

A young girl in Myanmar is shown from the chest up, carrying a large, white, rectangular tray balanced on her head. She is wearing a light blue checkered headscarf and a pink, short-sleeved, ruffled blouse with small holes. She has a determined and hopeful expression, looking upwards and to the left. The background is a bright, slightly blurred outdoor setting. The text 'Empowering people for change' is overlaid in a large, black, serif font on the upper left side of the image.

Empowering people for change

ActionAid Myanmar Annual Report 2013

act!onaid

The **values** guiding all of our work to transform ourselves, the community and the society, to free people from poverty and injustice are:

Solidarity with people living in poverty, taking sides with the powerless and the excluded.

Humility in our presentation and behaviour, recognising that we are part of a wider alliance against poverty.

Transparency and accountability at all levels for the effectiveness of our actions and openness in our judgements and communication with others.

Independence and neutrality from any personal religious, party-political or identity affiliation in the conduct of AAM's work.

Equity and justice in working to ensure equal opportunity for everyone, irrespective of race, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, HIV status, colour, class, ethnicity, disability, location and religion.

Courage of conviction requiring us to be creative and radical, bold and innovative – without fear of failure – in pursuit of making the greatest possible impact on the causes of poverty.

Our **vision** is a world without poverty and injustice in which every person enjoys their right to a life of dignity.

Our **mission** is to work with poor and excluded people to eradicate poverty and injustice.

Editing and design: Kalika Bro-Jørgensen, photos: Aung Htay Hlaing and ActionAid Myanmar staff. This publication is copyright ActionAid Myanmar 2014



Country Director's foreword

2013 was an exceptional year for ActionAid Myanmar and, even more so, for the nation and the people of Myanmar.

We experienced significant democratic and economic progress in the country as well as challenges and obstacles to development and the reform process. The government's engagement with the international community and civil society reached unprecedented levels, which gave us a unique opportunity to provide support and influence key policies and practices. We also increased our engagement with new and existing donors, partners, and vulnerable people across the country.

Our five year country strategy was approved early in the year, and we developed a new organisational structure and several important policies, frameworks and manuals to ensure continuous improvement of our work.

Having experienced constant growth since the country programme was established, in 2013 we nearly doubled our contributions to the communities we work with and welcomed many new colleagues to help in our mission of eradicating poverty and injustice in Myanmar. This led to significant results, which will be explored further throughout this Annual Report.

Many thanks to the Government of Myanmar, our donors and supporters, partners, communities we work with, and not least to our Fellows.

*On behalf of the team,
Shihab Uddin Ahamad
Country Director
ActionAid Myanmar*

Table of content

Country Director's foreword.....	3
Reflections on 2013.....	4
Who we are.....	6
How we work.....	6
Who we work with.....	8
Sustainable livelihood.....	10
Women's rights.....	14
Governance.....	18
Youth and education.....	22
Staff capacity.....	26
Organisational systems and processes.....	28
Resource mobilisation.....	30
Strategic collaboration.....	32

ActionAid Myanmar
1 Wingabar Road
Shwe Gone Daing
Bahan Township
Yangon, Myanmar
Tel: +95 1546671
www.actionaid.org

Reflections on 2013

Myanmar's reform processes continued to gain momentum and consolidate further in 2013.

The quasi-civilian government seemed genuinely interested in improving policies and practices as well as the capacity of civil servants. Various ministries and departments repeatedly requested support for this, lending us a unique opportunity to engage further with the government.

Meanwhile, the international community showed increased interest in supporting Myanmar on the reform process as well as economic and social development. Several foreign governments established relations with Myanmar while existing foreign missions scaled-up their presence and financial aid.

An international report warned against the risk of too much aid too soon - a valid concern - and advised on what steps could be taken by donors and the Government of Myanmar to enhance the effectiveness of aid, and mitigate possible adverse consequences.

The Framework for Economic and Social Reform (FESR) - a milestone document - was introduced early in the year, which outlined policy priorities for the government in the next three years while identifying key parameters of the reform process that will allow Myanmar to become a modern, developed and democratic nation by 2030. Further, the framework will guide development collaboration between the government, the international community and the civil society towards the long-term goal of inclusive growth and poverty reduction.

The limits of new found liberties, such as free speech and rights to assembly, were

tested from all sides, mostly portraying democratic progress but also magnifying several remaining challenges and obstacles.

Tensions continued to simmer around the review of existing laws on association. At first glance the new draft association law seemed somewhat progressive, not least thanks to the active involvement of the civil society in its formulation. However, doubts emerged about whether later drafts would indeed protect and support the civil society as intended, or, based on the interpretation, might restrict and limit the growth of local organisations.

A journalist-drafted Press Law and the ministry's own Printer's and Publishers Registration Bill were submitted to parliament, which was perceived to significantly improve press freedom in the country. However, recent events including the arrests (under various different laws) of several journalist and editors raised doubts about the real extent of media freedom.

Two new land usage bills (governing farm land and vacant land) were passed in parliament in 2012. Most observers acknowledged that these bills were improvements on previous legislation regarding land rights, however, they did not address more fundamental issues regarding the way most of the population uses and tends their land, which in some areas has led to conflicts and land rights disputes. The government initiated a national dialogue on land tenure and agreed with land rights activists to develop a comprehensive national land

use policy, which is still being drafted by the Ministry of Forestry. This process seems promising.

The president's office initiated a campaign to promote a people centred approach to service delivery, planning and development at state and regional levels, which has encouraged a participatory bottom-up planning process to emerge across the country.

Under schedule 1 and 2 of the constitution state and regional parliaments were committed to formulate a high volume of new laws and policies during 2012 and 2013, however, only a few managed to deliver on this. Further, the legislative processes at this level often lacked transparency and public consultation. This indicated some weakness in the decentralisation process and the level of empowerment at state and regional levels.

Visible migration trends indicated a risk of urban centred growth and development. The pull-factor of new job opportunities (primarily in the construction sector) led to worries about an increase in urban poverty and inadequate services (health, education, sanitation, and security). The push-factor (a severe lack of job opportunities and services as well as civil unrest in remote parts of the country) was equally disturbing. Appropriate policies and strategies to address this issue are urgently needed.

A National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women was passed in parliament. The 10-year plan covering

12 priority areas (livelihoods, education, health, violence, emergencies, economy, decision-making, human rights, media, environment, the girl child as well as institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women) details the government's strategy for improving issues related to women and girls. Further, an anti-violence against women law was drafted, which will be submitted to parliament in 2014.

Another major event was the government's decision to award two foreign companies with telecommunication licenses, allowing them to build and operate a nationwide network, which had previously been under strict government control. This is seen as a clear indication that the government is genuinely ready to accept foreign investments even in sensitive sectors. Further, the civil society showed great interest in engaging in a dialogue on how to ensure ethical and responsible business that will lead to improved infrastructure, growth and development.

