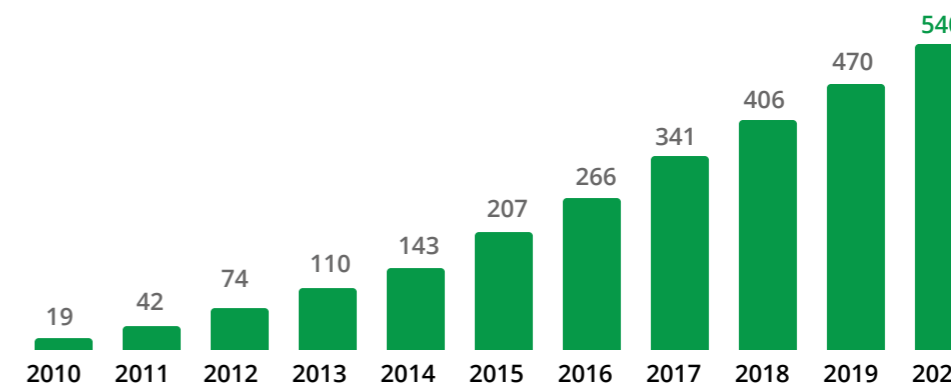


Figure 6.3. Cumulative LIFT expenditure in USD (millions) 2010-2020

### 7.3 FUND FLOW AND PARTNER PERFORMANCE

LIFT uses two indicators to track fund flow performance. As seen from the table 5.3, LIFT's implementing partners follow the LIFT operational guidelines closely and have good financial controls in place. A total of USD 203,684 was identified as ineligible expenditures, which represents 1 per cent of total expenditure incurred by the IPs (1.2 per cent in the previous year).

Additionally, LIFT started using a tailored 'traffic light' tool in 2012 to monitor the project management performance of all implementing partners. The results for the projects active in 2020 are summarised in Table 5.4. In total, 64 projects have been assessed with this tool. Performance of partners is comparable to previous years, with a slight reduction in implementation rate due to COVID-19 in 2020 as compared to 2019.

Even within the COVID-19 context, efforts were in place to work with implementing partners to prepare more realistic budgets and follow up on delays in implementation. Almost all projects were revisited and reviewed closely with the partners to align with the changed context. As a result, only 19 per cent of the projects have less than a 70 per cent expenditure rate. Reasons for any low expenditures were mainly implementation challenges during lockdown, which delayed regular progress.

For partners' reporting, a two-week extension was allowed for report submission due to the coup in February 2021; 98 per cent of partners met the extended deadline. In 2020, remote audits were introduced and conducted by LIFT for many IPs. IPs who were unable to participate in remote audits in 2020, due to challenges with accessing documents, have been included in the 2021 audit batch.

Implementing partners will be informed about their individual traffic lights, while the overall results are used by the FMO to analyse the functioning of the established systems and mechanisms.

### 7.4 FINANCE

During 2020, LIFT increased from USD 539 million at the end of 2019 to USD 579 million. LIFT budgeted for a delivery of USD 72.8 million during 2020 and the final 2020 expenditure was USD 70.0 million.

Amid a COVID-19 pandemic, LIFT pivoted and adapted and saw additional expenditures in some areas (such as large scale new grants for cash transfers), while restrictions on travel and gatherings saw large underspends in other areas (such as surveys, studies, monitoring visits). There was an increased and additional investment in the currency exchange hedging services (TCX) and an additional emergency provision of safety equipment PPE kits to MoALI for the COVID-19 pandemic. Overall, grants spent 94 per cent of the planned budget and non-grant support was 170 per cent of the planned budget.

The underspend in the human resources budget was caused by several late on-boarding, personnel changes and efficiencies made in human resources.



**LIFT increased from USD 539 million at the end of 2019 to USD 579 million.**



**The FMO organised webinars over four days in June 2020**

### 7.5 MONITORING AND EVALUATION FOR ACCOUNTABILITY AND LEARNING (MEAL)

In 2020, LIFT continued to implement its refreshed MEAL framework through activities undertaken by the Fund Management Office (FMO) and IPs.

LIFT's FMO organised an induction workshop for the refreshed LIFT Framework 2019-2023 over two days in January 2020 to seek agreement on how the refreshed LIFT MEAL Framework would be put into practice. The workshop was a useful opportunity to build a shared understanding of the MEAL refresh and its implications for programming. Some of the key action points included: updating the MEAL draft guidance documents, development of a comprehensive IP capacity support plan, finalising the LIFT strategic evaluation questions (SEQ) and refreshing the reporting guidelines, defining the LIFT-wide thematic and policy learning agenda and updating the IP MEAL guidelines

The FMO organised webinars over four days in June 2020 for all LIFT's IPs on the refreshed semi-annual/annual reporting template. The reporting guidelines needed updating to include the SEQs for ongoing assessment and learning and to incorporate feedback from the MEAL review process which highlighted information overlaps, the need for outcome analysis and for reporting to contribute to learning and adaptation.

LIFT's M&E team prepared for the 2020 household survey, revising study protocols, tools and re-engaging with data collection agencies. The survey was not possible due to COVID-19 restrictions. The M&E team then devised a phone survey, but this was also not possible following the February 2021 military coup.



**FMO updated data verification and system assessment**

In August 2020, LIFT's M&E organised an internal learning session with LIFT's programme teams focusing on adaptive management guidelines and how to operationalise these within LIFT's MEAL and project management cycles.

LIFT's M&E team updated data verification and system assessment tools and their guidelines. Thematic M&E officers and programme focal points conducted the virtual monitoring system and data verification with selected projects and provided necessary technical inputs and support to IPs.

LIFT's M&E team organised a series of meetings together with respective thematic programmes and thematic M&E focal points to discuss the roll-out of the guidelines for mainstreaming disability information and data in the IP monitoring systems. The guidelines were developed with the central M&E team in order to improve disability data collection.

Over the year, LIFT's M&E team provided technical support to 59 LIFT IPs, tailored to their individual needs. Support included providing technical inputs on measurement frameworks, MEAL plans, development of theories of change. Some IPs required and received intensive support on M&E reporting.

#### **M&E-related studies (surveys, evaluations and mid-term reviews)**

Listed (following page) is an outline of the studies, reviews and evaluations undertaken in 2020. MEAL system support activities undertaken by the LIFT M&E team are also outlined.

No.	Implementing Partner	Project	LIFT Programme
1	Michigan State University	Agri-food Value Chain Development in Myanmar: Implications for Livelihoods of the Rural Poor	AMFS DWLM
2	Save the Children	Tat Lan Plus	AMFS DWLM

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No.	Implementing Partner	Project	LIFT Programme
1	Cordaid Foundation	Technical Assistance (TA) to LIFT/Cordaid partner MFIs	Financial Inclusion
2	GRET	Expanding Rural Financial Markets by Institutionalizing Chin MFI	Financial Inclusion
3	GRET	Creation of a microfinance institution in the Dry Zone, Myanmar	Financial Inclusion
4	IFC	IFC East Asia and Pacific Advisory Services - Myanmar Microfinance Development Program (Capacity building for Inclusive Financial Sector)	Financial Inclusion
5	International Organization for Migration (IOM)	Migration as a Livelihood Diversification Strategy in the Delta (MILDAS)	DWLM
6	Land Core Group (LCG)	Fostering Equitable Access and Control over Land and Related natural resources in Myanmar	AMFS
7	Metta Development Foundation	Uplands Food Security and Participating in Market	AMFS
8	PGMF	Rakhine Access to Financial Inclusion (RAFIN)	Financial Inclusion
9	The Currency Exchange Fund N.V. (TCX)	The Currency Exchange Fund N.V. (TCX): Supply of Services for Term Hedging of Currency Risk in the Myanmar Microfinance Market	Financial Inclusion
10	UNCDF	UNCDF - Support to Savings-Led Microfinance Market Leaders to Enter Myanmar (Microlead Expansion Programme)	Financial Inclusion
11	Canadian Cooperative Association (CCA) / Cooperative Development Foundation of Canada (CDF)	Myanmar: Financial Inclusion Expansion through Co-operatives" (MyFINANCE) project	Financial Inclusion
12	BBC Media	Kyat Chat: Making the Most of Migration and Money (Yay Kyi Yar project)	DWLM
13	International Fertilizer Development Centre (IFDC)	Myanmar Agro-Input and Farm Service Project (MAFS) (Upland)	AMFS
14	International Labour Organisation (ILO)	Skill Development Project in Rakhine State	DWLM
15	Karen Development Network (KDN)	Enhanced Livelihoods for Displaced People (ELDP) project	AMFS Nutrition
16	Stichting ZOA, The Netherlands (Registered as Consortium of Dutch NGOs (CDN) in Myanmar	Improving Economic and Nutrition Outcomes of Poor Rural People in Northern Kayin State	AMFS Nutrition

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## 7.6 COMMUNICATIONS

The key priorities of LIFT’s communications in 2020 were communicating LIFT’s COVID-19 response, boosting partner communications and donor visibility in line with the 2019-2023 LIFT strategy, enhancing knowledge sharing, revamping digital communication channels and approaches, while reinforcing internal communications to strengthen LIFT’s team around LIFT values.



Success stories were published and the page gained 38,000 followers by the end of 2020.

**Communicating COVID-19 response:** Following the outbreak of COVID-19 in Myanmar in March 2020, LIFT’s and partners’ contributions to the COVID-19 response became the priority of LIFT’s communications work. In light of restrictions on movement and public gatherings, LIFT concentrated its communications efforts on media coverage and social media outreach. As LIFT and partners quickly pivoted resources to deliver immediate COVID-19 response activities in support of the most vulnerable, LIFT’s Communications Team followed with an information campaign, which kicked-off with a virtual press conference to announce LIFT’s dedicated COVID-19 funding and complimentary social media campaign. The press event received good coverage across digital and traditional media as 15 media outlets including television channels and online platforms (including, inter alia, Myanmar Times, 7 Days News and 7 Days TV, Balance News Agency, MRTV, Myanma Platform, The Voice Daily, Democratic Voice of Burma, The Irrawaddy, The Farmer Journal, MNTV, Channel K) reported on LIFT’s COVID-19 response. Social media coverage of LIFT’s announcement gained considerable traction resulting in high audience engagement numbers of 60,000 to 100,000 impressions for some publications.



High audience engagement numbers of 60,000 to 100,000 impressions for some publications.

Throughout the year, LIFT was intensively reporting on its COVID-19 response activities across thematic areas, highlighting LIFT’s, partners’ and donors’ success stories and lessons learned through original content drafted and produced by LIFT’s Communications Team or through reposts and retweets. In general, LIFT-initiated communications of its COVID-19 response contributed to a significant increase in media coverage of LIFT’s work in 2020. About 165 media mentions of LIFT-funded projects and campaigns with regard to the COVID-19 response were made by various prominent broadcast, print and online media outlets including 7 Day, Balance News Agency, BBC Burmese, Bloomberg, Channel K, Democracy Vision, Democratic Voice of Burma, Duwun, DVB TV News, Eleven Media, iMyanmar House, Just Style, Mizzima, MNTV, MRTV, Myanma Alin, Myanma Platform, Myanmar Digital News, Myanmar Times, Myawaddy Newspaper, Pyi Myanmar, ReliefWeb, Shwe Media, Skynet UptoDate, The Farmer Journal, The Irrawaddy, The Myanmar Times, The Standard Time Daily and The Voice Daily, who reported on LIFT’s and partners’ work in Myanmar.

In 2020, LIFT intensified its outreach to the media by sharing professional expertise on wide-ranging issues of the COVID-19 response. In particular, LIFT’s experts were sharing their insights on socio-economic developments through interviews and dedicated op-eds on decent work and labour migration, financial services, social protection cash transfers and civil society-led COVID-19 responses.



In 2020, LIFT won the UNOPS’ Project of the Year Award 2019

In 2020, LIFT won the UNOPS’ Project of the Year Award 2019 for excelling in project management and integrating the UNOPS mission, vision, and values in implementation of activities

**Boosting partner communications:** LIFT initiated regular coordination meetings and communications workshops for implementing partners, discussing communications plans, providing training to cover various communications needs and sharing best practices. These meetings





**LIFT arranged an online workshop on photography and storytelling**

and workshops were used as opportunities to hear feedback from partners for stronger coordination of communications activities, more effectively plan LIFT’s outreach activities through leveraging partners’ communications strategies as well as provide communications support and advice to partners.

LIFT arranged an online workshop on photography and storytelling for partners aiming at strengthening skills, enhancing communications networking and promoting photo stories submissions to amplify external outreach. The workshop included a mix of in-class discussions and writing/photo shooting assignments. The most compelling stories were featured on LIFT website and social media.

**Boosting donor visibility:** Though challenging with COVID-19 restrictions, increasing donor visibility was a focus for LIFT’s 2020 communications. LIFT organised a donor communications workshop to gauge the donor communication and visibility priorities, hear feedback on LIFT’s communications and strategise joint approaches and plans - all building into LIFT’s 2020 communications plan. As a follow-up, LIFT developed innovative opportunities to increase donor visibility by encouraging donor participation in online events, ceremonies, meetings, webinars, social media campaigns and virtual field visits. LIFT ensured donor visibility at all LIFT-supported events and across LIFT projects, knowledge products and media/social media outreach.

LIFT’s donor logos were prominently displayed in all LIFT-supported information and advocacy materials produced and disseminated during the large-scale social media campaign devoted to the 16 Days of Activism against gender-based violence. LIFT initiated its tailored social media campaign featuring 23 Facebook publications and a week-long social media quiz to highlight the gender equality initiatives in Myanmar. LIFT’s social media campaign on 16 Days of Activism cumulatively reached over 100,000 people with high post engagement.

Revamping digital communications channels and approaches: As COVID-19 restrictions affected LIFT’s plans for public events, field visits and outreach gatherings, digital communications channels including social media, website and the online newsletter became crucial to effective communication.

In 2020, LIFT revamped its website, aligning its content and structure to LIFT’s 2019-2023 strategy while upgrading its functionality to ensure user-friendly navigation across the website. LIFT’s refreshed website was launched in November and provides thematic- and approach-focused project-wide information in line with the LIFT strategy refreshed for 2019-2023. In 2020 alone, about 50 stories were published on the website.

In 2020, LIFT’s Facebook page was an important platform in LIFT’s digital communications, conveying critical information on LIFT’s response and programme results. As part of digitising its communications, LIFT strengthened its content creation for social media through developing a monthly content calendar and boosting outreach through developing more engaging and diverse content. As a result, quality, regular communications content was published on LIFT’s social media. Additionally, LIFT’s communications were amplified through partners’ social media platforms, which contributed to an increase in social media outreach. A total of 249 posts highlighting LIFT programmes, COVID-19 responses, public awareness campaigns, partners, events and success stories were published and the page gained 38,000 followers by the end of 2020. LIFT’s content including the success stories from partners and the in-house produced materials generated high engagement, with a cumulative audience reaching over 826,000 people.



As part of its social media outreach, LIFT produced a series of tailored social media campaigns which delivered dedicated messages and boosted considerable audience engagement while building LIFT profile. For instance, LIFT in collaboration with Access to Health and National Nutrition Centre supported a month-long nutrition promotion campaign, which included a series of publications, posters, animations, videos, nutrition advice and best practices.

Several social media campaigns and standalone publications hit record high engagement rates:

LIFT's announcement of additional funding of USD 15.8 million to support Myanmar's COVID-19 preparedness and response: 111,103 impressions, 21,136 engagements.

The announcement of the LIFT and the DSW collaboration on additional cash support to mothers and social pensioners: 61,944 impressions, 5,300 engagements.

Updates on LIFT's COVID-19 response and guidelines on staying healthy, developed jointly by LIFT and MoHS: 75,711 impressions, 4,892 engagements.

Updates on LIFT-supported nutrition awareness as part of the breastfeeding campaign: 36,058 impressions, 1,957 engagements.

**FB stats (Jan - Dec 2020)**

As part of its digital communications in 2020, LIFT prioritised the production of visual communications, which led to creation of in-house original video content and dissemination of partner-produced videos. Around 50 videos and animations were published on LIFT's social media, mainly featuring the COVID-19 response and COVID-19 essential information. In 2020, LIFT also reinvigorated its Twitter account to amplify its social media communications targeting donor communities. In light of the COVID-19 context, LIFT's newsletter was redesigned and relaunched as a bi-monthly digital communication product to expand the outreach of LIFT's information. By the end of 2020, total subscription to LIFT's newsletter exceeded 2,400 readers.

Reinforcing internal communications: In 2020, LIFT prioritised strengthening staff engagement and promoting LIFT values, which grew in significance in light of the COVID-19 restrictions including work-



**Aiming to support LIFT's priorities of promoting learning, knowledge management and knowledge sharing**

from-home requirements. As part of this effort, LIFT transformed its monthly staff town hall meetings into online UpLIFT forums that connected all staff and kept everyone informed on remote working experiences, best practice exchanges, cross-unit learning and online psychosocial counselling while promoting a unique spirit of unity. These monthly meetings and periodic updates highlighting LIFT's work and achievements boosted morale and helped staff feel acknowledged for their hard work.

**Enhancing knowledge sharing:** Aiming to support LIFT's priorities of promoting learning, knowledge management and knowledge sharing, the Communications Team contributed to packaging the knowledge generated by LIFT and its partners through accessible and need-tailored products and sharing it to a wide range of stakeholders while positioning LIFT as a 'thought leader' through its research and evidence generation. As part of this effort, LIFT has turned its website into a resource of easily accessible publications and reports. Almost 40 studies, research papers and knowledge management and learning publications were published on the LIFT website in 2020 <https://www.lift-fund.org/publications> including, inter alia, the following:

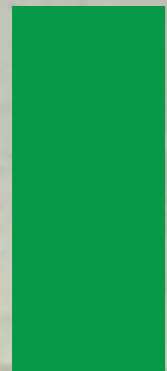
- » Value Chain Assessment of Turmeric from Myanmar, Summary report
- » Strengthening Resilience in LIFT-supported Villages 2014-2018, A Synthesis Paper
- » Social and Behaviour Change for Nutrition in Maternal and Child Cash Transfer Programmes, Lessons for Policy and Programming in Myanmar
- » Rice Production Manual
- » Relevance and Sustainability of LIFT Projects 2014-2018
- » LIFT's donors and partners response to COVID-19
- » LIFT's 2015-2019 Evaluation and Learning Questions
- » Extending the Scope Of Social Security To Internal Migrants In The Informal Economy: An Analysis For Myanmar
- » Assessment Study on The Skills Of Returned Myanmar Migrants
- » Poverty, Food Insecurity, And Social Protection During COVID-19 In Myanmar
- » Nutrition-Sensitive Guidance in The Context Of COVID-19 In Myanmar
- » Stepping Into Uncertainty: Refugee and IDP Experiences Of Return In Southeast Myanmar
- » Labour Market Survey
- » Impacts of COVID-19 Pandemic on Returning Migrants Analysis



# VALUE FOR MONEY

# 08

VALUE FOR MONEY



# VALUE FOR MONEY

## 08

### VALUE FOR MONEY

Value for Money (VfM) is an important, cross-cutting theme for LIFT and is key to measuring aid effectiveness. Applying VfM means maximising the impact and outcomes of LIFT investments/projects, making the best possible use of resources to strengthen resilience and sustainable livelihoods, and contribute to LIFT's three impact level outcomes for 2019-2023:

- » Improve nutrition status, particularly of women and children
- » Increase household income and assets, with greater control by women
- » Reduce vulnerability of households and individuals to shocks, stresses and risks

In the 2019-2023 programme phase LIFT aims to improve the use of VfM assessments in decision making, monitoring and reporting of projects' results. While VfM is considered important across different levels of LIFT, the primary focus has been on the following questions:

#### LIFT FMO-level

- » **Operations** – how LIFT sought to ensure VfM considerations were taken into account across the project cycle
- » **Results** – how much LIFT spent to reach individuals/households
- » **LIFT funding mechanism** – whether LIFT's design as a multi-donor fund offers value for money (e.g. governance structure, coordination and management)

#### LIFT Programme-level

- » **Project selection** – assessing the extent to which VfM was reflected in partner project design and its consideration during project selection
- » **Operations** – assessing how VfM considerations were taken into account in the project cycle and how projects use VfM measures
- » **Results** – assessing the extent to which the fund's investments have translated into the expected results (i.e. outcomes or generated positive returns)

Since 2015, LIFT has progressively integrated VfM analysis in its measurement of programme performance. LIFT has endeavored to develop a comprehensive list of VfM metrics, aligned to its refreshed MEAL framework. This approach is intended to ease the process of collecting VfM data by ensuring that it is integral to the M&E systems of LIFT implementation partners. LIFT embeds the four principles for VfM: economy, efficiency, effectiveness and equity in the adaptive management practices implemented by LIFT's programme teams:

**Economy** assesses the degree to which inputs are being purchased in the right quantity and at the right price. Each project's budget is reviewed for accuracy and its fit with proposed activities, work plan, and expected outputs and outcomes.

**Efficiency** assesses how well outputs are delivered and transferred to the beneficiary, considering the rate at which intervention inputs are converted to outputs and cost-efficiency.

**Effectiveness** assesses the quality of work and how well outcomes are delivered and sustained, considering the rate at which outputs are converted into outcomes, and impacts, and the cost-effectiveness.

**Equity** measures the degree to which the results of LIFT investments are equitably distributed across beneficiaries: gender; region; wealth quintile; ethnicity, etc.

