

The United Nations Human Settlements Programme, UN-Habitat, is the agency of the United Nations dedicated to promoting socially and environmentally sustainable development of human settlements in and urbanizing world, with the goal of providing shelter and inclusive human settlements. The agency provides technical assistance to countries and cities in the areas of urban governance, urban safety, housing, poverty reduction strategies, water management, post-disaster rehabilitation and disaster mitigation in human settlements. During the provision of support, UN-Habitat's approach, the People's Process instills capacities of hundreds of communities for achieving safer settlements, while delivering cross cutting impacts of local governance, sustainable livelihoods, empowerment and capacity building. 'The Project for Emergency Support to Poor and Vulnerable Communities in Ethnic Areas' supported by the Government of Japan has focused on empowering communities to jointly work to build/renovate quality services (WASH and community infrastructure), and housing (affected by the 2015 floods), to give people basis for healthy and productive life. The project benefited 120,949 people in 241 target villages across Hakha, Tedim, Falam and Thantlang townships in Chin State.

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From
the People of Japan



The Project for Emergency Support to Poor and Vulnerable Communities in Ethnic Areas

community empowerment



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community empowerment



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Chin State, in need of great support

Non-Bamar ethnic groups largely populate the upland areas of Myanmar; each state and region being diverse in terms of its people, languages and culture. Chin State is located in the southern part of northwestern Myanmar that is also known as ‘Chin Hills’, due to its mountainous geography of 500 to 800 feet in elevation. The Chin locals are of Sino-Tibetan origin and inhabit a mountain chain which roughly covers western Myanmar through to Mizoram in north-east India and small parts of Bangladesh. Called the mountain people by tradition they are composed of a number of ethnic groups of which about 80% are Christians. Combined with the difficulty in accessing the area; the living conditions of Chin State continue to degrade due to lack or inadequate support to its population. A survey conducted in 2009-10 by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has found that Chin State remains the poorest state among 14 regions and states in Myanmar with seventy-three per cent of the people living below the poverty line.

Like in many places of the country, the state is losing its labor force as many young people migrate to foreign countries for employment; no workforce means no production thus no production means no income.

A torrential downpour in July 2015 with the onset of cyclone Komen had triggered severe floods and landslides across 12 states and regions in Myanmar leaving 1.6 million people displaced.

In response to this the Government formed a Recovery Coordination Committee (RRC) on 10th August 2015 and developed a recovery strategy plan that covered both early and long-term recovery activities to ensure rapid recovery and strengthen the resilience of disaster affected communities.

The floods affected 20,449 people in Chin State, which is 4.3 per cent of the total population. The damage spanned across 9 townships in the state, causing widespread damage to households and basic infrastructure in the region. The Myanmar Post-Disaster Needs Assessment of Floods and Landslides report determined Chin State had the second highest (behind Rakhine State) number of affected households in the region, with 3,987 homes either collapsed or destroyed during the floods and of these households 2,934 requiring relocation. As a result of the floods Chin State has seen a further 4,042 people displaced to IDP camps along with 5 reported deaths from the disaster. The State capital Hakha was the worst affected region with heavy rainfall destroying 247 homes resulting in the displacement of 1,147 people.







Project location

The **Project for emergency support to poor and vulnerable communities** was implemented from August 2016 to December 2017 in 241 villages across Hakha, Falam, Tedim and Thantlang townships of Chin State.

UN-Habitat's Intervention in Chin

In response to the floods that affected Chin State in 2015, the Government of Japan funded UN-Habitat to implement the **Project for emergency support to poor and vulnerable communities** in 241 villages across four townships. The project started field operations from 1 August 2016 in Tedim, Falam, Thantlang and Hakha townships that focused on empowering communities to ensure they jointly work to build/renovate basic services, community infrastructure, and housing in order to provide communities basis for a healthy and productive life. The project was framed within the overall objective of helping Myanmar's ethnic poor minorities and vulnerable communities to address the emergency needs to restore their normal life and to sustainably improve their quality of life.

Empowering poor and vulnerable communities

UN-Habitat strongly believes that unleashing the potential of the people is the only way in which the affected community can work together for their recovery and development in a short period of time. Throughout the project UN-Habitat assisted in mobilizing and empowering the target communities to help them act on their own recovery. This community-driven process enabled people to reflect and gain insights on their own capacities to organize and initiate actions for their own rehabilitation and development.

The UN-Habitat's People's Process requires trust in people and recognition of the way people organize themselves. Communities are expected to lead in assigning priorities, in decision making and in taking action. They are encouraged to execute recovery and development programs which they build on their own skills and creativity. Groups of families and whole communities that share common interests and goals, work out action plans. In order to implement these plans UN-Habitat signs contracts, provides funding and sets up joint accountability formats, in such a way that the community groups are in full control of their own expenditures with the technical assistance of UN-Habitat.

This photo book showcases the Government of Japan funded-project implementation where the human spirit of target population has got united to work for the improvement of their communities

Local governance: Village Development Committee

The project activities were implemented by the support of elected Village Development Committees (VDCs), to represent their respective communities. Members were sourced from the community, and during the selection of members for VDCs usually 7- 10 persons (chair person, secretary, treasurer and members) - the community was encouraged to nominate and vote for people that did not already hold posts with local authorities or NGO's to minimize the possibility of conflict of interest, and at the same time select those people that could have influence (village elders and local opinion leaders) over the community. The latter ensures that decisions taken by the VDCs are upheld by the community, allowing for sustainable development building on existing power structures and hierarchies within the community. All VDCs members received trainings from UN-Habitat to build/strengthen their capacity and knowledge.

Community Action Planning and Community Implementation Agreements

The project was implemented through a community contracting system which is the formal instrument of agreement between UN-Habitat and the beneficiary households/ Village Development Committees (VDCs) through Community Implementation Agreement (CIA). The implementation of community contracts promoted by UN-Habitat follows a step-by-step methodology within the framework of the Community Action Planning (CAP) approach, where UN-Habitat supports the preparation of development plans and the activities identified during CAP are recorded in CIAs.

Skill development and capacity building

Capacity building and trainings were an integral component of the entire project cycle. The objective was to support communities to strengthen their social capital through formation of VDCs, provide platform for better coordination and communication for gaining access to basic services, and to develop their skills to improve employability of workforce including women in the labor market, and continue to enhance community capacity to own and maintain the infrastructure built.

Training sessions were not limited to classroom lectures but were more informal and practical that consisted of information and skills involving the project activities on ground. Implementation of project activities provided local communities with hands-on experience and enriched their knowledge and understanding of community-driven development initiatives.

The overall outcome of training was very encouraging. The local communities were found to be more organized, aware and exposed, more community contribution and participation was noticed and the networking among VDC and others were also improved a commendable level.

Gender mainstreaming

Participation of women in all activities was recorded high and this project was very successful at community level initiatives. VDCs were seen as the core of the village community and the project also created a major role for women in participating and decision-making process. Women participated actively in forming of VDCs, participating in CAP and preparing CIAs for their villages, with strong commitment and ownership. It was recorded that average female presence was 40% at VDC training and 46% in skills training all townships.



Empowering and mobilizing communities were the key aspects of this project. Communities were considered to be the primary resources rather than the objects of development. Communities were encouraged to take decisions in identifying their needs and priorities by preparing community action planning, implementing and monitoring project activities for their own development.



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