While both government and ethnic armed groups have appeared to make an honest good-will effort at constructive peace negotiations the efforts were often undercut by on-going armed conflict in some states. Most regional and state governments were more open to the idea of engaging with the international community and civil society to support peace and development across the country. However, most distressingly the government was unable to solve the on-going problem of violence and discrimination in Rakhine state, which in 2013 spread to other parts of the country.

Who we are

ActionAid is an international organisation, working with over 15 million people in 45 countries for a world free from poverty and injustice.

We have been working in Myanmar since 2006. Today we have an MoU with the Ministry of Social Welfare and Relief and Resettlement as well as with the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation and we are registered as an INGO with the Ministry of Home Affairs.

In partnership with 17 local and international organisations, we support more than 700 communities in 9 states and regions – in total around 200,000 people. We work with the most vulnerable people in remote rural areas. Along with this community-led, self-reliance work, we are actively involved with policy making at the national level.



How we work

We believe in the power of people.

Our Fellows are at the heart of all our work. We facilitate each village we work with to elect a Fellow – a young, energetic community member with leadership potential, the majority of whom are women. We equip Fellows with the skills, knowledge and confidence needed to stimulate participatory development and act as change-makers in their villages, serve as direct links between ActionAid and communities, and engage with local authorities to ensure sustainable local development and access to rights and justice.

We believe in the power of knowledge.

The communities we work with have intimate knowledge of the challenges they face as well as ideas for potential solutions. Employing various participatory rural appraisal tools, Fellows facilitate people coming together in order to analyse their situation, find solutions, and develop and implement their own context specific action plans. All information gathered during this process is compiled in “village books”, which also serve as bottom-up plans for government-led development initiatives.

We believe in the power of governance.

Sustainable development can only be achieved in collaboration with the state, which is why we support just and democratic governance. While community-led development is at the heart of our approach, we ensure that this is linked with local, regional and national level government and planning authorities. Further, we directly support the state’s efforts to improve its policies, practices and capacities to ensure transparency and accountability in the reform process and the future of the country as a whole.

We believe in the power of collaboration.

Fellows facilitate community members cooperating towards implementing their action plans and organising themselves in various development committees and self-help groups. Everyone is encouraged to contribute equally from the decision-making to the implementation stage, regardless of age, gender and status. The communities we work with experience increased unity and inclusion, giving them strength to face challenges and claim their rights together.



Who we work with

We aim to have a national presence, with priority accorded to areas of greatest need.

During 2013 we initiated a long-term engagement in Sagain Region and began working with partners in Mon state. Further, we scaled up work in Kayin state where we now work with both state and non-state actors. Today we reach most parts of the country, except Chin and Shan states.

We engaged with some of the most vulnerable communities in Ayeyarwaddy Region, Magway Region, Mandalay Region, Sagain Region, Rakhine State, Bago Region, Kayah State, Kayin State, Mon State, Tanintharyi Region, and Kachin State. Our focus is on landless, daily wage labourers, small scale fisherfolk, marginal and smallholder farmers, internally displaced people, ethnic minorities, people with disability – and among these groups particularly women, the elderly, youth and children – in remote rural areas.

Our Partners counted Action for Social Aid (ASA), Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), British Council (BC), Gender Equality Network (GEN), Knowledge and Dedication for Nation Building (KDN), Local Development Network, Kayah (LDNK), Myanmar Consortium for Community Resilience (MCCR), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Patheingyi Myaung Mya Association (PMA), Rambre Township Development Organisation (RTDO), Social Policy & Poverty Research Group (SPPRG), Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC), Thadar Consortium, Youth Legal Clinic (YLC)

We engaged with the government at local, regional and national level to



advocate for changes to policies and practices and to support ministries and departments to strengthen their capacity and awareness on various aspects of sustainable development.

Our donors counted the European Union (EC and DG-ECHO), the United Kingdom (DFID and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office), Sweden (Sida), Denmark (Danida), the Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund (LIFT), the Just & Democratic Governance Seed Fund (JDGSF), the UN-Trust Fund, the Planet Wheeler Foundation, DLA Piper, the GDS Foundation, the Haremead Foundation, several major private donors, and thousands of British and Italian child sponsors.

We also engaged with the private sector to pursue practices which are socially responsible and accountable; the media to amplify the people's voice and to ensure state accountability; and academia and research institutions to bring the evidence required to influence policy change.

Project	Partner	Donor	
Community Initiated Livelihood and Poverty Reduction Project	ADRA	LIFT	Sustainable Livelihood
Civil Society-led community based livelihoods Resources Development in the Dry Zone	Thadar	LIFT	
Building Local Capacities for a Livelihood Systems Approach in the Ayeyarwaddy Delta	Thadar	LIFT	
Inclusive Livelihoods & Social Protection Research	SPPRG	LIFT	
Assistance to conflict affected people in Myanmar	KDN	DFID	
Social Economic Development Network for Regional Development		LIFT	
Transforming the living standards of ethnic communities affected by conflict in Myanmar	KDN	Haremead Foundation	
Promoting Women's Rights in Burma	BC	FCO	Women's Rights
Mobilising Action for the Advancement of Women in Myanmar	GEN	LIFT	
Promoting Women's Empowerment and Political Participation in Myanmar	BC	FCO	
Promoting Access to Justice: Towards a Violence Free Environment for Women and Girls	YLC, GEN, RTDO, LDNK	UN Trust Fund, FCO	
Capacity Advancement of Non- State Actors in Myanmar	KDN	EC	Governance
Advancing Democratic Practices in Myanmar		JDGSF	
Active Citizenship for Accountable Governance	KDN	EC	
Citizens for Accountability in Public Service Financing		Danida	
Southeast Infrastructure Rehabilitation Project	SDC, NRC, KDN	EC	
Change-makers: Transforming the living standards of remote communities through Youth leadership		Private donor: Alex Graham	Youth and Education
Youth Fellowship Programme in Pyapon Township	ASA	Planet Wheeler Foundation	
Transforming Myanmar from within	ASA, RTDO, LDNK	Sida	
Change-makers: inspiring community-led development in remote, disaster-prone communities in Myanmar through youth leadership	PMA	DLA Piper	
Change-makers: inspiring community-led development in remote, disaster-prone communities in Myanmar through youth leadership	PMA	GDS Foundation	
Safer coastal and Urban communities through DRR in Myanmar	MCCR	DG-ECHO	DRR
Ready for Anything	PMA	DFID	

2013

Key achievements

7050

vulnerable families received direct livelihood support, such as start-up capital for self-help groups, access to irrigation, seeds and fertilisers, and vocational training.