VfM measures are quantitative and qualitative.

VfM Factor	VfM Metric	Description
<b>Planning</b>	VfM analysis of proposed intervention-planning and business case	Assess VfM of proposed and alternate interventions: planning stage
<b>Economy</b>	% management and overhead vs. total programmable cost	Calculate total management/ overhead vs. total program cost: global and CO level
<b>Economy</b>	Cost-driver analysis	Identify/quantify key factors that drive costs; close monitoring controls costs
<b>Efficiency</b>	Results vs. targets Indicators	Calculate and trend results achieved vs. targets by indicator
<b>Efficiency</b>	Expenditure vs. budget by indicator	Calculate and trend expenditure vs. budget by indicator
<b>Efficiency</b>	Unit-cost analysis	Unit-cost for key outputs, compared across time/location strengthen planning, partner negotiations
<b>Efficiency</b>	Cost-performance ratio (CPR) by indicator	Calculate ratio of achievement vs. ratio of expenditure, determines results efficiency
<b>Effectiveness</b>	Outcome level CPR	Calculate the cost-results ratio of Outcomes
<b>Effectiveness</b>	Catalytic benefits and Sustainability analysis	Calculate value lost/gained by unused outputs; calculate benefits of further investment
<b>Equity</b>	Beneficiary equity analysis	Disaggregated beneficiaries by gender (minimum), age, social identifier, region, etc.

Table 7.1: VfM Lines of Inquiry Matrix

**Programme-Level VfM**

Programme design starts with the development of the call for proposals and concept notes. The process allows a transparent and competitive tendering through open calls. The calls demand that budgets are linked with the Theory of Change to allow value for money (VfM) assessments to be conducted during the project's implementation. The call documents include an annex with the VfM Guidelines. These guidelines are the standard to be followed when preparing the proposal documents.

As a minimum, the guidelines require an overview of the return on investment for the overall project and for specific components. This can be a monetary assessment or a sensitivity analysis when benefits cannot be monetised. Also required is a presentation of alternative approaches and a justification for why the proposed approach was chosen. The guidelines also require information about the long-term benefits of the intervention and its sustainability, replicability, and scalability.

**Project-Level VfM**

All partners are aware of the importance of VfM, and report on their VfM approaches and activities. VfM analysis is used for ongoing project management and reporting. The following sections describe how VfM is integrated in LIFT's processes to strengthen project and programme performance.

**Value for money in the design and appraisal stages**

VfM considerations at the project design stage have grown in recent years. In the main, LIFT-funded partners are selected through competitive tendering via open calls for proposals. Though not directly related to a single VfM metric, the open calls for proposals and FMO appraisal and oversight support strong programme design, economy through competition, and efficient implementation procedures. The calls for proposals clearly define requirements on how value for money is integrated in the proposals, budgets and monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL) plans. The appraisal of the submitted proposals therefore includes a VfM compliance checker:

- » Is the budget sufficiently linked with the work plan and Theory of Change/measurement table to enable VfM assessments?
- » Are the planned metrics realistic and relevant to assess the expected outcomes?
- » Are the data collection plans and metrics aligned with the needs for continued assessment for VfM during project implementation?
- » Is the intervention replicable and scalable?
- » How does the project add value to the programme in the region and LIFT overall?
- » What are the primary cost drivers of the project? How will they be followed up during implementation?
- » For selected components of the project, what are the expected economic benefits? (monetised if possible)

The goal is to create awareness about the importance of VfM before the project implementation stage and prepare partners to report against VfM topics. Setting up the project structure at the beginning is important to enable partners to submit meaningful VfM reports.

In the appraisal stage, the FMO uses qualitative and quantitative data to assess likely VfM in projects and LIFT's FMO makes recommendations for project adjustments to increase VfM.

In the Financial Inclusion Programme the VfM criteria are slightly different. Partners working with the Financial Regulatory Department (FRD) report monthly to LIFT and have a different format for presenting VfM information, based on their activities. FMO assesses and compares results with the industry standard, i.e., costs for setting up offices in new areas, portfolio at risk (PAR), financial self-sustainability (FSS) or the amounts leveraged by the projects.

**Value for money during project delivery**

VfM analysis is used for ongoing project management and reporting across LIFT. During project delivery, there is a focus on the VfM component of ‘economy’ by verifying and adjusting human resources and staffing costs, validating travel and other cost drivers and ensuring that sufficient financial and operational controls are in place. This approach is embedded within LIFT procedures. Other examples where LIFT procedures strengthen ‘economy’ include co-location and cooperation with parallel programmes, which results in significant cost savings due to a sharing of services, facilities, and support staff. Several partners report on the following VfM-related topics in their 2020 annual report to LIFT:

- » Comparison of budget vs. expenditures
- » Comparison of direct vs. indirect costs
- » Cost-performance ratio (CPR)

Some partners went beyond these topics and presented cost per output, or unit cost analysis. For example, CDN-ZOA reported cost per household and cost per individual reached per output indicator and compared that to the cost estimated at the project’s inception stage. They reported a cost performance ratio (CPR) of 1.18 for the entirety of the Improving the Incomes and Nutrition Outcomes of Rural Poor in Northern Kayin State project. Save the Children included an Annex of their VfM in their 2020 annual report for the Tat Lan Plus project which included unit cost analyses on each output indicator. For example, the unit cost of financial education training was USD 39 per participant, the unit cost of productive grant and BSD training was USD 686, and the unit cost for the mother hygiene, clean delivery, and child kits was USD 5.70. Eden Centre for Disabled Children (ECDC) also provided a breakdown of the unit costs per output, illustrating their cost-efficiency. For example, the unit cost of disability awareness training was USD 2.80 per participant and the unit cost of capacity building for self-help groups was USD 7.10 per participant.

In 2020, Mercy Corps conducted an endline survey of its Linking Laputta to Markets project which included VfM aspects, particularly cost analysis of skills development and rice value chain interventions in which high level outputs and goal indicators were measured and used to inform VfM components on ‘efficiency’ and ‘effectiveness’. Mercy Corps submitted a case study that presented an economic rate of return for the rice value chain work and an assessment of the potential impacts from TVET interventions.

In 2020, LIFT did not conduct any full VfM project-level assessments in collaboration with implementing partners. The VfM team did however conduct interviews with a sample of implementing partners, representing 20 per cent of LIFT projects. Sampling was based on a set of criteria, including VfM status rating of past reporting to LIFT, phase of implementation, thematic area, geographic area, and project-specific context that would impact on VfM reporting. From these interviews, all partners reported that VfM considerations were included in their project proposal and design stage. They all also reported that they tracked their

performance and expenditure data, meaning that it is theoretically possible to align data for VfM analyses. Ninety per cent of the partner respondents reported that VfM assessments were being conducted informally through quarterly or biannual project review meetings and annual report preparation. Those partners who are considering VfM in project delivery focus on procurement policies and an assessment of cost drivers. However, a common theme that emerged from the interviews was that of the four components of VfM (economy, efficiency, effectiveness, and equity), economy is the only one that is currently well understood by partners and being reported on regularly. This is confirmed through a review of their reports to LIFT. Only one of the partners interviewed, from the Financial Inclusion Programme, reported any cross-project VfM analysis (either conducted or planned). Partners noted that they lacked a nuanced understanding of the full VfM components and needed more technical assistance on VfM assessments and monitoring.

**Project’s Cost Performance Ratios (CPR)**

LIFT uses CPR calculations to check partners’ performance and cost drivers to identify challenges and opportunities to practice adaptive management. The CPR calculation monitors the efficiency of the project’s work, i.e. how well funds are translated into results by comparing the result with the project budget and MEAL plan. The CPR related the number of beneficiaries reached to the percentage of the budget used. Generally speaking, a score of 1 or more is positive. If the denominator (percentage spend of budget) goes up, the cost-performance ratio goes down. If the numerator (actual no. reached/target), goes up the cost-performance ratio goes up. The examples below show the direct activity costs from several LIFT projects. To calculate CPR at the output level, the same indicators must be used across projects with consistent definitions and alignment of expenditure data.

	Measure/Metric	Achievement 2020	Details/Examples
<b>Design</b>	% of projects providing VfM considerations in the proposal/design stage	100%	(Requirement of the project selection process for LIFT)
<b>Inception/Delivery</b>	% of projects that conducted VfM assessments	83%	VfM assessments/analysis are conducted informally through quarterly or biannual project review meetings and during annual report preparation as part of regular project monitoring. The total of 37 VfM analysis/assessments are reported from 9 IPs in the project period. Those analyses range from regular in-house VfM analysis to VfM assessment by external consultants.
	% of projects that conducted cross-project VfM assessments	Nil	
<b>Delivery</b>	% of projects that track expenditure and performance data	100%	IPs use the MEAL plan and its indicators to review the performance of each activity as ongoing monitoring. High-level indicators are measured at midterm and endline surveys to inform effectiveness of the project. All IPs comply with LIFT financial procedures by tracking expenditures along their budget lines (which are reviewed monthly).

**Table 7.2: VfM From Design to Delivery Phase (from sampled partners)**

When CDN calculated the CPR for # targeted mothers and other village members who attended SBCC activities, no target was set in the measurement framework on output level overall. Instead, to calculate a CPR, the target for the related indicator under the same output (for WASH-related SBCC activities) was used.

Save the Children’s Healthy Choice project presented a CPR of 0.99 for # targeted mothers and other village members who attended SBCC activities with a unit cost of USD 62. This includes monthly MCCT transfers to mothers, bank transfer charges, transfer fees for the mobile service provider, and phone top-up card charges.

The number of constructed kilometres for motorbike paths by CDN shows a CPR of 0.95 for construction compared to 0.86 in 2019. This is because, with the additional budget for motorbike paths approved, the number of kilometres increased in 2020 from 59 per cent to 93 per cent of the target. Despite significant contributions from the community, this remains the most capital-intensive activity in the project. It also has clear benefits for the communities and remains one of the most valued activities according to the satisfaction survey.

The CPR of constructing water infrastructures by CDN significantly improved in the last months of the project. The cost per individual is only USD 20 to provide improved access to water. Although this is capital intensive compared to other activities, improving access to water is an essential service and its benefits span multiple years.

At the project’s end, the International Fertilizer Development Center (IFDC) achieved 153 per cent of targeted beneficiaries with CPR of 1.44 for the project outcome of ‘farmers with increased productivity and profitability through improved crop management products and practices’. The actual unit cost (per capita) of the project’s component is USD 13.03 in 2020. In 2019, it was USD 13.12.

CDN’s CPR for ‘# farmers with increased productivity and profitability through improved crop management products and practices’ is based on a composite of CDN’s output on agriculture training. The CPR of 2.11 shows good performance as a result of reaching a significant number of farmers in a low-cost manner. This is also seen for the CPR of the

various outputs which make up the composite, including the number of households that were members of a functional producer group (1.5), the number of farmers trained by the project (2.36), and number of cross visits and learning sessions attended by farmers (1.77). While cross visits are an expensive activity, more farmers could participate than originally targeted and the ratio was positive. Cross-visits have been shown to motivate farmers, expose them to new practices in a convincing manner and allow farmers to exchange experience with their peers.

**VfM in Financial Inclusion Projects**

LIFT’s value for money approach for financial inclusion centres on the performance of microfinance institutions (MFIs). The process of evaluating value for money is continuous throughout the project and is built into the monthly reporting of MFIs to the Financial Regulatory Department (FRD) and LIFT. LIFT assesses MFIs against the 4Es, as outlined below:

**Economy** assesses the degree to which inputs are being purchased in the right quantity and at the right price. Each project’s budget is reviewed for accuracy and its fit with proposed activities, work plan, and expected outputs and outcomes. Since all MFIs provide similar services their operations can easily be compared. In particular, human resources and office costs as a percentage of total budgets are compared across the microfinance projects.

**Effectiveness** assesses the quality of work and how well outcomes are delivered and sustained, considering the rate at which outputs are converted into outcomes and impacts and the cost-effectiveness. For an MFI, effectiveness measures the quality of its output, and the sustainability of its operations. The key indicators are portfolio at risk, operational and financial self-sufficiency.

- » LIFT MFIs loan portfolio at risk (PAR)—the proportion of the loan portfolio that is in arrears of 30 days and therefore at risk of not being repaid—is 10 per cent in 2020, significantly higher than that of <0.5 per cent in 2019. The best MFIs worldwide show a PAR of between 1 and 6 per cent. Loan repayments were affected by COVID-19 restrictions on MFI operations in Bago, Rakhine and Yangon from April to October 2020.
- » LIFT MFIs achieved 83 per cent operational self-sufficiency in 2020, lower than the 100 per cent achievement obtained since 2017.
- » 58 per cent have achieved financial self-sufficiency that shows a decrease from almost 90 per cent achieved in 2019.

Equity measures the degree to which the results of LIFT’s MFI investments are equitably distributed. By the end of 2020, LIFT partners had provided financial services, primarily in the form of loans, to 2,912,271 of whom 90 per cent were women.

**COVID-19 impact on VfM**

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated restrictions on mass gatherings, partners made project adaptations that had impacts on their value for money. Virtual trainings and meetings became the revised approach for most organisations. Many project activities were implemented virtually or semi-virtually (e.g. via Team, Zoom, Skype, and Facebook messenger) rather than being postponed or cancelled. This resulted in many implementing partners experiencing cost savings compared to their face-to-face trainings and meetings they had planned. However, there has not yet been any assessment conducted on the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of these changed activities to inform any evaluations of cost savings. It is possible that cost per

Indicator	Partner	2019 CPR	2020 CPR
1 # targeted mothers and other village members who attended SBCC activities	CDN	NA in 2019 VfM report	1.16
	Save the Children (Healthy Choice)	NA as project started in Jan 2020	0.99
2 # km motorbike path constructed	CDN	0.86	0.95
3 # of households using a protected water source	CDN	0.87	1.01
4 # Farmers with increased productivity and profitability through improved crop management products and practices	IFDC	1.1	1.44
	CDN	NA in 2019 VfM report	2.11

**Table 7.3:** Cost performance ratio of selected partners for LIFT programme-level indicators

beneficiary (CPB) per training activity was lower for online trainings. But reach and travel costs are not the only considerations for VfM analysis and a full analysis needs to consider economy, equity, and effectiveness lenses and include all costs of the trainings.

Other project adaptations due to COVID-19 included increased reliance on mobile money platforms. For example, ActionAid Myanmar used Wave Money, the mobile wallet application, for cash transfers. ActionAid negotiated for commissions to be waived on transfers made for humanitarian purposes during COVID-19, reducing costs of mobile wallet transfers. Several partners reallocated funds, or received additional funds from LIFT, to implement COVID-19 response activities in 2020. The VfM of these new activities has not yet been assessed. During the first COVID-19 wave in Myanmar, CARE International recognised that garment factories were forced to lay off workers when they lost orders, and so their Aung Myin Hmu project supported factories with a technical pack, including technical and logistical support to make fabric face masks. While a formal VfM assessment is yet to be conducted, CARE noted that only four staff were needed to support this activity that had a strong positive impact for 14 garment factories who were able to retain 795 workers and produce 3.3 million face masks.

#### Projects that conducted VfM Analysis

Welthungerhilfe (WHH)'s Rice Seed Sector Development (RSSD) project in the Ayeyarwady Delta prepared a report highlighting the cost-effectiveness of its main activities contributing to three project outcomes. WHH reports that the project achieved 100 per cent of targeted activities with a CPR of 1.06 in 2020 for the investment in seed producers and seed companies compared to an 88 per cent target achievement with CPR of 0.93 in 2019. The project also attained higher seed production acres and seed baskets as outcomes of investment in 2020. These were achieved through selecting investment plans that adopted improved practices and technology.

For example, WHH increased seed production and achieved a better price by expanding the storage capacity. The data collected from case studies suggests that storage of seeds for up to six months after the harvest guarantees a substantial increase of price per basket. The average price obtained by the 22 cases was MMK 10,400 (USD 7.50) per basket if the seeds were sold immediately, and MMK 14,318 (USD 10.30) per basket if stored. The increased seed storage capacity also allows for better seed stock management delivering other indirect benefits to the small producers.

Mercy Corp's Linking Laputta to Market project's endline survey shows the rice value chain component of the project generated an economic rate of return of 8.3 per cent over 4.5 years. Farmers earned a total aggregate additional USD 2.3 million and market actors (millers, traders, and companies) an additional USD 1.6 million in profits over the course of the project. Farmers earned an additional average income increase of USD 699 in the summer season (122 per cent increase) and USD 300 in the monsoon season (33 per cent increase). Income gains were created by forming farmer groups and supporting them to adopt productivity- and resilience-improving practices, business models, and technologies. High transaction costs were one of the biggest challenges of working for the farmers in the villages of Laputta Township due to the transportation difficulties. Collective farmer actions through farmer groups lower farmer transaction costs associated with accessing market services.


The project linked farmer groups to market actors through interventions in contract farming, certified seeds-on-credit, and crop insurance. In

contract farming where farmers and millers enter fixed-price contracts farming arrangements, farmers earned an average of USD 150 per acre more (an increase of approximately 40 per cent) than they did when selling to local markets. This increase is due to the increased yield from an improved, hybrid seed variety and a higher market price and secure market that the contracted company offers farmers. In terms of economic benefit, the project's contract farming partnerships with market actors exceeded that of the other interventions.


#### VfM improvements in 2020

In 2020, LIFT increased its commitment to VfM and engaged a VfM team with an international retainer and a local VfM Specialist. This team will engage with M&E teams, programme teams, and partners directly to build awareness and understanding of VfM, ensure buy-in of processes and requirements, and support analyses and reporting. In 2020, the VfM team conducted a review to assess the adequacy of existing VfM approaches to delivering, monitoring, and evaluating VfM at the LIFT FMO, thematic/programme levels, and for respective partners. The VfM team made recommendations for refreshing the VfM framework, reviewed the VfM sections of all partners' 2020 Annual Reports, and provided technical assistance related to VfM to IPs on request.

In 2021, the team will develop and implement a refreshed VfM Framework and conduct training with programme, M&E staff and partners and support integration of VfM data collection with LIFT's MEAL systems at all levels.



*Since 2015, LIFT has progressively integrated VfM analysis in its measurement of programme performance.*





# ANNEXES

# 09

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## ANNEXES

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## Annex 1: LIFT PROJECT LOCATIONS

At December 2020, LIFT was working in 14 States/Regions, 64 Districts, 255 Townships across the country.

	No. of Townships	No. of Districts	No. of States/regions
<b>Total reached during LIFT operation</b>	295	72	14
<b>Current operational in 2020</b>	255	64	14

LIFT total reached from year 2010 to End 2020

State_Region	District	Townships
<b>Ayeyarwady</b>	Hinthada	Hinthada, Ingapu, Kyangin, Lemyethna, Myanaung, Zalun
	Labutta	Labutta, Mawlamyinegyun
	Maubin	Danubyu, Maubin, Nyaungdon, Pantanaw
	Myaungmya	Einme, Myaungmya, Wakema
	Pathein	Kangyidaunt, Kyaunggon, Kyonpyaw, Ngapudaw, Pathein, Thabaung, Yegy
	Pyapon	Bogale, Dedaye, Kyaiklat, Pyapon
<b>Bago (East)</b>	Bago	Bago, Daik-U, Kawa, Kyauktaga, Nyaunglebin, Shwegyin, Thanatpin, Waw
	Taungoo	Htantabin, Kyaukkyi, Oktwin, Phyu, Taungoo, Yedashe
<b>Bago (West)</b>	Pyay	Padaung, Paukkaung, Paungde, Pyay, Shwedaung, Thegon
	Thayarwady	Gyobingauk, Letpadan, Minhla, Monyo, Nattalin, Okpho, Thayarwady, Zigon
<b>Chin</b>	Falam	Falam, Tedim, Tonzang
	Hakha	Hakha, Thantlang
	Mindat	Kanpetlet, Matupi, Mindat, Paletwa
<b>Kachin</b>	Bhamo	Bhamo, Mansi, Momauk, Shwegu
	Mohnyin	Hpakant, Mogaung, Mohnyin
	Myitkyina	Chipwi, Injangyang, Myitkyina, Tanai, Waingmaw
	Putao	Machanbaw, Nawngmun, Putao, Sumprabum
<b>Kayah</b>	Bawlake	Bawlake, Hpasawng, Mese
	Loikaw	Demoso, Hpruso, Loikaw, Shadaw
<b>Kayin</b>	Hpa-An	Hlaingbwe, Hpa-An, Thandaunggyi
	Hpapun	Hpapun
	Kawkareik	Kawkareik, Kyainseikgyi
	Myawaddy	Myawaddy
<b>Magway</b>	Gangaw	Gangaw, Saw
	Magway	Chauk, Magway, Myothit, Natmauk, Taungdwingyi, Yenangyaung
	Minbu	Minbu, Ngape, Pwintbyu, Salin, Sidoktaya
	Pakokku	Myaing, Pakokku, Pauk, Seikphyu, Yesagyo
	Thayet	Aunglan, Kamma, Mindon, Minhla, Sinbaungwe, Thayet

State_Region	District	Townships
<b>Mandalay</b>	Kyaukse	Kyaukse, Myittha, Sintgaing, Tada-U
	Mandalay	Amarapura, Aungmyaythazan, Chanayethazan, Chanmyathazi, Mahaaungmyay, Patheingyi, Pyigyitagon
	Meiktila	Mahlaing, Meiktila, Thazi, Wundwin
	Myingyan	Myingyan, Natogyi, Ngazun, Taungtha
	Nyaung-U	Kyaukpadaung, Nyaung-U
	Pyinoolwin	Madaya, Mogoke, Pyinoolwin, Singu
	Yamethin	Pyawbwe, Yamethin
<b>Mon</b>	Mawlamyine	Chaungzon, Kyaikmaraw, Mawlamyine, Mudon, Thanbyuzayat, Ye
	Thaton	Bilin, Kyaikto, Paung, Thaton
<b>Nay Pyi Taw</b>	Det Khi Na	Det Khi Na Thi Ri, Lewe, Pyinmana, Za Bu Thi Ri
	Oke Ta Ra	Oke Ta Ra Thi Ri, Poke Ba Thi Ri, Tatkon, Zay Yar Thi Ri
<b>Rakhine</b>	Kyaukpyu	Ann, Kyaukpyu, Munaung, Ramree
	Maungdaw	Buthidaung, Maungdaw
	Mrauk-U	Kyauktaw, Minbya, Mrauk-U, Myebon
	Sittwe	Pauktaw, Ponnagyun, Rathedaung, Sittwe
<b>Sagaing</b>	Thandwe	Gwa, Thandwe, Toungup
	Kale	Kale, Mingin
<b>Shan (East)</b>	Kanbalu	Kanbalu, Kyunhla, Taze, Ye-U
	Katha	Indaw, Katha, Tigyaing
	Mawlaik	Paungbyin
	Monywa	Ayadaw, Budalin, Chaung-U, Monywa
	Sagaing	Myaung, Myinmu, Sagaing
	Shwebo	Khin-U, Shwebo, Tabayin, Wetlet
	Tamu	Tamu
	Yinmarbin	Kani, Pale, Salingyi, Yinmarbin
<b>Shan (North)</b>	Kengtung	Kengtung
	Monghsat	Mongton
	Tachileik	Monghpyak, Tachileik
<b>Shan (South)</b>	Hopang	Hopang, Pangwaun
	Kyaukme	Hsipaw, Kyaukme, Manton, Namhsan, Namtu, Nawngkhio
	Lashio	Hseni, Kunlong, Lashio, Tangyan
	Laukkaing	Laukkaing
	Mongmit	Mongmit
<b>Tanintharyi</b>	Muse	Kutkai, Muse, Namhkan
	Langkho	Mawkmai, Mongnai
	Loilen	Kyethi, Laihka, Loilen, Mongkaing, Nansang
<b>Yangon</b>	Taunggyi	Hopong, Hsihseng, Kalaw, Lawksawk, Nyaungshwe, Pekon, Pindaya, Pinlaung, Taunggyi, Ywangan
	Dawei	Dawei, Launglon, Thayetchaung, Yebyu
	Kawthoung	Bokpyin, Kawthoung
	Myeik	Myeik, Palaw, Tanintharyi
<b>Yangon</b>	Yangon (East)	Botahtaung, Dagon Myothit (East), Dagon Myothit (North), Dagon Myothit (Seikkan), Dagon Myothit (South), Dawbon, Mingalartaungnyunt, North Okkalapa, Pazundaung, South Okkalapa, Tamwe, Thaketa, Thingangyun, Yankin
	Yangon (North)	Hlaingtharya, Hlegu, Hmawbi, Htantabin, Insein, Mingaladon, Shwepyithar, Taikkyi
	Yangon (South)	Dala, Kawhmu, Kayan, Kungyangon, Kyauktan, Seikgyikanaungto, Thanlyin, Thongwa, Twantay
	Yangon (West)	Ahlone, Bahan, Dagon, Hlaing, Kamaryut, Kyauktada, Kyeemyindaing, Lanmadaw, Latha, Mayangone, Pabedan, Sanchaung

## Annex 2 : ONGOING PROJECTS IN 2020

Sr.	Organisation/IP Name	Thematic area	Project Title	Budget (USD)
1	Action Aid Myanmar	Decent Work & Labour Mobility	Safe Migration for Decent Work in the Peri-Urban Areas of Yangon (SECURE)	2,800,000
2	Adventist Development and Relief Agency	Decent Work & Labour Mobility	Vocational Education to Support IDPs and Host Communities (VESI) in Kachin and Northern Shan State: Sustainably Enhancing decent work opportunities and bridging the gap between the youth from IDP and vulnerable host communities	2,200,000
3	BadeiDha Moe	Agriculture Market & Food system	Strengthening Socio-Economic and Legal Resilience of IDPs and their Original Communities in Kachin and Northern Shan State	499,995
4	BRAC Microfinance Company Ltd	Financial Inclusion & Private Sector	Expansion of Financial Services to Conflict Affected Areas and Inclusion of People Displaced by Conflict, People with Disabilities, and Migrant Women in Peri-Urban Areas	1,000,000
5	CARE International in Myanmar	Decent Work & Labour Mobility	Aung Myin Hmu Project - Industry Solutions for Safe Employment	6,685,643
6	Catholic Relief Services	Nutrition	Community Health, Agriculture, Nutrition, and Gender Empowerment (CHANGE) Project	2,000,000
7	Community Partners International	Nutrition	Project Nourish: Empowering Populations in South East Myanmar through Improved Nutrition, WASH and Livelihoods	4,767,185
8	Department of Social Welfare	Nutrition	Implementation of a Grant in Myanmar provided by the Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund	2,500,000
9	Department of Social Welfare	Nutrition	Support to DSW MCCT Programme in Kayin State	1,290,264
10	Department of Social Welfare	Nutrition	Support to DSW MCCT Programme in Kayah State	447,586
11	Eden Ministry Ltd	Decent Work & Labour Mobility	Eden Project to Rescue Migrant Women and Girls who have been Trafficked into Sexual Exploitation in Yangon	946,976
12	Eden Centre for Disabled children	Decent Work & Labour Mobility	Nothing About Us Without All of Us : Promoting disability inclusive Chin Society for sustainable development.	566,770
13	Food and Agriculture Organization	Financial Inclusion & Private Sector	Improving Farmer Livelihoods in the Uplands through Improved Livestock Health, Productivity and Marketing (Phase II)	2,000,000
14	Forest Trends	Agriculture Market & Food system	Towards Sustainable Peace in Southeastern Myanmar: Building subnational government, EAO and CSO capacity to strengthen tenure security and livelihood resiliency	800,000
15	Gender Equality Network	Decent Work & Labour Mobility	Strategic Partnership Agreement with LIFT	1,559,068
16	Gender Equality Network	Decent Work & Labour Mobility	Access to rights and livelihood opportunities for deported migrant workers and returnees (ARRIVE) project	600,000
17	Golden Pearl	Decent Work & Labour Mobility	Improving the Socio-economic situation of the Person with Disability	399,996
18	Health Poverty Action	Nutrition	Improve nutrition status of the vulnerable population in conflict affected Kachin and Northern Shan	1,299,555
19	HelpAge International	Decent Work & Labour Mobility	Strengthening the Ministry of Social Welfare to fulfil its Role in Expanding Social Protection	4,134,458
20	HelpAge International	Decent Work & Labour Mobility	Inclusive Social Protection and Livelihoods in Magway Region and Kayin State	2,884,548

Sr.	Organisation/IP Name	Thematic area	Project Title	Budget (USD)
21	International Labour Organization	Decent Work & Labour Mobility	Development of Internal and International Labour Migration Governance	4,329,751
22	International Organization for Migration	Decent Work & Labour Mobility	Increasing Developmental Impact of Labour Migration through Strengthened Governance and Partnership (G&P) (implemented by a Consortium)	13,556,760
23	International Organization for Migration	Decent Work & Labour Mobility	Strengthening the Resilience of Conflict-Affected Communities in Kachin and Northern Shan States through Increased Safe and Rewarding Migration (SAFE)	1,331,062
24	International Organization for Migration	Decent Work & Labour Mobility	New Infrastructure for Migration Opportunities and Employment of Migrants on the South East Boderline	2,000,000
25	International Rescue Committee	Nutrition	Kayah Integrated Nutrition (KIN) Project	3,000,000
26	Karuna Mission Social Solidarity	Nutrition	Supporting Conflict Affected Women and Infants for Nutrition (SAFE WIN)	1,996,290
27	Karuna Mission Social Solidarity	Nutrition	Strategic Partnership for Civil Society Empowerment (SPaCE) Phase 2	2,400,000
28	Land Consulting Group Co., Ltd.	Agriculture Market & Food system	Stakeholder Engagement for Better Land Outcomes	1,584,440
29	Lodestar Company Ltd./ SPPRG	Decent Work & Labour Mobility	Inclusive Development by enabling Existing Actors (IDEA) Project	626,915
30	Metta Development Foundation	Agriculture Market & Food system	A Strategic Partnership Proposal	3,506,866
31	Metta Development Foundation	Agriculture Market & Food system	Ring Chying: A Sustained Program Benefiting Vulnerable Households in IDP camps and Host Communities in Kachin and Northern Shan State	500,000
32	Michigan State University	Agriculture Market & Food system	Agri-food Value Chain Development in Myanmar: Implications for Livelihoods of the Rural Poor	5,710,354
33	Myanma Awba Group (Awba) Co., Ltd.	Financial Inclusion & Private Sector	Myanmar Allied Farmers Seed Company (MAFSCO)/Private Sector Engagement Program	3,749,734
34	Myo Thant Myanmar Limited by Guarantee	Financial Inclusion & Private Sector	Myanmar Allied Farmers Seed Company (MAFSCO)/ Private Sector Engagement Program Ref; NO CFP/ LIFT/2018/2/Seed Project Dry Zone	3,000,000
35	Network Activities Group	Agriculture Market & Food system	Reallocation and Development of Unused Concession Land	2,970,862
36	Network Activities Group	Agriculture Market & Food system	Strategic Partnership between LIFT and NAG for Inland and Marine Fisheries Governance	1,549,990
37	Nyein (Shalom) Foundation	Nutrition	Supporting Nutrition and Livelihoods through Selp Help Groups (SHG) in Kachin State, Myanmar	500,000
38	PATH	Nutrition	Smart Move: Enhancing migration transitions through urban food system innovations and peer directed services for migrant workers in Yangon	1,999,861
39	People in Need	Decent Work & Labour Mobility	Aye Chan Thaw Ein - Empowering Labour Migrants in Shwe Pyi Thar	3,208,950
40	PGMF	Financial Inclusion & Private Sector	Livelihood Improvement in Vulnerable Environment (LIVE)	1,163,259

Sr.	Organisation/IP Name	Thematic area	Project Title	Budget (USD)
41	Proximity Finance Microfinance Company Limited	Financial Inclusion & Private Sector	Financial Inclusion—Creating Opportunities	800,000
42	RAFT Myanmar	Decent Work & Labour Mobility	Support to Strengthen conflict sensitivity	500,000
43	Relief International UK	Decent Work & Labour Mobility	Response Mechanism for Addressing Protracted Displacement in Rakhine State, Myebon and Mrauk U	3,435,639
44	Save the Children	Nutrition	Tat Lan Plus	5,657,945
45	Save the Children	Nutrition	Building Resilience In Conflict affected areas of Kachin and Shan States (BRICKS)	3,500,000
46	Save the Children	Nutrition	Healthy Choice: Supporting Opportunities for Decent Work and Improved Health and Nutrition in Shwepyithar Township	5,148,203
47	Save the Children	Nutrition	Leveraging Essential Nutrition Actions to Reduce Malnutrition (LEARN) Phase 3	1,500,000
48	SwissAid	Nutrition	Uplands Township Fund (Phase II)	3,899,999
49	The Border Consortium	Nutrition	Sustainable Transformation for Agriculture, Nutrition and Development in Uplands (STAND UP) Phase II	4,166,894
50	Thitsar Ooyin Company Limited	Financial Inclusion & Private Sector	Expanding Thitsar ooyin Financial Services towards vulnerable rural households in Chin State and Sagaing Region, Myanmar	250,000
51	United Nations Capital Development Fund <sup>112</sup>	Financial Inclusion & Private Sector	Leaving no one behind	2,500,000
52	VisionFund International	Financial Inclusion & Private Sector	Financial Inclusion in Central Rakhine	3,500,000
53	VisionFund International	Financial Inclusion & Private Sector	Inclusive for Underserved Populations in Myanmar	3,250,000
54	Welthungerhilfe	Agriculture Market & Food system	Support to Rice Seed Sector Development in the Ayeyarwady Delta, Myanmar	3,669,642
55	World Food Programme	Nutrition	Engaging Businesses to deliver Government national nutrition strategies through SBN (SUN Business network) in Myanmar	297,813
56	Women's Organizations Network	Decent Work & Labour Mobility	Ending Vulnerability and Exploitation of Migrant Workers (EVE)	1,108,749
57	World Concern Myanmar	Nutrition	Improving the nutrition outcomes of conflict-affected people in Kachin State	1,888,702
58	World Vision	Decent Work & Labour Mobility	See, Hear, Empower (SHE): Supporting inclusive and transformative Livelihoods for IDP and Host Communities in Kachin	2,584,741
59	Yoma Bank	Financial Inclusion & Private Sector	Rural Women's Digital Finance Programme	5,800,000
<b>Total</b>				<b>151,525,465</b>

<sup>112</sup> UNCDF was contracted in March 2020 but terminated in August 2020.

## Annex 3 : COVID-19 RESPONSE FUNDING

LIFT responded quickly to the COVID-19 pandemic in Myanmar and swiftly mobilised and allocated USD 28.9 million for COVID-19 responses via existing projects.

No.	Implementing Partner	LIFT Thematic Area	Project Title	Budget allocated for COVID-19 response (USD)
1	People in Need	Decent Work & Labour Mobility	Aye Chan Thaw Ein - Empowering Labour Migrants in Shwe Pyi Thar	50,000
2	CARE International in Myanmar	Decent Work & Labour Mobility	Aung Myin Hmu Project - Industry Solutions for Safe Employment	700,000
3	International Labour Organization	Decent Work & Labour Mobility	Development of Internal and International Labour Migration Governance	330,000
4	Women's Organizations Network	Decent Work & Labour Mobility	Ending Vulnerability and Exploitation of Migrant Workers (EVE)	50,000
5	Land Consulting Group Co., Ltd.	Agriculture Market & Food system	Stakeholder Engagement for Better Land Outcomes	184,440
6	Department of Social Welfare	Nutrition	LIFT Social Protection Response to the COVID-19 Crisis	9,000,000
7	Department of Social Welfare	Social Protection	Cash transfers for internally displaced people	2,809,300
8	Gender Equality Network	Decent Work & Labour Mobility	Strategic Partnership Agreement with LIFT	159,068
9	Action Aid Myanmar	Decent Work & Labour Mobility	Safe Migration for Decent Work in the Peri-Urban Areas of Yangon (SECURE)	300,000
10	Karuna Mission Social Solidarity	Nutrition	Strategic Partnership for Civil Society Empowerment (SPaCE) Phase 2	1,000,000
11	Save the Children	Nutrition	Healthy Choice: Supporting Opportunities for Decent Work and Improved Health and Nutrition in Shwepyithar Township	598,203
12	Mercy Corps	Agriculture Market & Food system	Linking Laputta to Markets (LLM) Increasing Incomes through Agriculture, Skills, & Employment	43,460
13	BBC Media Action	Decent Work & Labour Mobility	Kyat Chat: Making the Most of Migration and Money	120,000
14	The Border Consortium	Nutrition	Sustainable Transformation for Agriculture, Nutrition and Development in Uplands (STAND UP) Phase II	70,000
15	Koe Koe Tech Co., Ltd	Nutrition	Shwe Kayi Lan Bawga Maymay (Shwe maymay), 'Mommy who is on the golden journey'	197,217
16	HelpAge International	Decent Work & Labour Mobility	Strengthening the Ministry of Social Welfare to fulfil its Role in Expanding Social Protection	494,458
17	Michigan State University	Agriculture Market & Food system	Agri-food Value Chain Development in Myanmar: Implications for Livelihoods of the Rural Poor	200,000
18	Metta Development Foundation	Agriculture Market & Food system	A Strategic Partnership Proposal	2,000,000
19	Metta Development Foundation	Social Protection	Cash transfers for internally displaced people	513,931
20	International Organization for Migration	Decent Work & Labour Mobility	Migration as a livelihood diversification strategy in the Delta (MILDAS)	39,011
21	International Organization for Migration	Decent Work & Labour Mobility	Increasing Developmental Impact of Labour Migration through Strengthened Governance and Partnership (G&P) (implemented by a Consortium)	612,239
22	International Organization for Migration	Decent Work & Labour Mobility	Strengthening the Resilience of Conflict-Affected Communities in Kachin and Northern Shan States through Increased Safe and Rewarding Migration (SAFE)	148,749
23	Network Activities Group	Agriculture Market & Food system	Strategic Partnership between LIFT and NAG for Inland and Marine Fisheries Governance	149,990
24	Network Activities Group	Agriculture Market & Food system	REAL Dev land reallocation	59,446
25	Save the Children	Nutrition	Tat Lan Plus	99,000
26	The Currency Exchange (TCX)	Financial Inclusion	Capital Markets Programme	9,025,000
<b>Total</b>				<b>28,953,512</b>

## Annex 4 : PROJECT UPDATES

### Decent Work and Labour Mobility

Sr.	IP, project title, timeframe, budget, status	Important updates
1	<p><b>BBC Media Action</b></p> <p>Decent Work and Labour Migration for Media (Yay Kyi Yar) project</p> <p>From 01/10/2016 to 30/09/2020</p> <p>USD 3,155,943</p> <p>Closed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» The Yay Kyi Yar project launched the first ever television discussion program on decent work in Myanmar in February 2020 –the Yay Kyi Yar discussion and documentary program had a high-profile launch held in Yangon opened by the Minister of Labour and Immigration (via tele-address) and the Head of DIFD.</li> <li>» 11 episodes of the Yay Kyi Yar discussion programme on decent work and labour migration were broadcast on independent media channels DVB and Mizzima - bringing transparent discussion on policy and labour rights and the voices of migrants and affected communities - onto national public media platforms.</li> <li>» In response to COVID-19 pandemic, the programme was re-launched as a radio program in June and customised with COVID content, broadcast twice a week on Myanma Athan and MAP radio in Thailand.</li> <li>» The project expanded capacity building partnerships with media over 2020 and continued coaching four local media partners - Myitkyina News Journal, Shan Herald, Dawei Watch and Voice of Myanmar, producing 13 feature reports on migration and decent work and COVID for local audiences.</li> <li>» The Yay Kyi Yar Facebook page, which currently has over 1 million followers, published online content in Burmese and continued to produce and publish regular visual content. The facebook page pivoted content production towards COVID related digital content from March and posted 234 posts from January to June 2020, with almost 100 posts on COVID content in addition to topics on labour rights; videos were viewed 26.88 million times.</li> <li>» There were over 2408 direct conversations between audiences and Yay Kyi Yar through Facebook messenger with the main topics of conversation revolving around seeking information regarding labour rights, social security, safe migration, overseas migration and how to find and select a reputable agency.</li> </ul>
2	<p><b>International Labour Organization (ILO)</b></p> <p>Development of Internal and International Labour Migration Governance (DIILM) project</p> <p>From 01/02/2016 to 30/June/2021</p> <p>USD 4,329,751</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» The project supported the Working Group and Network members to attend consultations on the draft domestic workers bill with the Amoytha Hluttaw Committee on Immigration, Local and Overseas Workers and with the Parliamentarian Women and Peace group.</li> <li>» ILO received a draft domestic worker bill for technical comments which are being compiled by ILO specialists in labour law and international standards together with DIILM to be submitted early next year.</li> <li>» The License to Stir curriculum and trainer and trainee materials produced by the Three Good Spoons were revised and five specialist instructors trained in student-centred and adult learning. The bilingual website was developed with digital learning content including 40 micro learning videos and 5 decent work guide videos. The videos reflected key lessons and content from the License to Stir curriculum.</li> <li>» The Legal Clinic of Myanmar under contract with ILO completed a draft analysis on the situation of domestic workers during COVID 19 which will feed into the revision of the law to make sure it is responsive to the current situation where the job security and the safety of domestic workers is particularly threatened by the COVID 19 pandemic.</li> <li>» In relation to the regular activities of the Migrant Resource Centers (not COVID-19 related) 24,424 people (43% women; 57% men) received direct services during this period and over 100,000 engaged in accessing information online, on radio and social media.</li> <li>» The Migrant Resource Centers provided legal counselling to migrants and supported migrants to negotiate in grievance cases: 706 claimants (30 per cent women) received USD 365,120 in total for redress of grievances and fulfilment of benefit claims.</li> </ul>