2089

farmers adopted improved agriculture practices

1085

women headed households got access to alternative livelihoods and affordable credits through self-help groups

112

communities became more resilient to natural hazards

11

Village Disaster Preparedness Plans were developed to be linked with Township Disaster management Plans in 6 townships

Programme Priority 1: Sustainable Livelihoods

Objective: To promote sustainable income through improved access to and control over natural resource and capital, alternative livelihood practices, and build community resilience to withstand disasters.

While Myanmar continued to rapidly open up its markets to international corporations and foreign investments in 2013, most of the vulnerable people in the rural communities we work with were left behind, with very limited livelihood opportunities. Further, recurring natural hazards such as cyclones, floods and droughts are major threats to people's livelihoods, especially in remote parts of the country.

To enhance access to sustainable incomes we facilitated farmers' groups to establish revolving funds for investments in seeds and equipment, thereby avoiding the usurious interest rates of moneylenders; and women self-help groups to engage in saving and loans activities while providing opportunities for vocational training and access to services such as education and health.

We collaborated with Yezin Agriculture University to carry out action research on seed multiplication, climate change and animal fodder in the Dry Zone, and provided local farmers the opportunity to participate in the experiments. The results were shared with the entire community.

We conducted community trainings on climate change adaptation, including maintaining forests and soil quality and transforming traditional agricultural

practices to more modern, sustainable practices according to the hazard risks identified in the respective areas.

To improve local control over resources we provided awareness raising activities on land rights and the establishment of community forests.

We facilitated communities to improve their infrastructure such as roads, bridges, dykes and dams – when possible in cooperation with local authorities – to enhance both livelihoods and resilience to natural hazards.

We facilitated the communities we work in to develop action plans with long term strategies for sustainable livelihoods and shared these with local authorities to promote further action and support.

As the lead agency for the Myanmar Consortium for Community Resilience (DIPECHO) and Co-Chair and member of the Steering Committee for the DRR working Group we engaged with local and national authorities and civil society organisations to support the implementation of improved policies and plans, such as the Disaster Management Law. We also contributed to a Disaster Management course for Government officials and simulation exercises and disaster preparedness plans from community to national level.



Myint Oo, member of the local Early Warning Task Force of Po Laung village, went from door to door to warn everyone about the Mahasen cyclone

“Now we can save everyone”

When Po Laung village in the Ayeyarwaddy Delta received warning of an approaching cyclone in May 2013 everyone knew exactly how serious the consequences could be – five years earlier Cyclone Nargis claimed the lives of an estimated 200 people in the village and swept away nearly every house, livestock animal, and piece of vital livelihood equipment.

ActionAid has supported disaster risk reduction activities in Po Laung for the past three years. A Village Disaster Management Committee (VDMC) has been established as well as three task forces concentrating on early warning, first aid and search and rescue respectively.

The elected members have received extensive training, organised simulation

exercises and initiated mitigation projects in order to improve safety and resilience.

In May 2013 the efficiency of these activities came to the test. Just about everyone followed the emergency procedures and contributed what they could. Until, after three days on high alert, the villagers were relieved to hear that Cyclone Mahasen had changed its course. Meanwhile, the warning was not in vein, it proved that the procedures in place are essentially perfect.

“I am so happy and proud about how we handled the Mahasen warning. Now we can save everyone because we are so organised and well prepared. Everyone knew exactly how to react,” said Myint Oo, member of the local Early Warning Task Force.

“ I am so happy and proud about how we handled the Mahasen warning. Now we can save everyone because we are so organised and well prepared. Everyone knew exactly how to react

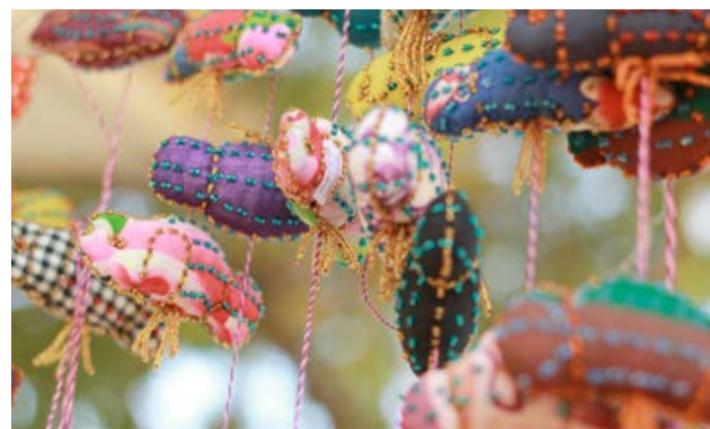


Sustainable Livelihoods highlight: Socio-Economic Development Network

In 2013 we initiated the Socio-Economic Development Network in Magway Region. This unique project funded by the Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund (LIFT) is designed to address the needs of women in poor, rural areas.

The women are provided income generating opportunities through vocational training in the production of quality handicrafts. Meanwhile they receive education on health, hygiene and gender issues. Further, through a referral system, our Fellows link the women and their families to a wide range of services provided by government, non-government, civil society groups and the private sector.

Overall, the project made solid progress in achieving the targets for year one. Visible and concrete achievements counted: vocational trainings delivered, support groups established, and weaving, sewing and rattan products reaching the market. 412 women have received vocational training in four vocational training centres. Of the 203 graduates, 106 women have formed 13 women producers' support groups, actively receiving and filling orders and implementing quality control. Sales are very good despite that the sales emporium and marketing system are not in place yet. Indications are that the market potential is high.



2013

Key achievements

95

community leaders trained to actively enable women's leadership and participation in decision-making at household and community levels

150

paralegals from 150 communities trained to initiate community level mechanisms to monitor and reduce violence against women

330

self-help groups have propelled women to increase their economic independence

33

Civil Society Organisations mobilised to work on women's rights and gender interventions as well as the drafting of the first anti-violence against women law.

Programme Priority 2: Women's Rights

Objective: To promote women's active leadership and the policies, practices and mechanisms that enable women to live free of fear and violence and to be economically independent.

2013 saw significant new projects, legislation and results within our Women's Rights work. On women in leadership we contributed to research exploring women leader's experience and the influence of social and cultural norms; we provided capacity building to women on political participation, which resulted in trainees becoming members of political parties and passing on the training within their party; and we provided women's leadership and participation training, which resulted in many examples of active and vocal women in leadership positions in the villages we work with.

We initiated a project to end violence against women. Training of community leaders, religious leaders, local government, community para-legal workers, and male-to-male engagement led to increased community awareness on the unacceptability of violence against women – and to women taking action to prevent and respond to violence against women. We also engaged in raising awareness among government stakeholders, parliamentarians and civil society through workshops and publications on the need for an anti-violence against women law, which led to the initiation of the anti-violence against women law drafting working group.