Sr.	IP, project title, timeframe, budget, status	Important updates
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» For the COVID-19 related activities, the Migrant Resource Centers/ GIFTs reached 141,716 people (78,741 men; 62,975 women) for immediate assistance, psychological support services and counselling and food distribution.</li> <li>» A draft of the paper Extension of Social Protection to Internal Migrants in the informal sector was presented to stakeholders at a validation workshop held in Nay Pyi Taw. The paper and its recommendations were well received, resulting in the Director General for the Social Security Board requesting regular meetings with the ILO to explore next steps in extending social protection both for internal and international migrants.</li> <li>» Eight government officials (took part in a two-day training of trainers on Complaints Mechanism Data Management on March 5th and 6th (3.2.3). Participants were from the Migration Division, Department of Relations (DOR) and Factory and General Labour Law Inspection Department (FGLLD), three Department of Labour participants had attended earlier trainings in 2018 and 2019. Training was given by the project's M&amp;E officer and NPC.</li> <li>» The project supported the Confederation of Trade Unions in Myanmar to work with 30 volunteers to disinfect and reduce the spread of Covid-19 in selected areas of Hlaing Thar Yar industrial zone, where the residences or workplaces of internal migrant workers are located.</li> <li>» The project responded to the urgent call by Shan State Refugee Committee/Building Resilient Communities Foundation) for food aid for Shan IDPs/cross border migrants in camps along the Myanmar-Thai border.</li> </ul>
3	<p><b>International Organization for Migration</b></p> <p><b>New Infrastructure for Labour Migration Opportunities and Empowerment of Migrants Workers on the South-East Borderline project</b></p> <p>From 17/08/2020 to 31/07/ 2023</p> <p>USD 2,000,000</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» All recruitment was completed.</li> <li>» 207 recruitment agencies, including 83 recruitment agencies who recruit migrant workers under the Memorandum of Understanding to Thailand, completed IOM's two-day introductory training on IRIS which is supported under complementary funding from Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.</li> <li>» CIDKP consulted and met with local authorities and stakeholders in preparation to establish two CSO advice centres in Lay Kay Kaw Myothit in Myawaddy Township and Paing Kyone in Hpa-An Township, with the participation of local leaders in December 2020. MWO met with the New Mon State Party (NMSP) leadership and explained the MOU advice and outreach activities planned to be offered at the centres.</li> <li>» MWO initiated a discussion with NMSP's Women Organization on the plan to conduct an assessment to have better insights into the migration context and dynamics and needs of the communities in NMSP-controlled areas.</li> <li>» IOM's finance team conducted a knowledge sharing meeting online with both CSO partners to clearly explain IOM and LIFT's rules around service agreements, financial policy, budgeting, financial reporting, and financial documentation.</li> <li>» The baseline study had been developed through a consultative process between IOM, MWO and CIDKP, with technical support from InterConnect, including the identification of respondents, sample size and the overall survey methodology.</li> </ul>

Sr.	IP, project title, timeframe, budget, status	Important updates
4	<p><b>International Organization for Migration</b></p> <p>Increasing the Development Impact of Migration through Governance and Partnership (Twe Let) project</p> <p>From 01/01/2017 to 30/06/2021</p> <p>USD 13,556,760</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» The project analysed the pre and post-test scores of 3,499 beneficiaries tested on pre-migration outreach and hybrid migration training sessions, which indicated that 3,291 participants (94 per cent) improved their knowledge on safe migration and remittance savings.</li> <li>» The project assisted migrants who were detained at the Immigration Detention Centre (IDC) in Ranong, Thailand for safe return with the coordination of the project partner, Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) and support of the Department of Labour (DOL) in Chin State, DOL in Nay Pyi Taw and the Labour Attaches in Thailand.</li> <li>» IOM and partners continued providing hybrid migration training, a combination of safe migration information and the importance of remittance saving content and other pre-migration outreach activities reach a total of 7,276 people (3,565 men and 3,711 women) with migration services and 51,054 people (22,722 men and 28,332 women) through edutainment and theatre shows in the Dry Zone, South East, Shan and Chin States.</li> <li>» The project supported 2,931 people who visited 2 MRCs and 8 SATMACs run by CHRO, MWC, PDN between late 2019 and August 2020, offering migration- and job-related advice and support to migrants.</li> <li>» A total of 6,517 beneficiaries (42 per cent women) participated in the village-based awareness meetings organised by the Safe Migration Promoters in Chin State.</li> <li>» In Chin state and Dry Zone, a total of 1,835 beneficiaries (391 men and 1,444 women) received Financial Literacy Training sessions, where migrant-sending households and returnees learned about the Importance of Remittance Savings (IRS).</li> <li>» IOM and DVB continued the roll-out of the communications campaign which produced 4 talk shows and 11 interviews, with an aggregated total of 414,553 estimated views on social media.</li> <li>» From 1 January to 31 December 2020:</li> <li>» Two virtual refresher training sessions were designed to provide coaches with more advanced business concepts and 114 coaches (54 men and 60 women) from partner organizations completed these refresher trainings.</li> <li>» Five coaching field support trainings were organised (virtual and physical) for PDN, Dry Zone CSO partners, CHRO, MWC and SCVG. These field support trainings prepared coaches to conduct coaching visits with the selected target households.</li> <li>» A total of 301 beneficiaries (211 women; 90 men) attended 17 types of vocational skills development trainings in the target states and regions during the reporting period, which included 71 returnees, 45 vulnerable migrants.</li> <li>» A Migration Mainstreaming Working Group under Twe Let with support of MOLIP was established to contribute to the Government policies and strategies at the national and state and region levels to leverage the developmental potential of migration.</li> <li>» The first meeting of the Migration Mainstreaming Working Group was convened virtually on 10 December 2020 with support of the Department of Labour which was attended by 48 working group members representing the Government, civil society, and international organizations.</li> <li>» The Migrant Resource Centers (MRC) in Myeik and Tachilek became fully functional by March 2020 and have been playing critical role in providing support and services to migrants in particular to those returned due to the COVID-19 pandemic.</li> <li>» IOM and Twe Let partners reached approximately 1,083,576 people in the target states (560,773 women and 522,803 men) in the target states and regions with response activities of COVID-19.</li> </ul>

Sr.	IP, project title, timeframe, budget, status	Important updates
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» As a part of Covid-19 interventions, hygiene/WASH kits were distributed to 97,748 beneficiaries directly, IEC materials with COVID-19 risk communication messaging (estimated 152,530 beneficiaries reached) and the handwashing basins were installed at strategic locations in migrant-sending communities (estimated 3,1755 beneficiaries reached);</li> <li>» IOM and partners, including Twe Let partners, also completed a rapid assessment on the impacts of COVID-19 on returning migrants in Twe Let (and MILDAS and SAFE) target areas, namely Ayeyarwady, Chin, the Dry Zone (i.e. Magway and Mandalay), Shan, and the Southeast (i.e. Mon, Kayin, Tanintharyi and Kayah) to better understand the impacts of the pandemic on returning migrants and migrant-sending communities.</li> </ul>
5	<p><b>CARE</b></p> <p>Aung Myin Hmu Project - Industry Solutions for Safe Employment</p> <p>From 01/03/2017 to 30/06/2021</p> <p>USD 6,685,643</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» 744 trainees graduated from Aung Myin Hmu (AMH) training centre, MOBA, TOTs and factory lines in 2020.</li> <li>» 182 graduate trainees were trained under AMH training centre.</li> <li>» 165 trainees received sexual harassment awareness training at the Business Kind Myanmar's Thone Pan Hla centre;</li> <li>» 52 migrant workers received the training at Thone Pan Hla centre and 5,457 factory workers were trained at the AMH's partner factories.</li> <li>» 179 migrant women received immediate support services through TPL women in crisis hotline, contacting TPL peer leaders or through community contacts.</li> <li>» 220 legal counselling and mediation were held by Legal Clinic Myanmar and 99 out of 220 cases have been resolved.</li> <li>» In AMH matched factories, 69 per cent of graduate trainees earned a higher salary than those who are not trained.</li> <li>» In response to COVID-19, the project has developed 23 videos and four animations for the advanced sewing machine operator training, supervisory skill training, industrial engineering, merchandising and labour law courses in Myanmar language.</li> <li>» The project conducted online industrial engineering training to 42 trainees and merchandising training to 22 trainees.</li> <li>» The labour law training for HR managers were organised for 69 trainees.</li> <li>» A total of 11 NOCS are drafted and ready for multi stakeholder consultation.</li> <li>» Yat page (STOP sexual harassment) was launched in June 2020 on social media to roll-out awareness on sexual harassment to nationwide audiences and promote anti-sexual harassment social networks.</li> <li>» Two virtual meetings with 29 members of parliament from Amyotha Hluttaw and Pyithu Hluttaw were organised to educate policy makers on the importance of ratification of ILO convention 190 and present the current opportunity of draft of PoVAW law as an entry point to integrate the stronger provision to address sexual harassment in workplace.</li> <li>» AMH worked with 20 partner factories to develop sexual harassment prevention packages, including adoption of anti-SH policies and sustainable workplace protection mechanisms.</li> <li>» 13 factories have adopted the workplace level anti-sexual harassment policy and are implementing the complaint mechanism based on their own action plans.</li> <li>» 15,699 people received sexual harassment and gender-based violence awareness messages through in-factories and out of factories trainings, workshops and events/campaigns activities including social media.</li> </ul>

Sr.	IP, project title, timeframe, budget, status	Important updates
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» 97 participants joined six community dialogue sessions on GBV and 77 men in the targeted community attended five engaging men trainings on GBV.</li> <li>» The AMH project developed a pattern, a technical pack of instructions and measurements, samples and an instruction video in order to support factories to make the masks and supporting migrant garment workers to maintain their livelihoods. 14 factories and 795 workers were supported to stay in work with orders of 3.3 million masks for around 13 NGOs.</li> <li>» The AMH project distributed COVID-19 relief supplies to factories and workers, reaching 125,474 people in Hlaing Thar Yar Township and other townships in Yangon.</li> <li>» The AMH project provided cash support to 500 female sex workers who were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in collaboration with Sex Workers in Myanmar network and distributed IEC materials on COVID-19 prevention.</li> </ul>
6	<p><b>Eden Myanmar</b></p> <p>Eden Project to Rescue Myanmar Migrant Women and Girls who have been Trafficked for the Purposes of Sexual Exploitation or Forced Marriage</p> <p>From 01/03/2017 to 31/12/2021</p> <p>USD 946,975</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Eden conducted interviews with 200 respondents in red light areas and brothels to collect information on their migration status.</li> <li>» Eden received 39 victims and survivors of trafficking who were referred from Department of Rehabilitation, Anti-trafficking Task Force (ATTF), CSOs, CBOs, NGOs and INGOs in 2020.</li> <li>» 64 survivors of trafficking were provided with safe shelter and or support services.</li> <li>» Eden provided support to 75 trafficked migrant women in Yangon and Lashio through holistic programs with a focus on providing trauma focused behavioural therapy.</li> <li>» 18 beneficiaries graduated from the rehabilitation program during the reporting period and four started their own enterprises.</li> <li>» 56 individuals were employed six months after completing LIFT-supported vocational skills training.</li> <li>» 75 beneficiaries who had completed LIFT supported training, had increased income from their employment in the reporting period.</li> <li>» Eden began recruiting and training staff for the Tachileik shelter.</li> <li>» Eden educated 72 government officials, CSOs and police on trafficking.</li> <li>» Eden trained and certified five trauma counsellors.</li> <li>» The project provided counselling services to 31 women trafficking victims who were in the shelters of Department of Rehabilitation.</li> <li>» In collaboration with New Hope, a local NGO, Eden created employment opportunities for 692 women in mask production as an income generation activity.</li> <li>» Eden shared the trauma informed care training video with 31 criminal justice actors.</li> </ul>
7	<p><b>International Organization for Migration</b></p> <p>Migration as a Livelihood Diversification Strategy in the Delta project</p> <p>From 15/12/2015 to 30/08/2020</p> <p>USD 1,588,111</p> <p>Closed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» IOM set about tracking MILDAS skills development training graduates to inform post-training support activities and managed to track a total of 181 graduates (112 men, 69 women).</li> <li>» 128 (71% of graduates tracked) graduates found employment after having received skills development training while 31 (17% of graduates tracked) began self-employment after having received skills development training.</li> <li>» Three documentaries, titled 'Lives of Seasonal Migrant Workers', aired on DVB's TV channel on 14 and 16 February. Following this, the documentaries were shared individually on the Miss Migration Facebook page.</li> <li>» Monitoring visits were conducted for 15 Revolving Fund for Migration initiatives (out of 63) in the three townships of Bogale, Malwamyinegyun and Labutta, having received a monitoring visit (by MILDAS staff, accompanied by partner CSO staff.</li> <li>» IOM conducted an online briefing on the rapid assessment with SAFE, Twe Let and MILDAS partners, as well as with state/regional focal UN agencies of the UN Core Group on Returning Migrants.</li> <li>» The circular migration brief was produced to contribute to filling a knowledge gap on migration in Myanmar, seeking to better understand the patterns, advantages and disadvantages of circular movement for people in three Ayeyarwady townships: Bogale, Mawlamyinegyun and Labutta.</li> </ul>

Sr.	IP, project title, timeframe, budget, status	Important updates
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» A total of 9,924 direct beneficiaries (primarily returning internal and international migrants) were reached with direct COVID-19 response and 163,688 beneficiaries were reached through indirect assistance.</li> <li>» IOM in collaboration with Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population and CSO partners, conducted a rapid assessment survey to understand the experiences of returning migrants affected by COVID-19 pandemic in Myanmar, interviewing 2,311 returned migrants and 453 community leaders.</li> <li>» An endline survey which focused on second phase of project implementation from 2018 to 2020 was conducted and assessed the project's activities using quantitative methods, including interviewing 300 sample households, and qualitative measures that include conducting 15 in-depth interview (IDI) sessions and 6 focus group discussion (FGD) sessions as well as visits to project villages.</li> </ul>
8	<p><b>Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA)</b></p> <p>Vocational Education to Support IDPs and Host Communities (VESI) project</p> <p>From 01/07/2019 to 30/06/2022</p> <p>USD 2,200,00</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» A total of 258 individuals successfully completed training on technical and vocational skills and enterprise development. A pedagogical refresher training (online) and Leadership &amp; Management Training (online) were provided to 66 GTHS staff including principals, heads of department and teachers to improve in the Teacher Quality Index. The 22 teachers participated in the curriculum development process and learnt how to design and develop short courses vocational curriculum for youths systematically under the supervision and guidance of the specialists/consultants.</li> </ul>
9	<p><b>International Organization for Migration</b></p> <p>Strengthening the resilience of conflict-affected communities in Kachin and Northern Shan states through increased safe and rewarding migration" (SAFE) project</p> <p>From 15/07/2019 to 30/06/2022</p> <p>USD 1,331,062</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» A scoping study on migration among conflict-affected communities in Kachin and northern Shan states was finalised and shared with project stakeholders to feed into discussions and considerations during state-level dialogues to enhance the protection of migrant.</li> <li>» The MRC in Myitkyina was launched and operationalised. The services provided are: information on safe and regular migration, referral to the Department of Labour to seek redress for complaints and registration of labour cards as well as humanitarian assistance.</li> <li>» 26 two-day safe migration trainings were conducted for a total of 493 participants (78 per cent women).</li> <li>» Adaptation of a safe migration curriculum for Northern Myanmar was done based on the results of the curriculum review workshop, scoping study report and validation consultations with CSOs in Kachin and Northern Shan States.</li> <li>» COVID-19 response activities, 148,763 (52 per cent women) beneficiaries including returning migrants and vulnerable migrants were supported with food, non-food items, bedding, hygiene items and WASH support.</li> </ul>
10	<p><b>World Vision</b></p> <p>See, Hear, Empower (SHE): Supporting Inclusive and Transformative Livelihoods for IDP and Host Communities in Kachin project</p> <p>From 05/07/2019 to 30/06/2022</p> <p>USD 2,584,7441</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» In relation to job readiness/pre TVET training, 578 youth (72 per cent women) aged 17 to 35 from 54 camps/villages received training on Safe Migration, Life Skills and Remittance Savings. Of those 52 youth (72 per cent women) from 27 camps/villages are currently enrolled in TVET/TNFE training.</li> <li>» In relation to business training, 533 beneficiaries (97 per cent women) were trained in the BEO and GYB/SYB methodologies. These beneficiaries come from 65 camps/villages.</li> <li>» A total of 60 VSLA groups have been formed in 42 camps/villages, with a total number of 1,185 beneficiaries (1,036 women; 149 men) from 943 households. A total of 370 (86% female) VSLA members and 194 VDC/CDC members have been trained in gender and disability Inclusion from 25 camps/villages.</li> </ul>

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11	<p><b>Women's Organization Network</b></p> <p>Ending Vulnerability and Exploitation of Migrant Workers (EVE) project</p> <p>From 10/10/2019 to 30/09/2022</p> <p>USD 1,058,749</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» 3 migrant support centers in Hlaing Thar Yar township and 1 center in South Dagon township were opened, and 166 women migrant workers were provided shelter, food and received GBV counselling, labour rights awareness and information on job opportunities.</li> <li>» 75 peer volunteers received training on gender-based violence and labour rights to share their knowledge gained in the migrant communities.</li> <li>» A labour market assessment was conducted to select appropriate and vocational training most in demand for migrant workers.</li> <li>» As COVID-19 response activities, trainings on making hand sanitizers and liquid soaps were conducted for volunteer groups and CBOs and 63, 928 migrant workers (79 per cent women) were provided the hand sanitisers and liquid soaps and received information on preventing COVID-19 and GBV awareness.</li> </ul>
12	<p><b>ActionAid</b></p> <p>Safe Migration for Decent Work in the Peri-Urban Areas of Yangon (SECURE) project</p> <p>From 21/10/2019 to 30/09/2022</p> <p>USD 2,800,000</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» 6 sessions of pre departure training on safe migration pathway, financial literacy, trafficking, workplace conditions, leave and HR policy/procedure of factories were conducted in Delta and Dry Zone to 190 migrant workers.</li> <li>» 54 migrant workers received training on social peer-to-peer networking in Hlaing Thar Yar Township to empower their decision making.</li> <li>» 95 migrant workers received psychosocial support due to labour disputes or dismissals because of the effects from COVID-19.</li> <li>» Women leadership training was delivered to 90 participants (96 per cent women) to become women leaders in the workplace, apply leadership skills in the family setting and more broadly.</li> <li>» 339 migrant factory workers (81 per cent women) received training on legal awareness and laws for protection, labour rights and violations, and how to demand their entitlements and better working conditions.</li> <li>» 1,022 people received legal aid services (757 people from a 24-hour hotline service and 265 people in person); 105 people received compensation from factory owners.</li> <li>» Capacity Development trainings were conducted with 58 participants from labour unions, labour rights organisations to improve their knowledge and skills on leadership, communication, networking, advocacy, negotiation and conflict resolution.</li> <li>» 96 participants including factory owners and HR managers from 30 factories in peri-urban areas were provided training on Occupational Health and Safety Training (OHS), Labour Laws and Strategic Management.</li> <li>» 7,400 worker journals have been distributed to migrant workers, CSOs, labour unions and Members of Parliament (MPs) to raise awareness on the situation of migrant workers and factory owners in peri-urban areas, lessons learned, and key challenges faced by migrant workers and 30 individual workers stories have been documented to serve as a means to raise awareness, and create conditions conducive for advocacy.</li> </ul>
13	<p><b>People in Need</b></p> <p>Aye Chan Thaw Ein: Empowering Labour Migrants in Shwe Pyi Thar project</p> <p>From 10/10/2019 to 30/09/2022</p> <p>USD 3,208,950</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Four Workers' Centers were established in Shwe Pyi Thar Township and 1,602 migrants received information services from the Workers' Centers (55 per cent women).</li> <li>» A paralegal training package was developed, and 26 paralegals were trained (48 per cent women).</li> <li>» 272 labour cases were supported through paralegal aids by ALR and STUM, representing 41,269 labourers in total.</li> <li>» A digital documentation system for legal assistance cases was developed.</li> <li>» The safe migration and labour rights training package was developed, 32 key project staff and 50 participants from CSO and trade unions.</li> <li>» Pyo Pyo May mobile App and Facebook page reached 656,703 people with new features on safe migration and labour rights. All new users were women.</li> <li>» Aye Chan Thaw Ein Facebook page was created and 7,500 people were reached.</li> </ul>

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Using the space of Workers' Centres, 182 labour migrants exchanged their experiences about: workplace communication, Workplace Coordination Committees, employment contracts and other general issues concerning the Social Security Board (SSB) and dealing with supervisors.</li> <li>» Career counselling service was delivered to 125 labour migrants.</li> <li>» A Training Needs Assessment and a soft skills training package was developed. 369 labour migrants were trained.</li> <li>» An awareness event was organized about the dispute settlement law and the labour law. 2,354 viewed the record and 30 labourers from factories joined the live program.</li> <li>» A food vendor assessment was conducted and a training package for fixed food vendors was developed, 6 vendors were trained and certified.</li> <li>» The methodology for the positive deviance analysis was prepared and the data collection will be ready to start in January.</li> <li>» 640 individuals, many dismissed workers ( 70 per cent women) received psychosocial counselling.</li> </ul>

## Nutrition and Conflict-Affected Areas

Sr.	IP, project title, timeframe, budget, status	Important updates
1	<p><b>Save the Children</b></p> <p>Supporting Opportunities for Decent Work and Improved Health and Nutrition in Shwe Pyi Thar Township "Healthy Choices"</p> <p>From 29/01/2020 to 31/12/2022</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>SCI and implementing partners - Water Aid, Pan Tine Shin, Rays of Light, BRIDGE, Solidarity Trade Union of Myanmar(STUM) - implement the 'Healthy Choices' project to ensure adequate health and nutrition for women of reproductive age and their children during the first 1,000 days through sustained access to decent work, improved nutrition behaviours, and reduced risk from water borne and communicable diseases in four target wards of Shwe Pyi Thar Township, Yangon, where there are high levels of migrant populations, mainly from rural areas such as Rakhine and Ayeyarwady. The following activities were carried out during 2020:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» During COVID-19 pandemic, the project supported cash transfer support to 1,237 garments workers who became jobless and did not receive wages and/or severance fees. Additionally, 52 small business holders who lost investment, closed their businesses due to lock down and stay at home rules during the pandemic, were supported through a cash based social protection mechanism.</li> <li>» The project promoted handwashing behaviour, and soap distribution to 89,094 HHs across Shwe Pyi Thar Township.</li> <li>» Staff received TOT on financial literacy, child protection, transferable life skills, and basic nutrition.</li> <li>» 304 women of reproductive age received financial literacy training.</li> <li>» 14 case managers were trained, and 24 para-social workers were recruited.</li> <li>» The project completed baseline data collection for livelihood and WASH components of the project. The nutrition component of the baseline was submitted for IRB approval, which is not yet received.</li> <li>» The project implemented 82 awareness raising sessions on Child Rights and Child Protection with 984 (81 per cent women) project-selected beneficiaries in targeted wards.</li> <li>» 122 mother groups with 1,376 participating mothers were formed with 122 elected mother leaders.</li> <li>» The project transferred MCCT cash to 1,015 beneficiaries.</li> </ul>



Sr.	IP, project title, timeframe, budget, status	Important updates
	<p><b>PATH</b></p> <p>Introduction of Fortified Rice in Myanmar</p> <p>From 07/2013 to 06/2020</p> <p>USD 4,659,626</p> <p>Closed</p>	<p>PATH introduced fortified rice (FR) in Myanmar through engaging private and public sectors in order to reduce micronutrients deficiencies in Myanmar. The project started in July 2013 and ended in June 2020. Key achievements in 2020 were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» PATH engaged 18 supply chain actors since early 2019, including 2 grain producers, 2 fabricators, and 14 rice millers.</li> <li>» Rice millers in Yangon, Ayeyarwady, Bago, and Sagaing are producing and distributing FR in commercial and social sectors. In 2020, PATH worked with 14 rice millers, of which 5 have produced a total of 7,151.87 MTs and distributed 6,730.38 MTs of FR to date.</li> <li>» The Technical Guidance on Rice Fortification was launched by the MoHS, which mandated the use of FR at institutions under the MOHS, such as nursing and midwifery schools.</li> <li>» The Rice Fortification Policy was drafted and endorsed by the Rice Fortification Working Group (RFWG), and was sent to the Union Minister of MoHS for approval.</li> <li>» Changed the blending ratio of FR kernels to normal rice from 98:2 to 99:1 in order to reduce the cost of FR.</li> <li>» PATH generated FR demand from the social sector through engagement with social-sector partners.</li> <li>» Engaged with WFP to use FR in WFP Food Aid programme to IDP in Rakhine</li> </ul>
	<p><b>World Food Programme</b></p> <p>Project: Scaling up Fortified Rice Production and Consumption throughout Myanmar</p> <p>From 08/2017 to 09/ 2020</p> <p>USD 387,380</p> <p>Closed</p>	<p>WFP integrated fortified rice (FR) in their food distribution programme in Rakhine. The project started in August 2017 and ended in September 2020. Key achievements in 2020 were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» WFP received a total of 112 MT FR kernel ( 20 MT in 2018, 64 MT in 2019 and 28 MT in 2020), and blended up to 6,449 MT of FR, and distributed it to camps for internally displaced people in Rakhine.</li> <li>» Over the project, WFP distributed 6448 MT of FR to 83,476 beneficiaries in Sittwe, Pauktaw, Myebon and Rathedaung Townships of Rakhine State.</li> <li>» WFP's Sittwe team, together with partner organisations, conducted FR awareness sessions prior to distributions to improve understanding and awareness of the nutritional value and health benefits of fortified rice.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Save the Children International</b></p> <p>Leveraging Essential Nutrition Actions to Reduce Malnutrition (LEARN) Phase 3</p> <p>USD 1,500,000</p> <p>From 28/05/2020 to 14/05/2023</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>LEARN 3 project has two outcomes, increasing technical capacity through providing technical assistance to IPs and increasing nutrition advocacy effort through SUN CSA. LEARN 3 aimed to support LNGO/CSO who are sub-IPs of INGO and implementing in conflict affected areas. The inception period was completed in December 2020 and the following was achieved:</p> <p><u>Outcome 1: Increasing technical capacity</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Existing seven training packages were reviewed, adapted to the COVID-19 context, established an e-learning platform, translated essential documents into Kachin, Shan and Chinese languages, developed IECs user guide and training reference guide</li> <li>» As new products, a basic MEAL nutrition training package had been developed and technical assistance provided for the development of a breastfeeding counseling manual for front line counsellors.</li> <li>» Master trainer network intervention model was launched and fifteen trainers (50 per cent women) were recruited. The seven graduated master trainers who had been trained in LEARN phase 2 received online TOT training with LEARN training tools adapted to the COVID-19 context. Four trainers then provided basic nutrition and facilitation training to 107 participants (62 per cent women) from eight organisations.</li> <li>» 317 participants, including 13 people with disabilities (52 per cent women) from 26 IP organisations received training directly from the LEARN team, 12 organisations received other technical support and 27 IPs received LEARN IEC materials.</li> <li>» Capacity assessment tool was developed and three IPs developed capacity building plans based on the findings.</li> </ul>

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		<p><u>Outcome 2: Increasing nutrition advocacy</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Supported BMS code violation monitoring and reporting</li> <li>» Participated in national and regional level meeting/WS and ensured CSO voices were included in national strategy</li> <li>» At the regional level, SUN SCA supported SUN movement Joint Annual Assessment (JAA), CSAs Plan for #Nutrition Can't Wait Campaign and SUN CSA strategy 3.0 development</li> <li>» There are now 70 members (17 INGO, 7 LNGO and 44 CSO).</li> <li>» Twelve member organisations, including four CSO, received technical assistance from LEARN training team</li> <li>» Nutrition champion contest and media campaign was held in nutrition promotion month.</li> <li>» Supported seven multi-stakeholders platform meetings and organised six steering committee meetings</li> <li>» One quarterly sharing session held and attended by 35 INGOs and 7 CSOs</li> <li>» Media engagement: 396,683 people were reached and had interacted with the SUN SCA Facebook page at the end of 2020.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Catholic Relief Services (CRS) in partnership with Karuna Mission Social Solidarity (KMSS) Hakha</b></p> <p>Productive Agriculture Through Community Engagement (PACE)</p> <p>From 06/2016 to 06/ 2020</p> <p>USD 1,813,203</p> <p>Closed</p>	<p>PACE project was designed to support small-holder farmers in 60 villages in three townships of central Chin State. PACE delivers training and capacity building on improved agricultural practices and improved nutrition practices through community-based approach. The project started in June 2016, and ended June 2020. During 2020, the project only conducted COVID-19 related response activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» 22,936 beneficiaries were reached (49 per cent women) with these COVID-19 activities, exceeding the 20,000 target.</li> <li>» The project procured and distributed IEC materials including 116 posters, 3,653 handwashing stickers, 43 speaker packages (includes a megaphone and packets of information for village leaders to disperse messaging to the communities), 48 thermometers, 9,530 soap bars, 1,492 bottles of liquid soap, 490 bottles of hand sanitiser, and 73 handwashing facilities.</li> <li>» 1,190 bottles of hand sanitiser and 21,900 face masks were procured and distributed among seven hospitals in the townships.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>PATH in partnership with BusinessKind Myanmar (BKM) Terres Des Hommes Italy (TDH-Italy), and Base of the Pyramid Innovation Center (BoPInc)</b></p> <p>SMART MOVE: Enhancing migration transitions through urban food system innovations and peer directed services for migrant workers in Yangon</p> <p>From 10/2019 to 09/2022</p> <p>USD 1,999,861</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>The project aims to enhance migration transitions for vulnerable migrant populations, including factory workers, street food vendors, and migrant households, through the introduction of peer-directed networks as well as services and innovative urban supply chains for nutritious products, including fortified rice (FR). The following activities were carried out in 2020:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» BKM, an implementing partner, conducted peer-leader training in early 2020, reaching 39 peers (the target was 30 peer leaders). Topics covered included nutrition, FR, crisis counseling, and COVID-19 information (shared by the World Health Organization (WHO)).</li> <li>» BKM managed to hold six Sunday Cafés for 463 participants by June 2020. Eight sessions focused on nutrition promotion reaching 215 women garment workers (21 of whom were pregnant).</li> <li>» BKM supported 50 women in crisis interventions, and 95 women in crisis received immediate intervention with food, shelter, crisis counseling, and referrals to medical and legal services by December 2020.</li> <li>» Implementing partner, TDH-It, developed Street Food Vendor training guidelines with references from NNC, Health department from YCDC and LEARN curriculum for staff and volunteers. The module was revised with inputs and learning from field tests with relevant stakeholders.</li> <li>» An online Street Food Vendor training was conducted by the Nutrition Community Mobiliser in collaboration with HDN volunteers at Yay Oakkan and A Lal Ywar Gyi villages in August 2020; 50 people attended.</li> <li>» BoPinc reached 5,286 individuals via the Facebook Miller page. BoPinc engaged with three rice millers to set up an online demand creation and awareness generation channel.</li> </ul>

Sr.	IP, project title, timeframe, budget, status	Important updates
	<p><b>World Food Programme (WFP)</b></p> <p>Engaging Businesses to deliver Government national nutrition strategies through SBN (SUN Business network) in Myanmar</p> <p>From 11/2019 to 10/ 2021</p> <p>USD 297,813</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>The project aims to improve and strengthen the private sector's contribution towards improving access to healthy and safe food in Myanmar. Through SUN Business Network, private companies actively participate and engage in the improvement of nutrition in Myanmar. Key achievements in 2020 were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Fifteen business members submitted their applications to join SBN, signed the commitment and three are under process</li> <li>» SBN organized a network meeting in August with SBN business members and support agencies</li> <li>» SBN contributed to SUN Joint Annual Assessment (JAA) and highlighted engagement with the private sector in Myanmar for improving nutrition</li> <li>» Members of Parliament and Ministers (MS-NPAN relevant line ministries) emphasised SBN's role and private sector contribution to improving nutrition in Myanmar, especially in the National Nutrition Promotion Steering Committee meeting in December 2020.</li> <li>» The role of the private sector and SBN were also highlighted in the meetings/ policy discussions of Myanmar Nutrition Technical Network, Nutrition Promotion Month, Nutrition Promotion Steering Committee, SUN Joint Annual Assessment.</li> <li>» The SBN has been established and the secretariat is operational through regular secretariat staff</li> <li>» The SBN strategy was developed and shared with the MoHS and revised after National MoHS/NNC's inputs and submitted for final approval. A pre-launch virtual meeting (kick-off) of the network was held in August.</li> <li>» About 45 key stakeholders (23 Male, 22 Female and 21 from the private sector and 24 from the non-profit sector) attended the SBN coordination/engagement meeting and the role of business in improving nutrition and SBN key actions were presented.</li> <li>» Private sector engagement for nutrition awareness reached 100+ companies through SBN information portfolio and bi-annual newsletters which issued twice during 2020.</li> <li>» 121 of Facebook page fans accessed SUN Business Network Myanmar's information sharing and activity updates through the Facebook page.</li> <li>» Survey reports on COVID-19, growing constraints with food production and supply in Myanmar as a result of COVID-19 and impact of COVID-19 on food SMEs and its implications for access to nutrition were shared with local food businesses, SUN Networks and nutrition stakeholders.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Karuna Mission Social Solidarity (KMSS)</b></p> <p>Supporting Conflict Affected Women and Infants for Nutrition (SAFE WIN) From 07/2019 to 06/2022</p> <p>USD 1,996,290</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>KMSS is implementing the SAFE WIN project in 51 communities including four camps for internally displaced people in conflict-affected areas in Kachin and northern Shan State. The project is managed by KMSS National Office and field level implementation is overseen by three dioceses; KMSS Myitkyina, Bhamo and Lashio. In 2020, the following activities occurred:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Formed Care Group with mother with children under 2 years</li> <li>» Conducted care group training to 357 lead mothers covering nutrition messages.</li> <li>» Lead Mother facilitates monthly nutrition awareness sessions (nutrition dissemination sessions) with neighbouring women in their respective villages. 1,828 women attend.</li> <li>» Organised breastfeeding/nutrition campaigns at five townships and 26 camps/ villages with the participation of 2,025 women and 136 men.</li> <li>» Carried out 45 cooking demonstration sessions with 798 women to improve their knowledge and encourage adoption of healthy and safe food preparation.</li> <li>» Project promoted homestead food production and provided home gardening support to 2,370 women including lead mothers followed by the distribution of home garden IEC materials.</li> <li>» COVID-19 preparedness and response interventions were carried out including handwashing support, distribution of preventative items and IEC materials to targeted communities.</li> </ul>

Sr.	IP, project title, timeframe, budget, status	Important updates
	<p><b>Save the Children in partnership with: Shan State Youth Capacity Building Centre (SSYCBC) Wunpawng Ninghtoi (WPN)</b></p> <p><b>Building Resilience In Conflict affected areas of Kachin and Shan States (BRICKS)</b></p> <p>From 01/08/2019 to 31/07/2022</p> <p>USD 3,500,000</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>BRICKS aims to increase resilience to shocks and conflict, and to protect adolescents from trafficking and unsafe migration. BRICKS focuses on youth and adolescent boys and girls, pregnant and breastfeeding women and children 0-23 months of age, living in camps, host communities and conflict-affected villages in northern Shan State. The project mainly focused on nutrition, livelihoods and child protection.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Selected Community Nutrition Counsellors (CNCs) and mother leaders, formed Mother-to-Mother Support Groups (MtMSGs) and Mother Leader Groups in each village and camp. A total 65 CNCs in 22 camps and 26 villages of project areas.</li> <li>» Formed (MtMSG) with the support of village leaders and Basic Health Staff. 10 to 15 members in each mother group. A total of 121 MtMSG in the 48 intervention areas were developed, with 1,414 pregnant and breastfeeding women, led by respective mother leaders.</li> <li>» A training on MUAC and community infant and young child feeding was conducted for nutrition staff of SCI and local partner staff WPN and SSYCBC. 10 participants (6 women) attended.</li> <li>» During the COVID-19 stay home period, project staff kept in close contact with CNCs to provide counselling services on children and PLW with malnutrition and to share updated information on each village and camp.</li> <li>» 13 financial education training sessions were delivered in all targeted townships, and a total 281 adults (79 per cent women) participated.</li> <li>» 23 financial education training sessions were conducted for youth and adolescents with 385 youth (76 per cent women) in attendance.</li> <li>» 230 awareness raising sessions on child protection, child rights, anti-trafficking and safe migration were conducted in 48 villages and 3,204 participants (1,582 girls, 517 boys, 256 female and 122 male).</li> <li>» The project supported COVID-19 hygiene awareness raising and sanitation activities by distributing vinyl, pamphlets, and soaps to Muse District's DSW. As a country-wide support, the project also provided 500 PPE sets to the State and Regional Health Departments of Chin State, Kayin State, Northern Shan State and Magway Region.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Health Poverty Action (HPA) in partnership with Kokang Charity Alliance (KCA)</b></p> <p><b>Improve nutrition status of the vulnerable population in conflict affected Kachin and Northern Shan</b></p> <p>From 23/01/2020 to 31/12/2022</p> <p>USD 1,299,555</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» HPA Waingmaw field team assisted the UNOPS-AFC Foundation project in needs assessment, coordination, and logistical support</li> <li>» The team in Kokang closely coordinated the COVID-19 responses with SAZ authorities, health department, and CSO partners across different projects, ensuring timely exchange of critical information and adherence to relevant local directives and contingency planning.</li> <li>» HPA also monitors the seasonal market price and conduct the pre-survey of nutritious food consumption and hygienic food preparation in the local context</li> <li>» Participated in an online secession with RAFT for Conflict Sensitivity Impact and Options Review (CSIOR), and engaged volunteers from migrant communities to disseminate essential health and hygiene messages.</li> <li>» HPA has trained 35 vendors for better support to PLW and U2 mothers in Waingmaw, with the following food voucher distribution, 451 PLW, and U2 mothers, and 324 U2 babies were reached in the year 2020 which has exceeded the annual target.</li> <li>» HPA also conducted Homestead food production training and livestock care training reached directly to 441 beneficiaries, and 301 households received input support.</li> <li>» HPA in Waingmaw distributed 400 sets of child potties, 400 10L water buckets, and 400 30L water buckets to PLW and U2 households.</li> <li>» The part of the project objective is to create synergy with A2H project and township health department, the team has been working closely with key stakeholders mentioned above on rolling out services and assisting in Covid-19 prevention efforts in 2020.</li> <li>» HPA received Training of Trainer with Save the Children's LEARN team and then organized a series of training to Women groups. In August, HPA in Waingmaw also supported the National Nutrition Month Campaign with the coordination of A2H and UNICEF projects.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Nyein (Shalom) Foundation</b></p> <p><b>Supporting Nutrition and Livelihoods through SHG in Kachin State, Myanmar</b></p> <p>From 28/01/2020 to 31/12/ 2021</p> <p>USD 500,000</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» The project is working in 14 camps for internally displaced people and recruited 12 volunteers and provided the capacity building training</li> <li>» The project formed 11 of self-help groups</li> <li>» The project has supported youths (U17) around 400-450 youths per month and the activities are reading, sports and other soft skill development activities.</li> <li>» The activities of TVET to adults (about 18) is processing and 60 candidates are waiting to participate in TVET training.</li> <li>» In response to COVID-19, the project distributed 186 units of hand washing stand with pipe line system, 2577 units of hand washing soap, 17 units of water sources maintenance, 11 units of fuel supply for water pump and 26 times of awareness support plus material distribution ( mask, glove, chlorine)</li> </ul>

Sr.	IP, project title, timeframe, budget, status	Important updates
	<p><b>SWISSAID, GRET and Metta Development Foundation</b></p> <p>Uplands Township Fund (PHASE 2)</p> <p>From 11/2019 to 09/2022</p> <p>USD 3,899,999</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>» The second phase of Uplands Township Fund started on 1 November 2019 and within the first 14 months up to 31 December 2020, 70 grants were contracted with 58 civil society groups, already exceeding the 3-year target of 36 grant-holders.</p> <p>» The majority of grants were contracted or re-planned after March 2020 and focus on slowing the rate of COVID-19 infection and/or mitigating the socio-economic impacts of the disease.</p> <p>» In the UTF 2 design, collective action is planned, in part, to be spurred by the Township Livelihood Systems Engagement planning processes. To date, 8 townships have started these processes</p> <p>» Partner CSOs engaged with EAO authorities and their health departments. This has contributed to the inclusiveness of the Covid-19 response system as CSOs provided a bridge between the needs of communities, including especially vulnerable groups, and the committees' plans.</p> <p>» UTF also focused on supporting marginalized groups. While many Grant-holders include reaching vulnerable groups in the implementation of their projects, 14 CSOs (24 per cent) have specifically addressed inclusion for marginalized groups in systems engagement for better realization of their rights in their plans. The marginalized group CSOs targeted include: returning migrants, people with disabilities, PLHA, IDPs and ethnic minorities</p> <p>» The plans of the UTF grant-holders for livelihood systems engagement, including with the public sector plans, were based on the situation at the end of 2020. It is not yet known whether all systems engagement plans will be possible to implement in 2021 due to the military coup in Feb 2021.</p>