To improve Women's livelihood

we initiated the Socio Economic Development Network project, which has resulted in increased incomes for women and confidence in working together. The project also established committees in target townships, which increased women's access to public services.

Our national level policy engagement with the Gender Equality Network has resulted in the finalization and launch of the National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women 2013-2022. We supported the Government at different levels – particularly the Department of Social Welfare – by providing training and support to strengthen knowledge and skills on women's rights and gender equality. Further, as co-chair we hosted and supported the Gender Equality Network, and were an active member of the following working groups: Anti-violence against women law drafting, violence against women research, impact of cultural norms and social practices on gender equality research, international women's day, 16 days of activism programmes, the National Women's Dialogue on Peace, Security and Development in Myanmar. Additionally, we contributed to the forum "towards inclusive development: enhancing credibility and status of women", which resulted in a statement urging the government to address issues pertaining to people with disabilities, especially women.



Ei Ei Moe raises awareness on violence against women during an ActionAid sponsored sensitization training held in February 2014 in Dala township.

“Knowledge controls shame”

Motivated by the Buddhist saying *ku tho*, or doing good, Ei Ei Moe and 10 other young lawyers established the Legal Aid Clinic in 2011 to help poor citizens of Myanmar access justice at little to no cost.

The Clinic is working in collaboration with ActionAid to train community paralegals to provide pro bono services for women who report violence.

“People need to be educated. Men and women alike have to contribute to stopping violence,” said Ei Ei Moe, who is now the manager of the Clinic.

While most cases reported deal with resolving matrimonial disputes, 13 cases of rape, 5 cases of forced marriage and 4 cases of rape of minors were brought to the Clinic's attention

in 2013. But the challenges to due process are multiple. Bureaucracy and delays in reporting, especially in cases of rape where the victim needs emergency medical attention, often render medical reports inconclusive.

Furthermore, “often, key witnesses are never questioned to verify the facts of a case.« Victims are often stigmatized as »their dignity is taken away from them,” said Ei Ei Moe.

Women victims of violence are often hard pressed to find men willing to marry them due to this ‘dishonour’.

Ei Ei Moe believes that “knowledge controls shame: Once women know how to combat violence through the law, they will not be ashamed to report it,” she said.

“Once women know how to combat violence through the law, they will not be ashamed to report it.”



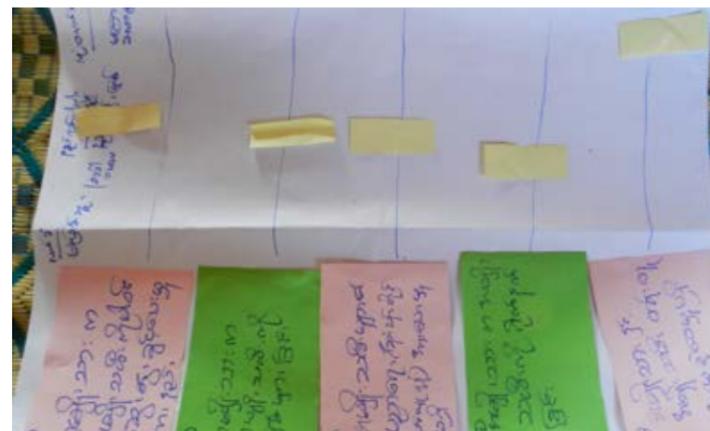
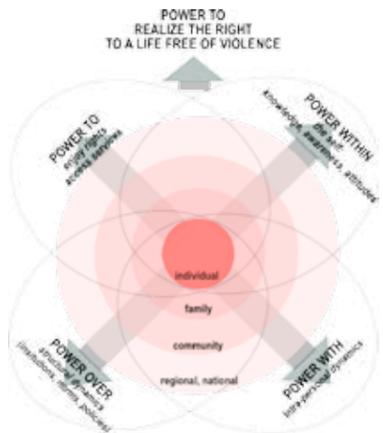
Women's Rights highlight: Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices Survey

In 2013 our Women's Rights team, with the support of an international consultant, conducted a Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP) Survey on violence against women in four states and regions. This survey – a first of its kind in Myanmar – initiated a new ActionAid project engaging communities in Pyapon, Meikhtila, Rakhine and Kayah on understanding the underlying causes and attitudes towards violence against women in order to confront and prevent this.

In-depth interviews and focus group discussions with men and women, boys and girls, religious leaders, traditional birth attendants, care takers of children with disability, teachers and village leaders, amongst other key respondents, identified various types of violence and

their impact on communities as well as existing dispute resolution mechanisms.

The survey lays the groundwork for understanding violence, and the tools to confront it, based on different forms of power: power to, power within, power with and power over. While the power that instigates violence is often rather apparent, such as an abusive partner, social norms are seen to propel violence. Communities often condone violence as a display of 'manliness' frequently citing that 'she [the woman] deserved it'. Violence, even in its most heinous forms, often goes unreported. Alternatively, communities prefer to settle such matters locally without the assistance of formal institutions of justice, often leading to very minimal punishment, if any.



2013

Key achievements

146

poor and excluded communities received training on accountable governance

572

government officials and members of parliament were sensitised on how to respond to the needs of people living in poverty and injustice

248

government officials increased their knowledge on participatory bottom-up planning processes

77

national and local civil society organisations increased their capacity on rights based approach to development

21

professional journalists and 46 "citizen journalists" received training on journalism and pro-poor policy and practices

Programme Priority 3: Governance

Objective: To support the reform process for just and democratic governance in Myanmar, strengthening democratic institutions and promoting active citizenship.

2013 was an exceptional year for promoting just and democratic governance in Myanmar. The reform process gained momentum and the government opened up to engage further with the civil society, including international NGOs.

We strengthened our cooperation with government at local, regional and union level significantly, which allowed us to not only support a transparent and accountable reform process, but also to influence key policies and practices.

We supported the National Comprehensive Development Plan – which is an integral part of the current reform process – by providing government officials at national and regional level with capacity-building workshops on participatory bottom-up planning processes.

In an effort to strengthen civil society engagement in public finances we organised two round-table discussions on the national budget, attended by government officials, politicians, civil society, the private sector, the media and economists. These historic events sparked a public debate about the regional and national budgets and promoted a culture of participatory planning and budgeting while challenging existing practises.

We supported the Union Ministry

of National Planning and Economic Development in drafting a township development planning guideline, which will ensure wide participation of people in local development planning as well as implementation and monitoring of development activities. Additionally, we supported region and state level government on participatory bottom-up initiatives and capacity building for government officials as well as community volunteers, to develop community plans in a participatory way.