## Annex 5: FINANCIAL INCLUSION PARTNERS

LIFT Partners	2019 (Annual)		2020 (Annual)		2019 (Annual) Loan portfolio (USD)	2020 (Annual) Loan portfolio (USD)	2019 (Annual) Saving (USD)	2020 (Annual) Saving (USD)	2019 (Annual) Total Asset (USD)	2020 (Annual) Total Asset (USD)	2019 (Annual) FSS	2020 (Annual) FSS	PAR>30 days			
	All Client	Client (Female)	All Client	Client (Female)												
<b>Local Microfinance Institutions</b>																
1	AYO Microfinance Co., Ltd	6,572	6,537	6,723	6,669	1,191,277	1,591,688	120,803	183,918	1,253,603	1,623,573	170%	142%	170%	133%	0.80%
2	Focal Points Microfinance Service Co., Ltd	5,881	5,807	5,729	5,635	985,130	1,155,091	236,042	262,023	1,039,630	1,211,081	156%	106%	129%	103%	0.00%
3	Jasmines Season Microfinance Co., Ltd	5,061	5,031	3,047	3,031	399,713	295,217	64,449	60,531	394,812	398,332	63%	58%	64%	58%	2.90%
4	Maha Agriculture Public Co., Ltd	71,767	38,251	93,545	48,385	31,163,749	46,517,634	1,622,696	2,380,559	38,801,647	65,550,336	126%	126%	118%	111%	1.00%
5	Ratana Metta Microfinance Co., Ltd	5,536	5,415	5,929	5,786	1,005,586	1,304,763	179,647	192,119	1,150,273	1,305,137	190%	168%	130%	100%	0.00%
6	Shine Heart Microfinance Co., Ltd	6,498	6,358	5,894	5,790	915,683	1,010,398	181,332	184,540	949,215	1,179,742	139%	132%	141%	78%	0.00%
7	Social Vision Microfinance Co., Ltd	4,732	4,673	4,580	4,527	758,957	1,116,551	150,509	147,312	933,823	1,117,913	172%	160%	241%	228%	0.00%
8	Wan Lark Microfinance Co., Ltd	5,833	5,641	7,497	7,393	873,534	933,560	182,479	240,414	907,023	1,024,178	140%	102%	95%	77%	8.40%
9	Yadana Thanlar Microfinance Co., Ltd (YTM)	6,463	6,450	9,606	9,577	1,232,236	1,470,726	218,150	240,659	1,402,600	1,748,569	215%	190%	182%	134%	16.90%
10	Yanong Y Rural Development Microfinance Company Ltd (YRDM)	6,022	5,737	5,573	5,532	738,431	810,353	143,207	99,655	879,905	948,863	210%	211%	128%	107%	0.00%
<b>Joint Venture Company</b>																
11	Microfinance Delta International (MIFIDA)	155,586	148,656	222,078	216,494	22,052,722	37,604,717	3,416,088	6,850,734	30,359,055	46,530,810	109%	105%	105%	88%	23.60%
<b>Cooperatives</b>																
12	Myingyan Township Cooperative Syndicate	41,196	14,980	41,846	27,370	2,075,727	2,337,325	1,513,752	130,935	2,157,959	2,467,121	109%	101%	110%	102%	3.00%
13	Natogyi Township Cooperative Syndicate	23,395	12,440	23,231	11,725	1,531,220	1,922,601	779,836	74,599	2,106,604	2,195,489	188%	173%	115%	98%	6.00%
<b>International Microfinance Institutions</b>																
14	Advans MFI Myanmar Co., Ltd	52,598	43,126	68,535	56,313	15,209,490	21,339,179	-	72,502	19,377,226	29,530,710	120%	78%	118%	102%	11.00%
15	Association of Medical Doctors of Asia (AMDA)	124,889	119,025	154,188	145,536	25,877,154	42,670,320	2,477,031	3,499,511	30,863,820	47,097,231	115%	107%	103%	91%	6.54%
16	BRAC	249,826	248,868	293,407	291,552	50,617,581	82,389,198	2,402,997	4,969,791	68,257,960	111,206,028	122%	145%	106%	98%	25.00%
17	Early Dawn Microfinance Co., Ltd	11,286	10,157	11,306	9,273	1,752,627	1,778,865	56,682	56,397	1,988,280	2,162,130	N/A	N/A	75%	73%	17.90%
18	ENTREPRENEURS du-Monde (EdM)	189,079	173,825	263,396	236,517	37,688,052	118,072,735	10,228,352	18,416,844	90,687,049	167,378,289	130%	120%	122%	115%	14.00%
19	LOLC Myanmar Micro-Finance Co., Ltd	25,545	20,102	33,750	26,905	4,940,811	9,306,455	-	-	7,339,172	10,177,403	122%	97%	125%	110%	2.00%
20	Thisar Ooyin Company Limited	1,033,620	1,018,900	1,065,866	1,039,247	281,744,293	436,332,695	81,744,732	95,346,919	309,969,902	486,481,601	149%	129%	167%	144%	7.00%
21	Pact Global Microfinance Fund	140,786	97,360	180,860	124,485	31,914,049	63,109,962	1,072,364	3,377,500	40,023,289	82,083,710	117%	111%	108%	100%	2.00%
22	Proximity Finance Microfinance Company Limited	354,816	302,111	380,396	322,326	61,182,274	75,099,567	8,664,998	9,870,775	67,686,399	79,693,786	102%	96%	72%	69%	19.73%
23	VisionFund Myanmar (VFM)	2,526,987	2,299,450	2,889,877	2,612,963	575,850,298	948,690,513	115,456,146	146,698,851	718,529,246	1,143,684,331					
<b>Private Bank</b>																
24	Yoma Bank															
	AFP Hire Purchase	3,672	273	3,393	316	41,665,322	43,310,758									
	Underscured Lending															
	Discounted Receivable Finance/borrowing base (Input Suppliers)	9		7		12,013,129	8,007,435									
	Payable Financ (Input Dealers)	68		65		5,744,637	4,791,850									
	Seasonal Overdraft (Maize Traders)	185		90		8,432,393	5,857,690									
	MFI lending	12		15		61,782,948	82,880,097									
	Individual Development Account (IDA): Saving			18,824	15,173											
	Total for all LIFT financial inclusion	2,530,993	2,299,723	2,912,271	2,628,452	705,488,727	1,093,538,343	115,456,146	150,062,704	718,529,246	1,143,684,331					

Achievements of LIFT Financial Inclusion Partners as of 31 December 2020

## ANNEX 6: POLICY ENGAGEMENT

Engagement of the Fund Management Office	
With MOALI, development partners, NGOs and private sector	<p>Despite COVID-19 limitations, LIFT Fund Management Office (FMO) actively participated in the government's policy-related initiatives in 2020.</p> <p><b>Agriculture and Rural Development</b> Sector Coordination Group (ARDSCG) In the agriculture sector, FMO plays a liaison role for collaboration and information sharing between development partner representatives and MoALI. When the government's COVID-19 Economic Relief Plan (CERP) was implemented, FMO and other development partner members of ARDSCG included their related activities in the spreadsheet developed by MoALI, as a collective ARDSCG contribution to CERP in agriculture. IFPRI, in collaboration with MoALI, organised monthly webinars on assessments of COVID-19's impacts on Myanmar's agriculture, livelihoods and food security. LIFT's Fund Director moderated several of the webinars organised by IFPRI and MoALI to present findings from COVID-19 monitoring phone surveys. FMO provided an unofficial English translation of the <i>Rural Development Law</i> in April 2020 at the request of the Department of Rural Development.</p>
With Financial Regulatory Department	<p>Financial Inclusion FMO assigned one international staff and one national staff to provide technical assistance (TA) and capacity building support to the Financial Regulatory Department (FRD). Before the upsurge of COVID-19, the TA personnel provided training on on-site examination and due diligence for deposit-taking licensing process for officials from all state and regional FRD offices. As a result of COVID-19's travel and in-person meeting constraints, they then delivered online training on accounting and financial analysis. This training equipped the department's human resources with professional skills and knowledge in policy and regulatory guidelines development, supervision, and information management to more effectively regulate and supervise microfinance institutions in Myanmar.</p>
With MoHS, other ministries concerned, state/regional governments and UN agency and civil society stakeholders	<p>Nutrition FMO collaborated with UN agencies/INGOs/CSOs, and supported MoHS and other ministries to strengthen multisectoral nutrition implementation. FMO assigned one international consultant, one national consultant and three national staff to provide technical and logistic support to National Nutrition Centre (NNC) for operationalising the government's Multisector National Plan of Actions on Nutrition (MS-NPAN) at state and regional level. These FMO personnel served as the members of the MS-NPAN Core Team that adapted planning, prioritisation and capacity assessment tools within the COVID-19 context and supported Kayin State MS-NPAN implementation in 2020. Together with SUN UN, to support the continuation of essential nutrition-specific and sensitive interventions, FMO has been an active member of the Nutrition in Emergencies Strategic Advisory Group. This group developed two guidance documents to help organisations make adaptations to nutrition programming for COVID-19 mitigation, prevention and recovery. FMO was the main supporter of the SBN and SUN CSA in 2020 in which 8 companies and 68 organisations engaged; 70 INGOs and CSOs were active members of SUN CSA.</p>
Agriculture Markets & Food Systems	
<p><b>Policy Issue:</b> Seed sector development</p> <p><b>LIFT IP:</b> Myanma Awba, Welthungerhilfe (WHH), farmer cooperatives and farmers</p> <p><b>Collaborators:</b> DOA, DAR, Mercy Corps, Wageningen University Research, Myanmar Rice Federation (MRF)</p>	<p>To contribute to the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation's objectives for seed sector development and the national goal for poverty reduction, LIFT initiated funding for two seed projects in the Delta and Dry Zone in 2017 and 2018 respectively. In 2020, LIFT continued to support both projects for improving the supply of quality rice seed, which currently only meets about 1 per cent of domestic demand, by supporting sustainable domestic seed production, with a focus on serving smallholder farmers.</p> <p><b>Myanmar Allied Farmers Seed Company/Private Sector Engagement Programme</b></p> <p>To produce quality seed in collaboration with DoA and DAR, Myanmar Awba formed and registered a private company with co-operative principles to produce, process, and market seeds of the prioritised open-pollinated variety crops, mainly pulses and oilseeds, primarily grown in the Dry Zone. Myanma AWBA was the private implementing partner responsible to establish and manage this company. This joint-venture company was titled as Pahtama Seeds Co., Ltd. and it was locally-owned, with shareholding, dividends, and other benefits linked to its members' (individual farmers' and farmer cooperatives') production and other commitments to the company. For Pahtama Seeds Co Ltd. to become functional in seed production with cooperative principles, the project also initiated a joint venture partner entity (farmers' entity) named Myo Thant Myanmar.</p> <p>In January 2020, Myo Thant Myanmar Co., Ltd. was legally registered with the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration. The project also contracted with Mercy Corps to support the development of the Myo Thant Myanmar Co., Ltd. COVID 19 impacted the project's ability to locate and assess suitable land to build a modern processing plant. However, the pandemic had no large effects on the project's seed production. The project was able to allocate staff at the target locations before COVID-19 travel restrictions and travel and interactions between projects and farmers/seed growers within the production area were also possible.</p>

	<p>In 2020, the project made a change of the project's practice in getting early generation seed (EGS) supply from DAR for seed farm production. Early in 2020, the project experienced a serious purity issue in EGS purchased from the two government seed farms. To resolve this problem in the future, the project will not purchase high volumes of EGS from just two seed farms because producing a large volume of high quality seed may exceed the capacity of each seed firm. Instead, the project will order relatively smaller quantities from a higher number of DAR seed firms. Instead of ordering early generation seeds only after these are produced, the project will conduct a longer term forecast for EGS supply and will order seeds from DAR 12 months in advance. Project staff will also regularly visit and assist those seed firms with technical advice in monitoring quality, high-yielding EGS production throughout the whole growing cycle.</p> <p><b>Support to Rice Seed Sector Development in the Ayeyarwady Delta, Myanmar (RSSD)</b></p> <p>The RSSD project with WHH attempts to improve smallholder farmers' access to and uptake of quality rice seed in order to sustainably increase their agricultural income and production in Ayeyarwady Region. The project addresses key challenges in EGS production, seed business development, seed quality assurance and seed sector coordination, which have had adverse effects on smallholder farmers' income. During 2020, in collaboration with DoA and MRF, the project conducted several policy-related events for seed sector coordination.</p> <p>The project collaborated with DoA and MRF to organise two regional seed sector platforms for sharing experiences and innovations in order to improve collaboration. The fourth Ayeyarwady regional platform meetings were conducted in January 2020 to share experience and learning about contract farming and crop insurance with stakeholders. The fifth Ayeyarwady Seed Sector Platform meetings were conducted in September 2020 to launch the RSSD Cash for Work pilot initiative with DoA in accordance with the government's COVID-19 Emergency Response Plan. The project also shared an RSSD lessons-learned study and Seed Sector Roadmap. Representatives from government agencies, farmers and seed growers, private sector and development organisations attended the meetings.</p> <p>The RSSD team also presented a demonstration of the EGS App to a wider audience at the National Seed Fair in Nay Pyi Taw on 28 and 29 January 2020. In collaboration with DoA and MRF, the project team organised the Ayeyarwady Regional Seed Fair with 661 participants from private, public and development sectors on 11 and 12 March 2020; 34 companies and organisations presented their services at 40 booths at the fair.</p> <p>In April and May 2020, facing COVID-19, the project commissioned Mercy Corps to conduct a rapid market assessment. The findings and recommendations culminated in a quick recovery response for targeted seed growers and contract farmers to foster resilience and ensure a steady supply of quality rice seed.</p>
<p><b>Policy Issue:</b> Agriculture value chains</p> <p><b>LIFT IP:</b> Michigan State University</p> <p><b>Collaborators:</b> IFPRI, DOP, DAR and Yezin Agricultural University</p>	<p>Agrifood Value Chain Development in Myanmar: Implications for Livelihoods of the Rural Poor</p> <p>At the end of 2019, the AVCD project was extended for two years to address the three work streams:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Develop an agricultural and food system analysis for inclusive growth and improved nutrition outcomes;</li> <li>2) Prepare an agricultural research and extension reform masterplan; and,</li> <li>3) Build capacity for applied policy research and analysis at Yezin Agricultural University and MoALI.</li> </ol> <p>In the middle of 2020, the project was again expanded to conduct telephone surveys to monitor the impact of COVID-19 on key components of the rural economy and agri-food systems assessment.</p> <p>A more detailed discussion of the AVCD project can be found in 5.2 Policy of this report.</p>

<p><b>Policy Issue:</b> Land tenure policies</p> <p><b>LIFT IP:</b> Network Activities Group (NAG)</p> <p><b>Collaborators:</b> MOALI, Land Core Group (LCG), Centre for Development and Environment and local CSOs</p>	<p><b>Reallocation and Development of Unused Concession Land (REAL DEV)</b></p> <p>The REAL DEV project was initiated by MoALI in 2017 as a pilot for the restitution/reallocation of unused concessional land with LIFT's support. The pilot project site is in Minhla Township, Magway Region. The primary objective of the project is to inform policy reform processes linking land tenure and land use reform. There is not much clarity on such land reallocation to communities who were holding lands before concessions were granted. At this cross point, clarity on government provisions and a systematic new approach would facilitate reallocation process and delay on such clarity further delays the process.</p> <p>A second component of the project will focus on strengthening smallholder capacities to increase agricultural productivity. To do so, the project will conduct farming system analysis, green agriculture infrastructure, and detailed crop and livestock value chain analysis in the next reporting period.</p> <p>A more detailed discussion of the REAL Dev project can be found in 5.2 policy of this report.</p>
<p><b>Policy Issue:</b> Land tenure policies</p> <p><b>LIFT IP:</b> LCG</p> <p><b>Collaborators:</b> UAGO, MONREC, MOALI, CSOs and development partners</p>	<p><b>Stakeholder Engagement for Better Land Outcomes</b></p> <p>In 2020, LCG participated in meetings organised by the National Land Law Formulation and Law Harmonisation Working Committee and contributed to the development of the <i>National Land Law</i> (NLL) by emphasising the need for transparent processes and public consultations. The Union Attorney General Office (UAGO) accepted LCG's advice to draft the NLL through a process of public consultation, and to include CSO representatives in the development of the NLL road map. The UAGO also publicly announced the draft work plan and invited public comment on it.</p> <p>LCG successfully advocated for fairer, and technically stronger, articles in the amended <i>Farmland Law</i> enacted on 14 February 2020. For example, a definition of shifting cultivation, previously not included in farmland and a clarification that farmers' organisations are only for true farmers, has been added in the Law. The Law has also included a provision that land transactions will be registered with the township Farmland Administration Bodies, which includes farmer representatives and various government officials, for a fairer land valuation.</p> <p>The project organised and facilitated a series of capacity development workshops with DALMS for continuing improvement in internal governance and inclusive land governance in Myanmar.</p> <p>At the local level, the project's local CSO partners were effectively engaged with EAOs in the COVID-19 projects. In Kayin State, local partners convinced KNU to allow transportation so that people could continue livelihoods activities and convinced all authorities to take gender issues more seriously. They also helped to ensure that needy families received support provided by the government.</p>
<p><b>Policy Issue:</b> Agricultural development</p> <p><b>LIFT IP:</b> International Fertilizer Development Center</p> <p><b>Collaborators:</b> DOA, farmers and private input service providers</p>	<p><b>Dry Zone Agro-Input and Farm Services Project</b></p> <p>The project aims to improve productivity and smallholder farmers' incomes via quality farm inputs and advisory services. The project has also contributed to policy discussions around public-private partnerships in Myanmar with its learnings.</p> <p>On 14 March 2020, the Chairman of Agriculture, Livestock Breeding and Fishery Development Committee of Pyithu Hluttaw and his committee members visited project sites in Kayah State, together with LIFT personnel.</p> <p>A more detailed discussion of this visit can be found in 5.2 Policy of this report.</p>

<p><b>Policy Issue:</b> Small-scale fishery development in Ayeyarwaddy Region</p> <p><b>LIFT IP:</b> Network Activities Group</p> <p><b>Collaborators:</b> Ayeyarwady Regional Government, Department of Fisheries, Myanmar Economic Bank, Ayeyarwaddy Regional Fishery Network, Fishery Development Association</p>	<p><b>Strategic Partnership between LIFT and NAG for Improving Inland and Marine Fisheries Governance</b></p> <p>The project seeks to support fishing communities to be aware of and enjoy their legal rights from implementation of new regional policy and legislations in Ayeyarwady Delta. Under a previous LIFT-funded project, NAG successfully worked with regional and local authorities and fishing communities to develop a regional policy and legislation for freshwater fisheries and to support fishing communities to be aware of, and enjoy their legal rights from implementation of the policy and legislations.</p> <p>The current project was launched late in March 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic started in Myanmar. Hence, the project had to limit its implementation in 2020 to a narrower scope than expected. Although the project was expected to conduct a Fisheries Co-management Study in the project areas in 2020, the study was postponed to 2021. In 2020, the project completed questionnaire and draft survey design. The study will contribute to the national goals of sustainable natural resource governance and development of Fisheries Co-management Guidelines by identifying the comparative advantages and situational analysis of each geographical and social context of fishing communities.</p> <p>Since October 2020, NAG has been actively involved in developing the National Plan for the implementation of 'Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries'. To share essential knowledge with key stakeholders in developing the National Plan, the project has also translated documents which provide guidance in strengthening the capacities of fishers' networks, partnerships, legal frameworks and resource governance. In the same month, NAG initiated the formation of the National Small-scale Fishers Network which can act as a platform to help representatives of small-scale fishers advocate for their rights and protection.</p> <p>In 2020, the project team effectively collaborated with Ayeyarwaddy Regional Fishery Network and Fishery Development Association to develop plans for the small-scale fishers in the Ayeyarwady Region so that these fishers could formally and systematically access loans for their fisheries operations from the Myanmar Economic Bank. To initiate this programme, the project team held discussions with the Myanmar Economic Bank to develop the loan programme's operation. The programme is scheduled to start in 2021, depending on COVID-19 restrictions.</p>
<b>Conflict-Affected Areas</b>	
<p><b>Policy Issue:</b> improved policy and governance in conflict-affected areas</p> <p><b>LIFT IP:</b> The Border Consortium</p> <p><b>Collaborators:</b> Back Pack Health Workers Team, Human Rights Foundation of Mon Land, Karen Department of Health and Welfare, Karen Environment and Social Action Network, Karen Office for Relief and Development, Karen Women Organization, Karenni Evergreen, Tenessarim Rivers Indigenous People Network, and other EAOs and CSOs</p>	<p><b>Sustainable Transformation of Agriculture, Nutrition and Development for Uplands (STAND UP)</b></p> <p>The project works with local organisations for communities living in conflict-affected areas of Kayin State and Mon State to improve their livelihoods and food security. While focusing on activities directly supporting agriculture, land tenure security, water and sanitation, and nutrition in these areas, the project also provides technical assistance to improve policy and governance there.</p> <p>The STAND UP partners are primarily engaging with EAOs for enhancing their policies rather than government stakeholders in the southeast areas of Myanmar. The Covid-19 pandemic has afflicted partners' work progress in doing planned engagements in 2020.</p> <p>During the reporting period, the project partner Human Rights Foundation of Mon Land and other Mon CSOs were working with the New Mon State Party's (NMSP's) line departments to ensure that lands and properties were belonged to villages settled in NMSP areas, and encouraged NMSP to manage local forests, rivers, and lands and protect the environment well. Even though NMSP previously discouraged civil society engagement in policy dialogue, it is very likely that policy engagement opportunities have just started to open.</p> <p>During the reporting period, another project partner Karenni Evergreen was also working with Karenni National Progressive Party's (KNPP's) Land, Forest and Environment Department to formalise KNPP's Land and Forest Policy and Procedures. A pilot initiative was commenced during 2020 in which selected communities have been awarded land use certificates. Karenni Evergreen planned to continue this persuasion and advocacy in the next reporting period, especially if KNPP could bring this issue to political dialogue with the government.</p>

<p><b>Policy Issue:</b> Skill development and employment in Rakhine State</p> <p><b>LIFT IP:</b> International Labour Organization (ILO)</p> <p><b>Collaborators:</b> DOL, DRD, NGOs, CSOs</p>	<p>Skills for Improvement of Livelihoods, Economic Opportunities and Security</p> <p>The project seeks to support the Rakhine State Government in creating non-discriminatory and inclusive employment, training and skills for its people, based on the objectives of the Rakhine State Five-Year Development Plan and recommendations of the Rakhine Advisory Commission on TVET.</p> <p>Together with GIZ, ILO established the Rakhine State TVET Coordination Group over the past three years. As a founding co-chair of TCG, ILO plays a leading role in coordinating all TVET activities of UN and NGOs in Rakhine State. In 2020, the project organised the 7<sup>th</sup> TVET Coordination Group with 15 member organisations online. At the meeting, challenges in responding to COVID-19, specifically in coordinating multiple and overlapping assistance of development organisations and how to overcome these challenges were effectively discussed.</p> <p>The Rakhine State government created and led the Skills Development Technical Working Group. The Group was mandated to serve as a coordinating body and policy discussion forum for skills development, livelihood, and job creation. It consisted of government line agencies and private sector representatives. Together with the Department of Labour, ILO served as the secretariat for the group and facilitated the group's functions in accordance with its mandate. The first group meeting was held and reached an agreement to establish a database that will collect and analyse plans and interventions of various providers of TVET and other skills development services. ILO was tasked to support the development of the database in order to harmonise the fragmented interventions in the conflict-affected Rakhine State.</p>
Decent Work and Labour Mobility	
<p><b>Policy Issue:</b> Policy and legal framework development for internal and external migration</p> <p><b>LIFT IP:</b> International Labour Organization</p> <p><b>Collaborators:</b> Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population</p>	<p><b>Developing International and Internal Labour Migration Governance</b></p> <p>The project aims to improve policies and legislations on safe migration. Some examples of progress in 2020 include:</p> <p><u>2<sup>nd</sup> National Plan of Action (2018-2023) development</u></p> <p>The project provided technical support to the Government and other stakeholders to develop the 2<sup>nd</sup> National Plan on Labour Migration (2018-2023) and ensured participation of labour organisations and civil societies in the development process. Hence, the plan paid greater attention to migrant rights and policy and practices to protect migrants from exploitation and abuse. Two project personnel served as official members of the Technical Working Group for implementation of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Five Year National Plan of Action on the Management of International Labour Migration (2018 – 2022).</p> <p>There were delays in implementation of the plan due to the upsurge of the COVID-19 in 2020. In 2020, different sections of the plan were implemented in an ad hoc way. Only one Technical Working Group meeting was convened in December 2020 as a mid-term review of the plan's implementation.</p> <p><u>Legal Protection of Domestic Workers</u></p> <p>The project supported CSOs and labour organisations provide feedback on the draft bill on domestic workers in consultations held by NDI with the Women and Peace Parliamentarians Group and the Amoytha Hluttaw Committee on Immigration, Overseas and Local Workers. The project provided technical support to the group for the development of the bill in 2019 and ensured that all participants were familiar with the <i>Convention on Domestic Workers</i>. The draft was submitted to the Amoytha Hluttaw and to MoLIP and MoSWRR for their comments.</p> <p><u>Development of study reports</u></p> <p>The project drafted a paper, <i>Extension of Social Protection to Internal Workers in the Informal Sector</i> and presented its findings and recommendations with key stakeholders in a validation workshop in Nay Pyi Taw. The Social Pension Board and Department of Social Welfare personnel paid particular attention. The Social Security Board requested regular meetings with the ILO to further discuss how to extend social protection for internal and international migrants. The Department of Social Welfare also expressed an interest in starting a pilot extension of social protection to the informal sector.</p> <p>The project also developed an Assessment Study on Skills of Returned Migrant Workers. The validation workshop for the assessment study that was also held online. The workshop allowed space for policy dialogues on recognition and certification of skills of returned migrants as well as access to further skills training. The final report was published online.</p>

<p><b>Policy Issue:</b> Anti-sexual harassment in the workplace</p> <p><b>LIFT IP:</b> Care International</p> <p><b>Collaborators:</b> BusinessKind Myanmar, Legal Clinic Myanmar and Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population</p>	<p><b>Aung Myin Hmu Project - Industry Solutions for Safe Employment</b></p> <p>A workplace without sexual harassment is an integral part of safe employment so Aung Myin Hmu project put anti-sexual harassment at the centre of its policy advocacy efforts. In 2020, some progress was made as follows.</p> <p><u>Occupational Skills Development Law</u></p> <p>The project continued to actively work as a member of the Occupational Skills Development Law Drafting Committee in 2020. Because of COVID-19 and upcoming elections, there was only a committee meeting in February 2020. The law is yet to be finalised.</p> <p><u>Law and policy reform to address sexual harassment in workplace</u></p> <p>Previously, project personnel and partners advocated with government delegates to vote for the ILO Convention 190 (prevention of violence and harassment in the world of work). In 2020, Care continued to be involved in the advocacy working group together with Fair Ware for the ratification of the Convention at the country level. The working group developed an advocacy paper including the importance of why the Convention should be ratified, a road-map of the ratification process, legal gaps and specific recommendations and distributed the paper to the members of the parliament. The project also organised two virtual meetings with some interested members of the parliament and one in-person meeting.</p> <p>Towards the workplace level policy changes to address the sexual harassment issue, the project successfully engaged with 20 garment factories to date, resulting in 13 factories already implementing sexual harassment prevention policy and complaint handling mechanism.</p> <p><u>Development of the National Occupational Competency Standards (NOCS)</u></p> <p>The project provided technical and coordination support to the National Skills Standards Authority and garment industry to develop the NOCs. By the end of 2020, a total of 11 NOCS have been drafted and were ready for multi stakeholder consultations.</p>
<p><b>Policy Issue:</b> Migration and Development</p> <p><b>LIFT IP:</b> International Organization for Migration</p> <p><b>Collaborators:</b> Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population, Mon Women's Coalition, Parami Development Network, Chin Human Rights Organization, Social Care Volunteer Group, Centre For Economic And Social Development, Australian National University</p>	<p><b>Two Let: Increasing the Developmental Impact of Migration through Capacity Strengthening and Partnership</b></p> <p>The Two Let project works for enhanced protection of migrants, decent work and successful self-employed businesses, and improved government policies to increase the developmental impact of both internal and international migration in Myanmar. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic limitations, the project's work progress was slowed down in 2020.</p> <p>The project was able to establish the Working Group on Migration Mainstreaming with support of the MoLIP. Via the Working Group, the project will work with key stakeholders and provide technical support in strengthening government policies and strategies to leverage the developmental potential of migration. The Working Group will serve as a coordination platform for migration specific research and policy agenda with the MoLIP and supporting the Government's efforts in gradual migration mainstreaming. The project successfully held the First Meeting of the Working Group online on 10 December 2020. The government agencies, private sector, international organisations and civil society organisations joined the virtually convened meeting, with especially fruitful discussions between the Government and civil society on migration and development policy development.</p>
<p><b>Policy Issue:</b> Media discourse and social dialogues contributing decent work and migration policy advocacy</p> <p><b>LIFT IP:</b> BBC Media Action</p> <p><b>Collaborators:</b> MRTV, MAP Radio, 9 media partners from 7 different states and regions and 1 media partner from Mae Sot, Thailand</p>	<p><b>Yay Kyi Yar: Decent Work and Labour Migration for Media</b></p> <p>The Yay Kyi Yar Project seeks to support a more informed media discourse on labour migration within Myanmar and increased social dialogues between key stakeholders including government, employers, trade unions and migrants – on labour migration governance and decent work initiatives.</p> <p>In 2020, the project identified key decent work policy reforms that were being led by ILO in tripartite discussion with employers, unions and the government. To support these reforms, the project launched a TV programme in February 2020 that included discussion and review of decent work-related legislations such as the <i>Law Relating to Overseas Employment</i>, the <i>Social Security Act</i>, the <i>Labour Disputes and Settlement Act</i> and the <i>Employment Skills Development Act</i>. The project team also produced a digital programme that included discussion on national policy development with a link to international good practice. For example, a discussion linked the proposed law to protect domestic workers in Myanmar with ILO Convention 189 for domestic workers and Convention 138 on minimum age related to child labour.</p> <p>In 2020, the project team also successfully engaged with members of parliament and senior government officials as contributors and panellists in the Yay Kyi Yar's radio, digital and television programs with multiple levels of policy discussion.</p>

Financial Inclusion	
<p><b>Policy Issue:</b> Saving mobilisation in rural Myanmar</p> <p><b>LIFT IP:</b> Yoma Bank</p>	<p><b>Yoma Bank Agribusiness Finance Program (AFP)</b></p> <p>The AFP project with Yoma Bank was extended to work on the remaining component of mobilising savings amongst rural smallholders through the introduction of Individual Development Accounts (IDA). The other two components of: 1) stimulating investment in agricultural mechanisation and 2) increased access to finance for players in agricultural value chains had been completed in 2018.</p> <p>To reach as many people using IDA as possible, a digital infrastructure must be there. However, Yoma Bank did not have the requisite infrastructure in place so the project was required to support infrastructure development while providing incentives to rural smallholders for on-boarding and rewarding savings behaviour. However digital components were not fully in place in time during the project implementation due to challenges of Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) regulations.</p> <p>The first challenge is needing a CBM regulation that approves cash-in cash-out into the SMART App using Wave agents to allow a customer to go to a Wave agent (typically located closer to a rural customer) to deposit funds into a Yoma account rather than have to go to a Yoma Bank branch. This was delayed and only approved by CBM in September 2019. At that time, Yoma Bank faced technical challenges that prevented the feature from being implemented. This obstacle is now largely overcome for customers who have both a WavePay and Yoma Bank SMART account, since they can now easily (digitally) link these accounts and transfer cash between them.</p> <p>The second challenge is needing a CBM regulation that approves a fully digital on-boarding process to allow customers to apply for a SMART account remotely using a mobile app without the need for a customer to go to a Yoma Bank branch or a third party (e.g. Wave agent). The CBM hasn't approved such regulation in 2020 so Yoma Bank still continues to rely on assisted on-boarding (reliance on third-party and Yoma Bank branch staff) to open accounts for customers and verify their identity. Yoma Bank will engage with the CBM regarding this regulation which restricts access to rural areas, when it is appropriate to do so again.</p> <p>The IDA program implementation was started in November 2019 and originally scheduled to complete by the end of June 2020. However, due to government restrictions and other constraints in the COVID-19 context, the program implementation could not finish in time. It continued until the end of the project in September 2020. The project has resulted in 18,000 IDA beneficiaries being signed up for SMART accounts and a total of USD 2.81 million (95 per cent) of available funding disbursed.</p>
Nutrition	
<p><b>Policy Issue:</b> MCCT &amp; social pension cash transfer to respond COVID-19</p> <p><b>LIFT IP:</b> Department of Social Welfare</p> <p><b>Collaborators:</b> Department of Public Health and General Administration Department</p>	<p><b>LIFT Social Protection Response to the COVID-19</b></p> <p>During the first wave of COVID-19 in Myanmar, the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) implemented key components of the government's COVID-19 Economic Relief Plan (CERP) in Myanmar with LIFT funding by providing one-time top-up benefits for Maternal and Child Cash Transfer (MCCT) and Social Pension beneficiary households. The MCCT component reached 238,392 beneficiary households in Rakhine, Chin, Kayah and Kayin States and the Naga Self-Administered Zone. The Social Pensions component reached 176,138 social pension beneficiaries aged 85 and above nationwide. Both MCCT and social pension beneficiaries received additional MMK 30,000 (USD 22) each from this one-off intervention. Both one-off cash transfers were accompanied by COVID-19 preventative and mitigation messaging.</p> <p>A more detailed discussion of LIFT's COVID-19 Social Protection response efforts can be found in 5.4 Social Protection of this report.</p>

<p><b>Policy Issue:</b> Rice fortification</p> <p><b>LIFT IP:</b> PATH</p> <p><b>Collaborators:</b> BusinessKind Myanmar, Terres Des Hommes Italy, Base of the Pyramid Innovation Center and National Nutrition Centre (NNC)</p>	<p><b>SMART MOVE: Enhancing Migration Transitions through Urban Food System Innovations and Peer-Directed Services for Migrant Workers in Yangon Project</b></p> <p>The project seeks to enhance migration transitions for factory workers, street vendors, and migrant households by introducing peer-directed networks and services, and innovative urban supply chains for fortified rice and other nutritious products in Hlaing Thar Yar and Shwe Pyi Thar Townships.</p> <p>In February 2020, PATH actively participated in an NNC-organised meeting on development of food based dietary guidelines. In the second half of 2020, PATH personnel also contributed as focal persons in the development of the food category draft writings led by NNC for preschool children, migrant workers, and special groups including persons with disabilities. The project also attempted to reinforce messaging to promote fortified rice as an endorsed rice category with accurate information on the NNC's Facebook page. To do so, the project developed a Facebook reactivation strategy and submitted it to NNC for their inputs and approval.</p>
Others (cross-cutting)	
<p><b>Policy Issue:</b> Disability inclusive rural development</p> <p><b>LIFT IP:</b> LODESTAR COMPANY LTD./ SPPRG</p> <p><b>Collaborators:</b> Department of Rural Development, Sagaing Regional Government, Department of Rehabilitation</p>	<p><b>Inclusive Development by Enabling Existing Actors (IDEA)</b></p> <p>The IDEA project aims to build stakeholder capacities that will enable the inclusion of disabled people in rural community-based development. It also employs an action research approach for ongoing project work in 20 villages in Sagaing Region. Working in partnership with DRD, the project aims to produce working costed models that provide a clear template that can be used elsewhere by both government and non-government actors.</p> <p>In 2020, the project contributed to a key policy change as PwDs inclusion became an indicator in DRD's proposed M&amp;E framework for the COVID-19 Economic Relief Plan (CERP) and other future activities of DRD. The action research component also assessed the cost-effectiveness of including PwD in Mya Sein Yaung and other programs of DRD. The findings will be presented to DRD at national and state/regional level in January 2021 so DRD can consider disability inclusion in its policy and practices.</p>
<p><b>Policy Issue:</b> Community-based social protection and inclusion</p> <p><b>LIFT IP:</b> HelpAge International</p> <p><b>Collaborators:</b> Disabled People's Development Organisation, Karen Baptist Convention, DSW, regional governments</p>	<p><b>Inclusive Social Protection and Livelihoods in Magway Region and Kayin State Project</b></p> <p>This project combines two LIFT-funded projects: Dry Zone Social Protection Project and Inclusive Social Protection and Livelihoods Project. It provides social protection services, via Inclusive Self-Help Groups (ISHGs) and Inclusive Village Development Committees (VDCs), to vulnerable rural households with a focus on their inclusion in community-based development.</p> <p>In collaboration with DSW and GAD, the project also tested the electronic cash transfer pilot intervention through mobile phone technology, with potential for nationwide replication by the government. The pilot was in line with the DSW's plan to administer 40 per cent of social pensions electronically by 2023.</p> <p>A more detailed discussion of LIFT's Social Protection work with people with disabilities and older people can be found at 5.4 Social Protection section of this report.</p>
<p><b>Policy Issue:</b> Gender equality and women empowerment</p> <p><b>LIFT IP:</b> GEN</p> <p><b>Collaborators:</b> CSOs, NGOs, government ministries</p>	<p><b>Deepening Commitment to Gender Equality in Myanmar.</b></p> <p>The project seeks to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in Myanmar. Being a member of Myanmar National Committee for Women's Affairs, which is a high-level inter-ministerial committee, GEN involved in the committee's National Strategic Plan for Advancement of Women 2013-2022 (NSPAW) implementation and <i>Prevention and Protection from Violence Against Women (PoVAW) Law</i> development process by actively participating in the committee's four technical working groups (TWGs). GEN also served as the co-chair in two out of the four TWGs: 1) Gender Mainstreaming and 2) Violence Against Women &amp; Girls. The project's inputs and suggestions in the MNCW meetings and activities supported institutional strengthening mechanisms of the MNCW for achieving gender equality in Myanmar.</p> <p>In 2020, the project continued to provide technical inputs for development of the <i>PoVAW Law</i>. As the MoSWRR officially announced their <i>PoVAW Bill</i> and the Parliament requested suggestions for the bill, GEN organised a meeting with UN agencies, GEN members and other CSOs on 31 January 2020, and was able to develop an action plan and collective suggestions for the bill. As a result of the meeting, the <i>PoVAW Law Advocacy Working Group</i> was also formed. The project also provided an unofficial translation of the <i>PoVAW bill</i> into English. The project organised a meeting with the <i>PoVAW Law Advocacy Working Group</i>, and finalised suggestions and recommendations for the bill in a letter and submitted the letter to the parliament in February 2020. The project also made verbal presentations of the suggestions to relevant parliamentary committees in March and sent a letter encouraging to amend the draft <i>PoVAW Law</i> in accordance with the suggestions to the parliament on 29th June. However due to the COVID-19 situation, the parliamentary discussions on enactment of <i>PoVAW Law</i> were postponed.</p>

	<p>The project also discussed with LGBT Rights Network for amendment of Penal Code 377, and then the network was able to draft a policy brief. The policy brief will be applicable for future advocacy works on LGBT rights.</p> <p>In 2020, the project initiated advocacy with five union ministries for gender equality and gender mainstreaming in their scope of work. This involves advocacy with the Ministry of Information to mainstream gender in the state-owned media and in dissemination of information related to gender issues and Ministry of Home Affairs on gender-based violence situation and response in Myanmar.</p> <p>Due to the COVID 19 situation, the project organised virtual events and awareness raising campaigns to increase both the public and government awareness on gender equality issues and gender-based violence. These events and campaigns included International Women Day, Myanmar Women's Day, LGBT Pride Month, and 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence.</p>
<p><b>Policy Issue:</b> Social pension for the elderly</p> <p><b>LIFT IP:</b> HelpAge International</p> <p><b>Collaborators:</b> DSW, regional governments</p>	<p><b>Strengthening the Ministry of Social Welfare to Fulfil its Role in Expanding Social Protection</b></p> <p>This project empowers the MoSWRR to achieve sound policy outcomes with effective public expenditure in social protection for the vulnerable. In terms of social protection for elderly people, the project's technical support has significantly contributed to development of the national social pension programme started in April 2017 and then the programme's expansion to cover older people more, by reducing eligible age and increasing national government budget expenditure over time.</p> <p>The government has reduced eligible age for the National Social Pension from 90 to 85 since October 2018. This has expanded the coverage of the universal national social pension thereby increasing beneficiary numbers from 40,872 by end of 2017 to 168,578 by end of 2018, to 197,593 by end of 2019 and 249,241 by end of 2020.</p>

## ANNEX 7: LIFT LOGFRAME

Purpose level outcome – 1-1: Improved nutritional status, particularly of women and children

### I-1.1 %/# of households in LIFT areas with an acceptable household dietary diversity score

This indicator measures the total number of households in LIFT villages with a dietary diversity score of at least 6 (6 out of 12 food groups). This indicator is based on the Household Dietary Diversity Score (HDDS) methods of the Food And Nutrition Technical Assistance (FANTA) for measuring households' access to food as well as the socio-economic level of the household.

### I-1.2 % of moderately/ severely stunted children under 5 years in LIFT areas

This indicator measures the percentage of children under the age of five (0-59 months) in LIFT villages who are either moderately or severely stunted. Stunting is defined as a height that is more than two standard deviations below the World Health Organization (WHO) child growth standards median

### I-1.3 % of women of reproductive age (15-49 years) in LIFT areas achieving minimum dietary diversity

This indicator measures the percent of women of reproductive age, defined as those women from 15-49 years of age, in LIFT intervention areas achieving minimum dietary diversity. MDD-W is a dichotomous indicator of whether or not women 15-49 years of age have consumed at least five out of ten defined food groups the previous day or night.

Purpose level outcome 1-2 Increased household income and assets with greater control by women

### I-2.1 % of households in LIFT areas below the international extreme poverty line

This indicator measures the percentage of households in LIFT villages that are below US\$ 1.90 per day per capita poverty line based on a detailed analysis of consumption and expenditure and adjusted for inflation and PPP (Purchasing Power Parity)

### I-2.2 %/# of households in LIFT areas with increased income

This indicator measures the total number of households in LIFT villages reporting an increase in income from any source during the previous 12 months. It is based on perceptual data

### I-2.3 %/# of households in LIFT areas with increased asset ownership

This indicator measures the total number of households in LIFT villages who reported an increase in asset ownership during the last 12 months. It is based on perceptual data.

### I-2.4 % of male-headed households in LIFT areas in which women report at least equal control over assets and income

This indicator measures the degree of women's input into decisions about the use of income and assets generated from the productive/ generating activities undertaken at the household, as well as the extent to which women feel they can make their own personal decisions regarding wage or salaried employment. Measurement is based on the Women Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI). 113



Purpose level outcome 1-3 Reduced vulnerability of households and individuals to shocks, stresses and risks

**I-3.1 Prevalence of moderate and severe food insecurity in LIFT areas, based on the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES)**

This indicator measures the share of LIFTs households that have experienced moderate and severe food insecurity based on the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES). As per the SDG definition, Food insecurity is associated with the inability to access safe, nutritious and sufficient food regularly.

**I-3.2 %/# of people in LIFT areas whose resilience has been improved and ability to cope has increased**

This indicator measures the number of individuals whose resilience has improved as a function of positive changes in income, assets and food availability. It is based on perceptual data.

**I-3.3 %/# of households in LIFT areas categorized as vulnerable**

This indicator measures the number of households with a score of 3 or more based on LIFTs 10 Umbrella indicators (dependency, debt, expenditure, livelihood diversity, food security, water & sanitation, health, social capital and decision making). Overall, vulnerability at the household level is based on having three or more of the 10 ten factors classified as 'vulnerable' based on the score of more than one standard deviation from the population mean.

**I-3.4 % of informal employment in non-agriculture employment in LIFT areas**

This indicator measures the share of non-agricultural employment which is classified as informal employment in LIFT areas. Employment is defined as all persons of working age who, during a short reference period (one week), were engaged in any activity to produce goods or provide services for pay or profit.

# NUTRITION

## Nutrition Policy Indicators

**NP 1 New and/or improved gender-responsive public sector policies, programmes and expenditures that support:**

Multi Sectoral National Plan of Action for Nutrition (MSNPAN) at the national or sub-national level (including SBCC for MICYN, IMAM scale-up, food fortification, and the ADS nutrition-sensitive agriculture component).