After several years of active engagement and trust building the Pyapon Township authorities made a historic move to incorporate all village books – action plans developed by the communities we work with – into the local planning process, allocating budget and other support. This was a model for collaboration with local authorities, which we expect to replicate in other townships across the country.

We promoted active citizenship at village level by mobilising people to participate in the development of local budgets, and encouraging women, children and senior citizens to be represented in decision-making bodies.

Further, we engaged with the media through trainings and workshops on public service financing in order to introduce journalists to the perspective of people living in poverty and injustice.



Maw Maw Aye, facilitated the village book process in Hti Tan Yin village, which helped secure funding from the township authorities.

Township budget for village books

“The trainings helped me become more confident, and after a while, people began to appreciate my work. Now we have made a detailed village book with a prioritised action plan.”

Since U Myo Myint, 58, was young he wanted his village to have a library to improve the low level of education.

“A long time has passed since then. We were too poor and not united enough to cooperate around building a library,” he said.

When Fellow Maw Maw Aye facilitated the village book process in Hti Tan Yin village, a library was the village’s first priority.

“People kept complaining about how time consuming it was (to develop the village book). But the trainings helped me become more confident, and after a while, people began to appreciate my work. Now we have made a detailed village book with a prioritised action plan,” said Maw Maw Aye.

At first U Myo Myint was among the

people who found the village book process too time consuming.

“But it was definitely worth it when it was accepted into the township plan, which helped us get funding and build a library together,” he said.

In 2013 the Pyapon Township authorities made a historic decision to incorporate all village books into the local planning process, allocating budgets to help realise the communities’ action plans.

“It is challenging to implement (the new bottom-up approach) with limited staff and budgets and many very remote villages in the township. That is why we cooperate so closely with ActionAid; to get information from the Fellows in villages we otherwise couldn’t reach,” said U Nyan Soe, Assistant Director of Pyapon District Planning Department.



Governance highlight: Bottom-up planning workshop

More than 200 senior government officials from 30 different ministries attended a workshop on Bottom-up Participatory Planning Processes on May 7-9 in Nay Pyi Taw.

This event was jointly organised by the Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development and ActionAid Myanmar.

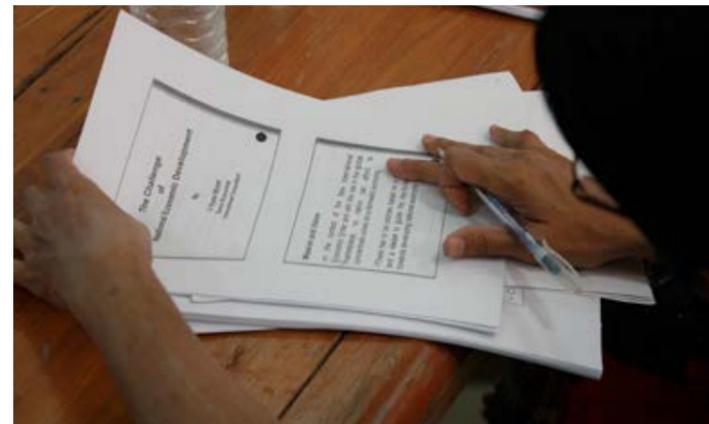
The aim was to support Myanmar's development process by deepening decentralisation and advancing transparent, participatory and inclusive governance in Myanmar.

The workshop was designed to build the capacity of the participants to implement bottom-up participatory

planning processes. It also helped raise awareness of alternative development approaches and good practices of other countries on people participation, and micro-macro linkages to ensure pro-poor development.

During three days the participants gained a strong foundation for analysing the current context of development in Myanmar and were inspired to use a participatory, bottom-up approach to national planning and development.

This event was one of several ActionAid Myanmar initiatives to support the Myanmar National Comprehensive Development Plan (MNCDP), which is an integral part of the current reform process.



2013

Key achievements

700

Fellows have been trained in total – in 2013 147 new fellows graduated from the Fellowship training and worked to facilitate sustainable development in their villages

191

Existing fellows developed their capacity to lead social change and development through active citizenship trainings

96

Urban and rural youth activists worked together to develop campaign plans and organised 12 events in 2013

9

New fellow alumni groups were initiated by fellows themselves with the aim of sustaining their social development activities as independent CBOs in Rakhine, Kayah, Kayin, Magway and Mandalay

Programme Priority 4: Youth and Education

Objective: To encourage and support young people to become change-makers, driving peace, democracy and development in Myanmar, and to ensure that all children in the Local Rights Programme target villages have access to quality primary education.

2013 saw a massive expansion of the fellowship program, the cornerstone of our youth work. 147 new fellows graduated from the two introductory rounds of fellowship training – each lasting one month, covering topics such as leadership and facilitation, poverty and vulnerability, human rights, active citizenship and democracy.

We improved the link between our training and our bottom-up and participatory development planning approach, which brings communities together to analyse their social context and develop inclusive development plans called Village Books. Following the trainings the Fellows have started to facilitate village book processes in their villages, taking the first steps towards lasting change by implementing the villages’ action plans such as building bridges, improving schools, organizing villagers and teaching about women’s rights. For the first time, all active fellows met in February for the 4th national fellows conference to share experiences about community work.

In 2013 we scaled up our activities working with urban and rural youth groups through our youth training centre, the Global Platform. Closely linked to these training activities, we have started to build up action platforms for youth to meet, engage and debate.

We expanded our three youth resource centres in Meikthila, Patheingyi, and Kanma, providing local youths with training opportunities (including IT and language courses), a youth space, and a platform for developing their own social change initiatives. Moreover, we have worked to link urban and rural youth to develop youth networks and action plans for youth advocacy. So far, this has resulted in 12 campaign events, highlighting environmental, peace and land rights issues.

We facilitated School Management Committees and Parent-Teacher Associations from over 60 villages to develop participatory School Development Plans. These have been finalized in 37 villages and handed over to local government agencies in 17 villages.

We supported 2850 children in 100 villages with child sponsorships and established 34 child spaces with fun activities for children. We also linked our child sponsorship program closer to our overall Local Rights Programs, scaling up efforts to ensure that all children get access to quality primary education, and that fellows are involved in facilitating activities for children, monitoring children’s school attendance and well-being and helping to collect child messages for supporters.



At the Global Platform Ko Ko Min learned how he can help protect the environment and to believe that he can instigate change in his community.

“Now it is difficult to ignore us”

It was always painful for Ko Ko Min to witness how trees around his village were cut down by the government and big companies.

“It had a big effect on our land. The soil quality in the village got bad and we couldn’t collect as much rain as earlier. It was a problem and none of us knew what to do about it,” says the 27-year-old Fellow from Kyoe Tan village in the Dry Zone.