National Social Protection Strategic Plan (NSPSP) at the national or sub-national level (including nutrition-sensitive and conflict-sensitive MCCT, social pensions, people with disabilities)

**NP- 1.1 # of changes to nutrition related public sector policies and programmes supported by LIFT**

This indicator measures contributions to policy reforms, new policies, legislative amendments, new laws or by-laws, and new public sector programmes or programme revisions in nutrition including implementation of national plans, resulting from deliberate advocacy efforts and/or policy/legislative/programming activities carried out by LIFT or LIFT implementing partners. All such new/improved policies and programmes should be gender responsive.

**NP- 1.2 # of changes in nutrition related public sector budget allocation/spending supported by LIFT**

This indicator measures the numbers of significant additional budget allocations, adjustments or spending in nutrition that result from deliberate advocacy efforts and sector budgeting and planning support from LIFT or its IPs. All new or modified budget allocations or spending should be gender responsive

**NP-1.3 # of LIFT-supported nutrition related policy-oriented events organized**

This indicator measures the number of policy-oriented events organized by LIFT or its IPs designed to provide information and evidence in order to promote/advocate policy reforms, new policies, legislative amendments, new laws or by-laws, and new public sector programmes or programme revisions to support nutrition outcomes for vulnerable populations.

**NP-1.4 # of LIFT-supported nutrition related policy-oriented publications provided to key policy makers**

This indicator measures policy oriented publications related to policy reforms, new policies, legislative amendments, new laws or by-laws to support positive nutrition outcomes for vulnerable populations provided to key policy makers by LIFT IPs.

## Nutrition system level

**Outcome NS 1- increased quality and coverage of nutrition interventions:**

### NS-1.1 # of individuals reached with LIFT supported nutrition-specific interventions

This indicator measures the number of individuals who have been reached with one of any of the LIFT supported nutrition-specific interventions. Nutrition specific interventions address the immediate causes of malnutrition, which are inadequate dietary intake and disease

### NS-1.2 # of individuals reached with LIFT supported nutrition-sensitive interventions

This indicator measures the number of unique individuals who have been reached with LIFT supported nutrition-sensitive interventions, through any available direct channel. These channels include activities by primary health care workers, community health workers or volunteers, support groups, local authorities, extension agents or other non-health personnel. Nutrition sensitive interventions address the underlying and basic causes of undernutrition.

### NS 1.3 %/# of households in LIFT areas reporting year round availability of drinking water from improved water sources on premises

This indicator measures the percent and number of households that have access to an improved drinking water source, from which they can obtain sufficient and safe water for drinking and domestic use, on premises, and available when needed throughout the year

## Nutrition household level

**Nutrition outcome-1 Increased adoption of improved nutrition, dietary, sanitation and hygiene practices.**

### NH-1.1% of children under 6 months in LIFT areas who are exclusively breastfed

This indicator measures the number of children under 6 months (that is, 0-5 months of age) in LIFT villages who were exclusively breastfed during the previous 24 hours at the time of survey. Exclusive breastfeeding means that the infant received breast milk only (including milk expressed or from a wet nurse), but did not receive any other food or liquid, including water

### NH-1.2 % of children 6-23 months in LIFT areas with minimum acceptable diet (apart from breast milk).

This indicator measures the percentage of children 6–23 months of age who receive a minimum acceptable diet, apart from breast milk. The MAD indicator measures both the minimum feeding frequency and minimum dietary diversity, as appropriate for various age groups

### NH-1.3# / % of households in LIFT areas using (a) safely managed sanitation services and (b) a hand-washing facility with soap and water.

The first component of the indicator (a) tracks the percentage of population using safely managed sanitation services. The second component (b) tracks the percentage of population with basic handwashing facilities in the home, where the presence of a handwashing facilities is used as a proxy for handwashing behaviour.

### NH-1.4 %/# of households in LIFT areas using improved drinking water on premises

This indicator measures the number of households that utilise an improved drinking water source, which provides sufficient and safe water for drinking and domestic use, is located on premises, and is available when needed

### NH-1.5 % of women who are involved in child health & nutrition decisions individually or jointly

This gender-sensitive indicator measures how women (15 years or older) with children under five years of age usually make child health and nutrition decisions. Women 15 years or older who are identified through the household roster as being a parent of a child under five years of age are selected to respond to the set of questions related to this indicator.

## FINANCIAL INCLUSION

### Financial inclusion policy level

**FP-1: Financial inclusion policy level: New and/or improved gender-responsive public sector policies, programmes, and expenditure**

#### FP-1.1 # of changes in FI related public sector policies and programmes supported by LIFT

This indicator measures significant contributions to policy reforms, new policies, legislative amendments, new laws or by-laws, and substantive new public sector programmes or programme revisions that support MFI's, Support MOPF's implementation of the National Saving Mobilization Policy and support the revision of micro-insurance regulation and practice to better serve MFI clients.

#### Indicator FP-1.3 # of LIFT supported FI related policy oriented events organized

This indicator measures the number of policy-oriented events organized by LIFT or its IPs designed to provide information and evidence in order to promote/advocate policy reforms, new policies, legislative amendments, new laws or by-laws, and substantive new public sector programmes or programme revisions aimed at promoting financial inclusion.

#### FP -1.4 FP-# of LIFT supported FI related policy oriented publications provided to key policy makers

This indicator measures policy oriented publications related to policy reforms, new policies, legislative amendments, new laws or by-laws seeking to promote financial inclusion that have been disseminated to key policy makers by LIFT FMO, as well as by LIFT-supported IPs.

### Financial inclusion systems level

**FS -1 Increased institutional capacity for provision of inclusive and socially responsible financial services**

#### FS-1.1 %/# of LIFT supported MFIs financially self-sustaining

This indicator measures the number of MFIs (Microfinance Institutions) supported by LIFT that are financially self-sustaining. A MFI is financially self-sufficient when the MFI's annual income is more than annual operating expenses and financial expenses.

**FS-1.2 %/# of LIFT supported MFIs operating efficiently**

This indicator measures the number of MFIs supported by LIFT that are operating efficiently in using its resources (assets and personnel).

**FS-1.3 # of individuals with access to LIFT supported financial services (individual clients)**

This indicator measures number of households of which at least one family member is registered as a member of a MFI, cooperatives and/or banks supported by LIFT. In financial terms, it is called "active client".

**FS-1.4 Value of private sector investment leveraged (USD)**

This indicator measures the value of private sector investment leveraged whether directly through micro finance institutions or commercial banks or investors (private sector co-financing through LIFT supported private sector engagement projects).

**Financial inclusion household level****FH-1: Increased utilization of socially responsible and sustainable financial services****FH-1.1 # of clients using micro, small and medium enterprise loans from LIFT supported MFIs and banks**

This indicator measures the number of client using loans for Agriculture, Small Business (Less than 500,000 MMK), Medium Business (More than 500,000 MMK) from LIFT supported MFIs and Banks.

**FH-1.2 Total value of loans disbursed by LIFT supported MFIs and banks (USD)**

This indicators measures total loan portfolio disbursed by LIFT supported MFIs and Banks. The thrust of LIFT's work on microfinance is to expand access to inclusive financial services that can serve as a catalyst for inclusive economic development in Myanmar.

**FH-1.3 % of clients of LIFT supported MFIs and banks who do not meet their loan repayment terms**

This indicator measures the percentage of clients with Portfolio at Risk (PAR)

**FH-1.4 % of individual households receiving LIFT supported financial services moving out of extremely poor/poor to near poor status over the last twelve months**

This indicator measures the proportion of households moving into and out of poverty based on the international and national poverty lines in LIFT villages. Reporting will be based on an augmented version of the Poverty Probability Index (PPI). This index is based on a range of household characteristics, including expenditures and consumption of twenty important food and household products found to be predictive of poverty status in previous years

**FH-2 Increased control of credit and savings by women****FH-2.1 %/# of households with women reporting equal or greater control over LIFT supported credit and savings.**

This indicator is also based on WEAI and measures women's role in decision making about obtaining and use of credit and savings associated with LIFT's financial inclusion services. Whereas participation in at least one decision concerning credit and savings is considered adequate, equal or greater control implies that the women must report having participated on all or a majority of the decisions.

# AGRICULTURE, MARKETS AND FOOD SYSTEMS

**AFMS policy level**

**AP-1: New and/or improved gender-responsive public sector policies, programmes, and expenditure that support: Implementation of the ADS and MoALI's contribution to MS-NPAN; Inclusive value chains; Inclusive, nutrition-sensitive crop, livestock and aquaculture practices; Inclusive climate-smart crop, livestock, and aquaculture practices; Land tenure security for small smallholder farmers and Natural resource management**

**AP-1.1: # of changes to agriculture related public sector policies and programmes supported by LIFT**

This indicator measures significant contributions to policy reforms, new policies, legislative amendments, new laws or by-laws, and substantive new public sector programmes or programme revisions in agriculture, land administration, or natural resource management resulting from deliberate advocacy efforts and/or policy/legislative/programming support from LIFT IPs. All such new/improved policies and programmes must be, where relevant, gender responsive, nutrition sensitive and climate smart.

**AP-1.2: # of changes in agriculture, NRM and land administration related public sector budget allocation/spending supported by LIFT**

This indicator measures the numbers of significant additional budget allocations or spending in agriculture, NRM and land administration that result from deliberate advocacy efforts, and sector budgeting and planning support, from LIFT or its IPs. All new budget allocations or spending must be, where relevant, gender responsive, nutrition sensitive and climate smart.

**AP-1.3: # of LIFT-supported agriculture, NRM and land administration related policy-oriented events organized**

This indicator measures the number of policy-oriented events organized by LIFT or its IPs designed to provide information and evidence in order to promote/advocate policy reforms, new policies, legislative amendments, new laws or by-laws, and substantive new public sector programmes or programme revisions in agriculture, land administration, or natural resource management.

**AP-1.4: # of LIFT-supported agriculture related policy oriented publications provided to key policy makers**

This indicator measures policy oriented publications related to policy reforms, new policies, legislative amendments, new laws or by-laws in agriculture, land administration, or natural resource management provided to key policy makers by LIFT IPs. All such new/improved policies must be gender-responsive and, where relevant, nutrition-sensitive and climate-smart.

**AFMS systems level**

**AS-1: Value chain actors promote inclusive, climate smart and nutrition-sensitive agriculture**

**AS-1.1: # of LIFT-supported value chain service providers (public, private, CSO) promoting inclusive, climate smart and nutrition-sensitive agricultural production**

This indicator measures the number of agricultural service providers funded under LIFT that are supporting rural households in their agricultural value chain activities. Value chain service providers can provide inputs and financial services, technical advice, market development, farmer organisational support, marketing services, mechanization, etc. They can be government agencies, NGOs/CSOs or private sector individuals, partnerships or companies. Services should be inclusive, gender responsive, climate-smart and nutrition sensitive.

**AS-1.2: %/# of LIFT-supported input/service providers reporting business growth**

This indicator measures business growth of input/service providers supported by LIFT. Business growth can be measured/defined in several ways, however this indicator is based on a simple way to quickly assess growth and for providers to report: the numbers of individuals receiving services or inputs. (In addition, this fits well with calculations for Indicator AS-1.3, below).

**AS-1.3: # of individuals reached by LIFT-supported agricultural advisory services**

This indicator measures the cumulative number of individuals reached by agricultural advisory services provided through a LIFT-supported IP intervention. Those individuals provided only with inputs (eg bags of fertilizer) are not included unless they also received associated agricultural advice. Agricultural advice can be delivered in many ways, including: direct extension to individuals at the village (either to individual farmers or groups), training courses (at village, village-tract, township level, training centre etc), farmer field schools, training conducted by trained village trainers (TOT approach) among others.

**AS-1.4: # of value chain related decent jobs created for vulnerable individuals with LIFT support**

This indicator measures the number of decent jobs created within the agricultural value chains supported under LIFT-funded interventions. Decent jobs are jobs '...that provide fair wages and working conditions, allow for freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining and do not permit forced and child labor or discrimination in respect to employment and occupation' (LIFT Strategy 2019-2023, p 32).

**AFMS Household level**

**AH-1: Increased production, income and food security through commercialisation and/or diversification of sustainable and nutrition-sensitive agriculture**

**AH-1.1: %/# of people reached by LIFT-supported advisory services using Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), inputs and technologies (including mechanisation)**

This indicator measures the number and percentage of the persons who have been reached by agricultural advisory services and who have adopted the improved technologies extended: GAP, inputs, improved technologies, mechanization etc. Agriculture includes crops (cash crops and subsistence/food crops), livestock, and fisheries.

**AH-1.2: Area of cultivated land under Good Agricultural Practices in LIFT areas**

This indicator measures the area of land in acres where GAP is being applied by farmers who have been supported by LIFT IPs who promote GAP through advisory/extension services. This does not require a GAP certification scheme to be in place, or that the producers or their agricultural products are certified under such a scheme.

**AH-1.3: Average estimated value of agricultural production, consumed or sold, by households receiving LIFT-supported agricultural advisory services**

This indicator measures the average annual value of agricultural production (in MMK) of a household reached by LIFT-supported advisory services. It covers the total value of household agricultural production whether sold, consumed, gifted, traded, shared or used to repay debts.

**AH-1.4: #/% of LIFT-supported households reporting increased income from agricultural activities**

This indicator measures the number of households reached by LIFT-supported advisory services who report increased income from agricultural activities since the commencement of the new strategy (2019).

**AH-2: Increased control and decision-making over agricultural production and related income by women**

**AH-2.1: #/% of women in LIFT-supported households reporting equal or greater access, control and decision-making regarding agricultural production and related income**

This indicator measures the number of women in households reached by LIFT-supported advisory services who report equal or greater access, control and decision-making regarding agricultural production and related income since the commencement of the new strategy (2019).

## DECENT WORK AND LABOUR MOBILITY

**DP-1: New and/or improved gender-responsive public sector policies, programmes, and expenditure on: Labour rights and social protection (e.g., ratify C189, Violence Against Women Law, Social Security Law); Labour migration governance (e.g., Law Relating to Overseas Employment, Plan of Action on Labour Migration); Forced labour, child labour and anti-trafficking (e.g., Plan of Action on Forced Labour, Anti-Trafficking in Persons Law); Employment and skills development (e.g., Skills Development Law, TVET Law, National Occupational Competency Standards)**

**DP-1.1: # of changes to labour related public sector policies and programmes supported by LIFT**

This indicator measures the changes that result from LIFT's work to support policy development and the implementation of government programmes on labour issues. The unit measure of "changes" is inclusive of the adoption of new policies and programmes, changes in the content or approach of existing policies and programmes and changes in the formulation process for policies and programme (e.g. social dialogue, establishment of working groups and committees, etc.).

**DP-1.2: # of changes in labour related public sector budget allocation/spending supported by LIFT**

This indicator measures the number of changes in labour-related public sector budget allocation or spending supported by LIFT. Its aim is to identify whether LIFT has contributed to increases or better targeting of public budget allocations and expenditures by state and non-state actors. This includes both changes in public budgets, as well as more efficient use of existing financial resources.

**DP-1.3: # of LIFT supported labour-related policy-oriented events organised**

This indicator measures the number of policy-oriented events organised, whether directly by LIFT or by its IPs. This includes all events that have a specific objective of supporting policy development or implementation. The term “events” is broadly defined and includes workshops, consultations, public campaigns, launch events, meetings, discussion forums, field visits or advocacy events whose aim is to influence policy processes, whether directly or indirectly.

**DP-1.4: # of LIFT supported labour related policy oriented publications provided to key policy makers**

This indicator measures the number of publications disseminated by the LIFT FMO, as well as by LIFT-supported IPs and initiatives that are intended to inform policy-processes. For the purposes of this indicator, “publications” are defined as written outputs which are produced in a medium to reach an external audience and which include policy-relevant content. It does not include video or social media communications or internal project management documents.

**DWLM systems level****DS-1: Enhanced capacity of stakeholders to support decent work (including reducing the gender wage gap), labour mobility and anti-trafficking****DS-1.1: # of representatives of government, private sector, civil society, labour organizations and media trained with LIFT support on labour and social protection, safe migration and anti-trafficking.**

This indicator measures the number of stakeholder representatives who participate in training with LIFT support. The subject of the training is broadly defined and inclusive of all issues relating to decent work and labour mobility, encompassing labour and social protection (including sexual harassment and gender-based violence), safe migration, anti-trafficking, skills development and other related topics. It also includes instrumental training that expands the capacity of relevant actors to engage more effectively with these issues (e.g. training on project management, monitoring and evaluation, communications, etc.).

**DS-1.3: Amount of money awarded to workers for redress of grievances and fulfillment of benefit claims**

This indicator tracks the money that is awarded to workers in relation to labour rights and human trafficking complaint cases filed. The subject of the cases is unrestricted and inclusive of all matters for which they have sought assistance from a LIFT-supported legal service providers. This includes complaints related to recruitment, wages and working conditions, terminations, workplace accidents, social protection benefit claims, sexual harassment, deaths while overseas and other issues.

**DWLM household level****DH-1: Increased access to information, training and support services for women and men migrants and other vulnerable workers****DH-1.1: Number of individuals successfully completing LIFT supported skills development training**

This indicator measures the total number of individuals reached through various types of non-farm livelihood trainings. This includes vocational skills trainings, enterprise/business development trainings and life/soft skills trainings meant to increase employability as well as other skills

development topics. There is no predefined minimum or maximum length of time for the training.

**DH-1.2: # of migrant workers and family members provided with LIFT supported information, training and support services on safe migration and/or financial literacy**

This indicator captures the number of migrant workers and family members provided with information, training and services on safe migration or financial literacy. This includes a broad range of different types of services, including outreach, counselling, legal assistance, education, training, networking and organizing services. However, it does not include communications through media channels which do not provide for individualized engagement.

**DH-1.3: # of survivors of trafficking provided with LIFT supported shelter and/or support services**

This indicator measures the number of trafficked persons who receive safe shelter and services after their identification. Post-trafficking services are taken to be inclusive of all services provided to survivors with the objective of supporting their recovery and rehabilitation. Examples include temporary housing, trauma informed counselling, psycho-social support, healthcare, job matching, legal assistance, documentation and others related services.

**DH 2 Expand opportunities for decent work particularly for workers who are at a heightened risk of exploitation and abuse.****DH-2.1: %/# of individuals successfully completing LIFT supported training who establish their own enterprises (including trafficking survivors)**

This indicator measures the total number of trained individuals (DH-1.1) who establish their own small or medium enterprises. The businesses may be in any economic sector (including agriculture, industry or services), however, subsistence farming and fishing are not included.

**DH-2.2: %/# of individuals employed six months after completing LIFT supported vocational skills training.**

This indicator measures the total number of trained individuals (DH-1.1) who are employed six months after completing LIFT supported vocational skills training. The employment may be in any economic sector (agriculture, industry, services), however, own-account and contributing family workers are not included.

**DH-2.3: %/# of individuals successfully completing LIFT supported training with increased income from their employment or enterprise.**

This indicator measures the number of individuals that have achieved an increased income six months after completing vocational or enterprise development training. It is based upon the respondents' subjective perception of an increase in personal income and does not capture empirical data to quantify the change. It is inclusive of increases in income resulting from finding employment after previously being unemployed.

**DH-2.4: % of individuals employed in a situation of forced labour within LIFT target areas.**

This indicator measures the prevalence of individuals employed in a situation of forced labour within LIFT target areas. The determination of

forced labour will be made through conducting household surveys that apply the ILO survey guidelines for estimating forced labour of adults. Extrapolation from the statistical data collected in the surveys will support a representative estimate of the prevalence of forced labour in LIFT target areas, including the dark figure of unidentified victims.

Original indicator formulation	Revised/Modified indicator formulation
NS 1.3 # of households in LIFT areas with access to improved drinking water and sanitation facilities	%/# of households in LIFT areas reporting year round availability of drinking water from improved water sources on premise
NH-1.4 %/# of households in LIFT areas using safely managed drinking water services	%/# of households in LIFT areas using safely managed drinking water, which is available on premises
NH-1.5 % of men/women in union with children under two in LIFT areas who make child health and nutrition decisions jointly with spouse/partner	% Of women who are involved in child health & nutrition decisions individually or jointly
DS-1.1 # of representatives of government, private sector, civil society, labour organizations and media trained with LIFT support on labour and social protection, safe migration and anti-trafficking, by sex.	# Of stakeholder representatives trained to support decent work and labour mobility"
DS 1.2 # of private sector enterprises whose compliance with ethical code of conduct related to recruitment and employment practices is audited.	Proposal to drop still pending. Further research on suitable replacement ongoing.
DS-1.3 Amount of financial compensation awarded to workers for redress of grievances related to labour rights abuses and human trafficking.	"Amount of money awarded to workers for redress of grievances and fulfilment of benefit claims"
DH-1.1 # of individuals successfully completing LIFT supported training on technical and vocational skills and enterprise development	"# of individuals completing LIFT supported skills development training"
DH-1.2 # of migrant workers and family members provided with LIFT supported information, training and support services on safe migration and financial literacy	"# of migrant workers and family members provided with LIFT supported information, training and support services"
DH-2.4 % of individuals employed in a situation of forced labour within LIFT target areas	"% of employed individuals in a situation of forced labour within LIFT target areas"





**Livelihoods and Food Security Fund**

UNOPS

No. 12(O), Pyithu Lane,  
7 Mile, Mayangone Township,  
Yangon, Myanmar  
+95 1 657 278, 657 280-7, 657 703-4

Email: [lift@unops.org](mailto:lift@unops.org)  
[www.facebook.com/liftfund](http://www.facebook.com/liftfund)