In July 2012 Ko Ko Min joined an *Active Citizenship* training session at ActionAid’s Global Platform youth training centre in Yangon.

“At the Global Platform I got knowledge and information, but I also learned that change can start from you.”

A *Letter to the editor* session provided Ko Ko Min with the necessary tips and tricks

to write a letter to the editor of the news journal about the environmental issues in his village.

Twenty days later his letter was published. Ko Ko Min noticed that journalists also read his letter and began covering the problem.

“I can’t know the effect of my letter. It seems like they are not cutting as many trees here anymore, but I can’t be sure. But at least I have made peoples voice heard in a way that is a little bit more difficult to ignore.”

Ko Ko Min’s second *letter to the editor* was about the local member of parliament who had not visited the area since he was elected. As soon as the letter was published the politician visited to apologize and promise his voters that he had not forgotten about them.

“At the Global Platform I got knowledge and information, but I also learned that change can start from you.”



Youth and Education highlight: The Global Platform

2013 saw a significant development and expansion of the Global Platform, an ActionAid youth space and training centre that plays a significant role in the delivery of our country strategy. Young people are at the heart of our work across our different programme priorities and the platform provides both a physical space and professional expertise to engage and develop the capacity of the young people that we work with.

In May, the platform moved from ActionAid's country office to a new building close to Yangon University. With three training halls, accommodation for over 40 participants, and outside areas, the space has allowed us to scale-up the trainings and youth activities. We have also significantly grown and developed

the dedicated team of trainers at the global platform. Over 500 youth were engaged and developed as change-makers in 2013. We designed and delivered two major programmes for Fellows (active citizenship and citizen journalism), provided trainings for Activista and other youth networks and developed the capacity of ActionAid staff, partners and youth leaders through a training of trainers.

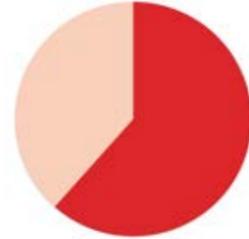
The platform is about more than just trainings. We also provided space for young people to organise independently, for example in preparing to celebrate International Peace Day. And we house a video and music studio, established in partnership with Turning Tables that enables us to engage young people in more creative ways.



Organisational Priority 1: Staff Capacity

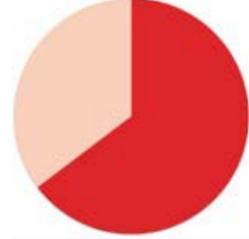
Objective: To empower AAM staff, equipping them with knowledge and skills and creating an organisational culture which promotes the internalisation and practice of ActionAid’s values, with a special focus on building women’s leadership.

Gender balance – all staff



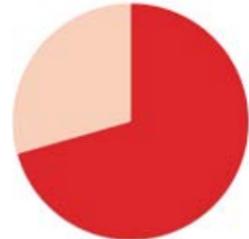
■ 104 female staff
■ 65 male staff

Gender balance – new recruitments



■ 55 female staff
■ 30 male staff

Gender balance – interns



■ 24 female interns
■ 10 male interns

In 2013 we seized all opportunities available to equip staff with knowledge and skills. Our collaboration with ActionAid Denmark’s People4Change programme proved particularly useful in this regard. Through People4Change we recruited four inspirators and five advisors to build the capacity of our staff and partner organisations on governance, communication, monitoring and evaluation, and our human rights based approach.

Also in cooperation with ActionAid Denmark is the Global Platform, a training centre in Yangon, which continuously designed and conducted a variety of tailored trainings for our staff and fellows as well as external participants. Staff members attended a total of 57 trainings on a range of relevant topics. About half of the trainings were conducted in Myanmar whereas the rest took place in more than a dozen different countries abroad. Additionally, we improved the monthly, full-day induction program for new and existing staff members. Our Human Resource department conducted in-house trainings for managers and supervisors on Staff Management and Performance Appraisal.

Our internship programme allowed 34 Myanmar youths (24 female, 10 male) to gain invaluable skills, knowledge and work experience, which led 11 of them

to find permanent positions within the organisation, while the rest have not completed their internships yet.

We made a conscious effort to promote the internalisation and practice of our values and policies through our introduction programme as well as day-to-day interactions. Special emphasis was given to creating a multicultural environment where people celebrate diversity in terms of ethnicity, religion and capacity. Further, we added a values assessment to our performance appraisal process to monitor and evaluate our progress.

Our human resource and organisational development team had a special focus on building women’s leadership within the organisation by creating an enabling work environment, providing capacity development support, and giving women the chance and space to practice leadership. This resulted in 19 female staff promotions in 2013. Two Women’s Forums organised during 2013 provided female staff members a forum for empowerment and discussion on how to further improve women’s leadership within the organisation. In 2013 we recruited 85 new staff members, of whom 55 were female - in total more than 60 per cent of our staff members were women (104 of 169) and we continue to encourage the recruitment of young women at all levels of the organisation.



Susan Chel at her desk in the ActionAid Myanmar Country Office in Yangon, where she works when not in the field

“Working here is truly empowering”

When Susan Chel, 23, volunteered to translate for ActionAid’s Child Sponsorship department in May 2012 she never expected the rapid career development it would lead to.

“I was doing a Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies in Yangon and my dream was to become a social worker. But my primary reason for volunteering was to learn more about living standards, culture and customs in remote parts of the country.”

She had already witnessed a severe lack of opportunities and access to basic health and education during a field trip to Chin State with her University. It was also a field trip – this time to collect information from ActionAid’s child sponsorship areas – that motivated her to pursue a career in ActionAid.

“I was the only volunteer in my batch

who got the chance to go to the field. My supervisor said I was chosen because of my hard work and dedication, which motivated me to work even harder.”

Susan Chel was soon offered a position as an intern, then an associate and in January 2014 she was appointed a programme officer.

“I have continuously received relevant trainings from ActionAid, which gave me the necessary skills and confidence to progress. I love working here because the senior staff really listen to junior staff and consider our opinions in their decisions, which is truly empowering. Also, the work environment is like a family, which I like.”

Susan Chel’s new dream is to pursue an MA in Community Management, but first she wants to gain more experience in the field through working with ActionAid.

“I have continuously received relevant trainings from ActionAid, which gave me the necessary skills and confidence to progress”

Organisational Priority 2: Systems and Processes

Objective: To strengthen organisational systems and processes to promote and measure our accountability, efficiency and effectiveness.

In early 2013 our five-year country strategy was approved by ActionAid International. Throughout the first year of the strategy period we have had a special focus on improving organisational systems and processes in order to improve our accountability, efficiency and effectiveness.

In 2013 we finalised our first manual on Human Resources and Organisational Development, which was approved and rolled-out across the organisation. A new organisational structure was also designed to support the new country strategy.

We introduced a more systematic approach to familiarising all staff with our policies: handing out hard copies of policies to all staff, requiring all staff to sign non-negotiable policies, and examining their understanding and internalisation of these policies during recruitment as well as promotional interviews.

With the support of an external consultant we evaluated our Monitoring and Evaluation system to identify areas in need to be enhanced. With the assistance of People4Change advisors, the capacity enhancement and institutionalisation of the monitoring and evaluation system at AAM country level as well as with partners were initiated towards the end of 2013. Results based monitoring and reporting system,

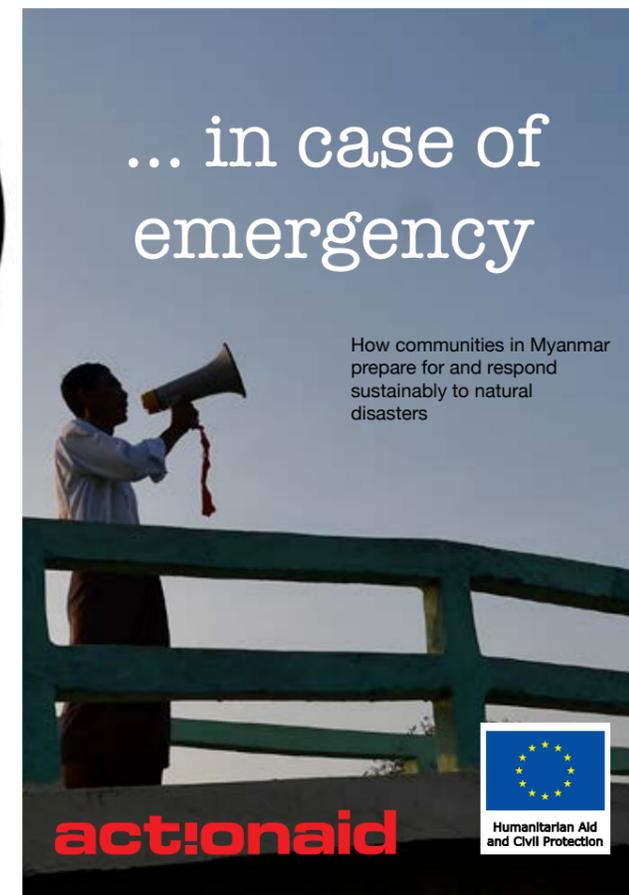
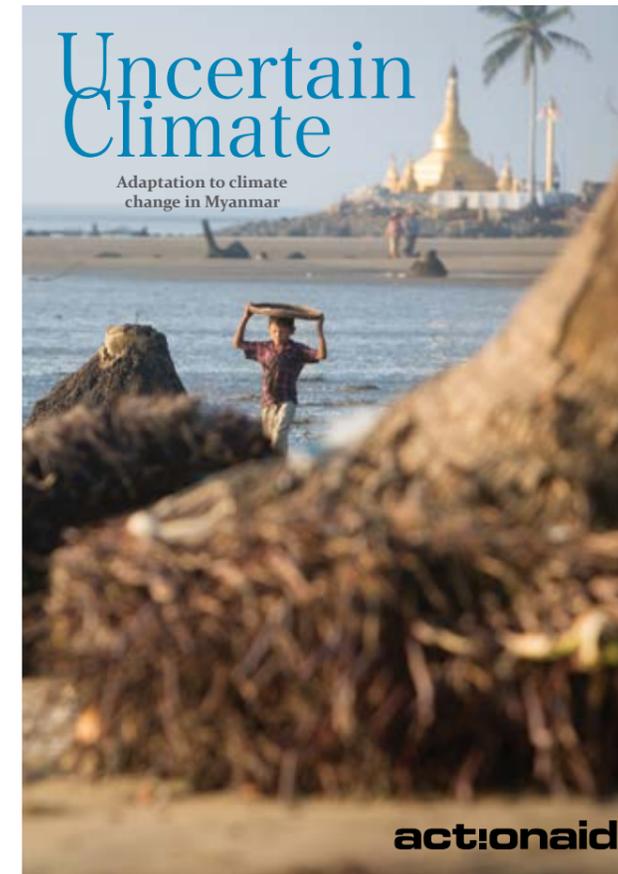
database build up system, enhanced participatory monitoring and evaluation, feedback mechanisms, shared learning system, were among the frameworks and systems drafted and installed.

Our new Communication Framework was approved in 2013, to effectively support the country strategy. We established a small communications team, and a larger group of communications focal persons from teams and projects, to improve our communication internally as well as externally. Communications staff received training and mentoring and we provided the same to staff of partner organisations – with a special focus on case story writing.

We produced a number of high quality communication materials such as a book on Climate Change and documentary movies about the Village Book concept and Women's Leadership.

Further, we improved our website through more regular content upload and established a lively presence on social media, primarily Facebook.

As a contribution to the ActionAid International Federation, two staff of AAM were deployed on secondment in Jordan and the Philippines, to support local country programme responses to the civil war in Syria and Typhoon Haiyan respectively.



We produced a number of high quality communication materials such as a book on Climate Change and documentary movies about the Village Book concept and Women Leadership.

Organisational Priority 3: Resource Mobilisation

Objective: To mobilise adequate financial resources to fund our programme priorities from compatible funding partners.

In 2013 we successfully increased our overall income by 63 per cent compared to 2012.

Our funding from institutional donors (partnership official income) increased by 76 per cent compared to 2012, which was 40 per cent more than expected. Especially our unique Fellowship Programme motivated new and existing donors to contribute further to the realisation of our work.

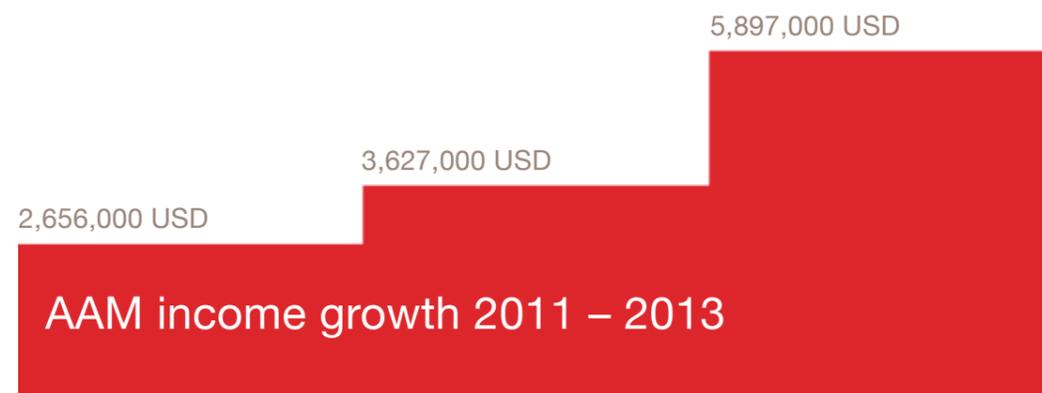
Our Child Sponsorship Programme (regular giving income), established in 2012, also significantly contributed to the increase in our income. By the end of 2013 we had linked 2,838 children in the Delta and the Dry Zone with sponsors in the United Kingdom and Italy, which was 62 per cent more than expected.

Our funding from high value donors (partnership other income) decreased by 25 per cent compared to 2012.

In total, 81 per cent of our operations in Myanmar were funded by institutional donors, 11 per cent by child sponsors, and 6 per cent by high value donors.

The significant increase in funding allowed us to nearly double our direct community support and recruit several new colleagues.

During 2013 we spent 75 per cent of our overall income directly on partner grants and community inputs; 17 percent on salaries and benefits; 4 per cent on office and service costs; and just 2 per cent on travel, thanks to a commitment to prioritise public transport whenever possible.



2013 income

- 11 % Child sponsorship
- 81 % Institutional donors
- 6 % Major private donors
- 2 % Other Income

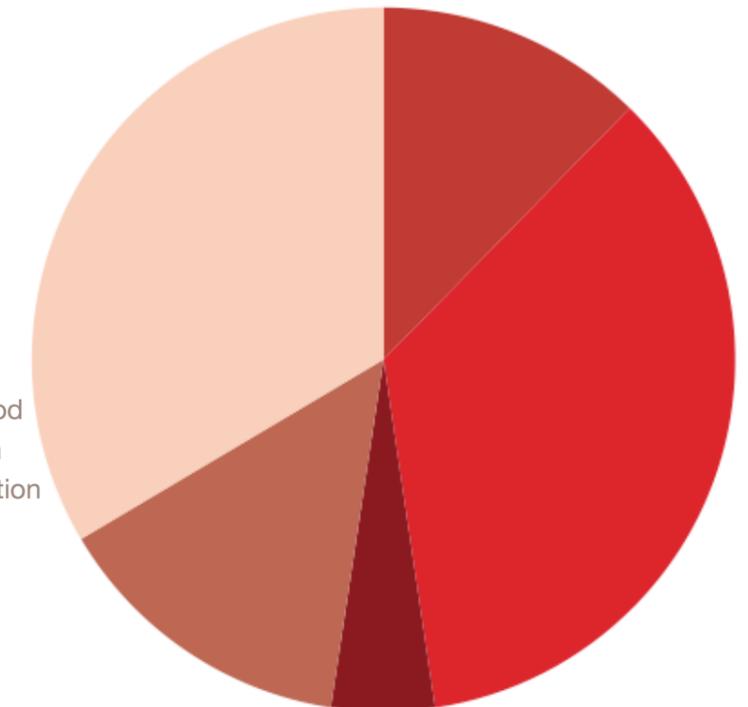


2013 expenditures

- 75 % Direct community support
- 17 % Salaries and benefits (staff)
- 2 % Travel and transportation
- 4 % Office and service costs
- 2 % Capital expenditures

Theme-based expenditures

- 12 % Women's Rights
- 35 % Sustainable Livelihood
- 5 % Youth and Education
- 14 % Disaster Risk Reduction
- 34 % Governance



Strategic collaboration

Apart from our direct partnerships we have engaged in a number of strategic collaborations with other like-minded organisations and networks: from hosting their secretariats in our country office to encouraging our Fellows to contribute to their field research. Below testimonies give brief highlights of such strategic collaboration in 2013.

SPPRG

The Social Policy & Poverty Research Group is a consortium of ActionAid, HelpAge, the Leprosy Mission, and the Myanmar Department of Social Welfare, aiming to build research capacity amongst government and non-government stakeholders to enable effective, evidence based policy for social protection, livelihoods and poverty reduction.

“Through the collaboration with

ActionAid, 50 village Fellows were trained to undertake community based research, and this research has been the bedrock of several major publications, including a policy paper on Child Orientated Social Protection at the UNICEF/SMERU conference in Jakarta in September 2013. Overall, SPPRG and ActionAid have collaborated in five major research projects, including education, governance, social protection, community based social protection systems and inclusive livelihoods.”

GEN

The Gender Equality Network is a growing inter-agency network that now comprises 105 national and international NGOs, CBOs, UN agencies, civil society networks and technical resource persons.

“Key highlights of 2013 was the provision of technical support for the development of the National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women (NSPAW) 2013-2022, and support for the development of an inclusive drafting process on a new anti-violence against women law. Throughout 2013, Action Aid Myanmar has played a pivotal role in GEN’s work and its successes. AAM’s

Advisor, Women’s Rights and Policy Research, co-chairs the Network. This is an influential, strategic and at times demanding leadership position that the AAM incumbent has carried out with skill, dedication and intelligence. In addition to this, many AAM staff, and in particular those from the Women’s Rights Programme, contribute actively to GEN-related events, workshops and meetings, and where applicable staff participate in GEN Working Groups formed to take forward emerging issues. AAM also provides GEN with generous office space, and administrative and financial support. The strategic, financial and practical support that AAM provides to GEN is valued highly by the Network and its members.”



BBC

BBC Media Action is BBC’s international development charity, using media to improve health and help people understand their rights.

“Building on the successful partnership between ActionAid Myanmar and BBC Media Action in 2012, this year we expanded our work through the establishment of 10 listener groups, which aim to strengthen the reach and impact of the governance messages broadcast on our radio show; provide a space for guided discussion, where listeners feel safe and supported to share thoughts and ideas about issues raised in the radio show; and create a network of citizen journalists to provide feedback and to ensure that the radio show is entertaining and engaging for its target listeners. In November all the listener group fellows were invited to one week of citizen journalism training jointly organized by ActionAid Myanmar’s

Global Platform and BBC Media Action. This training helped them learn to communicate and work with the media, including teaching them to write letters to the editor. BBC Media Action also partnered with ActionAid to conduct baseline research to inform a media and communications approach to supporting improved governance in Myanmar. The research focused on public experiences of governance and accountability in relation to public service delivery, as well as access to media and information. Partnering with ActionAid has significant value for BBC Media Action’s approach to research. As they are known and trusted in the communities in which they conduct the research, the Fellows are able to create a safe space where research participants are their ease and comfortable sharing experiences and opinions. The Activistas also contributed important insight on the findings and their experiences in the field, during an analysis workshop at BBC Media Action.”



act!onaid