



Addressing Humanitarian Needs and Building Community Resilience in Rakhine State

Myanmar Red Cross Society's programmes in Rakhine supported by IFRC



Photo courtesy of Myanmar Red Cross Society

Operational context

The outbreak of violence in communities in Rakhine requires integrated programme responses which meet immediate needs linked to displacement as well as building community resilience to the combined impacts of protracted crisis, high rates of poverty and exposure to natural hazards.

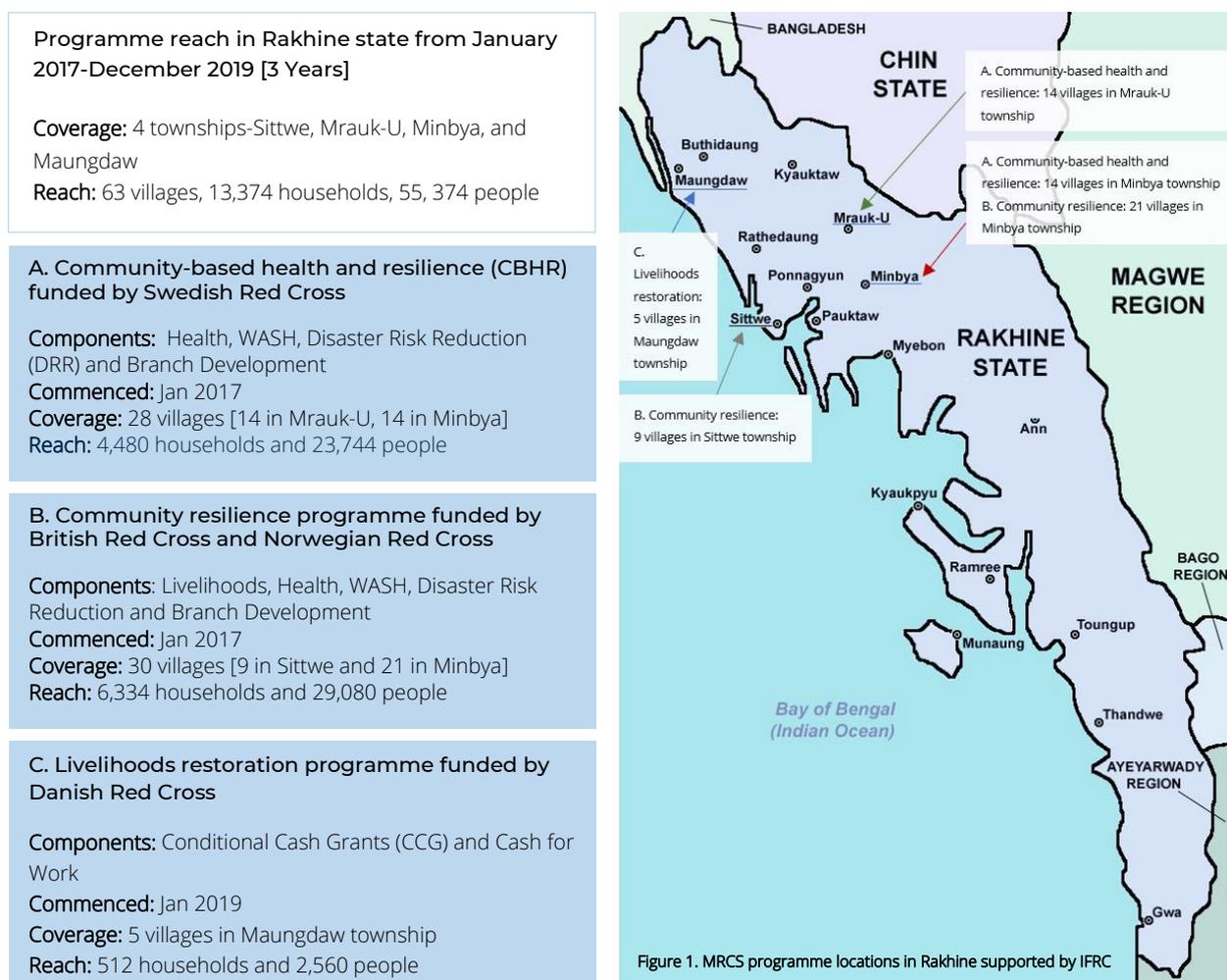
The humanitarian needs of affected communities are linked to recent and ongoing violence across central and northern areas of Rakhine state and includes the following affected populations:

- Since March 2012, an estimated 131,000 people, predominantly Muslim, reside in IDPs camps in central Rakhine.
- Since August 2017, more than 728,000 Muslims from northern Rakhine are displaced into Bangladesh, pending fulfillment of requirements for safe, dignified and voluntary return.
- Many households in northern Rakhine depend on food distribution with limited livelihoods or access to basic services.
- Since December 2018, people across northern and central Rakhine are temporarily displaced due to escalating violence between the Arakan Army and the Myanmar Military.

Communities across nine townships in Rakhine state remain vulnerable to the protracted crisis context with reduced access to regular programme support by external agencies due to access restrictions.

Programme overview

Myanmar Red Cross Society (MRCS) has been supporting communities in Rakhine since 2012 initially with Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in camp settings. Due to protracted crisis, multi-year programmes for village-based community resilience in central Rakhine commenced in 2015 with the support of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). Following the violence in August 2017, MRCS supported by IFRC began livelihoods restoration in northern Rakhine from 2019. As shown in figure 1, these activities are taking place in 4 townships in conjunction with humanitarian responses to displacements and natural disasters.



Programme delivery approaches

Goal: To build healthier and safer communities, reduce vulnerabilities and strengthen resilience

	Integrated sectors	Cash modalities	Social capital/Institutions
			
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community capacity for prevention First aid and health services access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conditional cash grants Referral funds support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skilled community volunteer committees Branch engagement Referral linkages
WASH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge & resources to access clean water and latrine utilization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cash for latrines Community cash grants-micro projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WASH sub-committee Community action plans & village books
Livelihood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthening & restoring of income generation and community assets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conditional cash grants Cash for work Revolving funds-women Cash for seeds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resilience committee Women's groups Community action plans Technical support
Disaster Risk Reduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disaster risk management awareness Response capacity and resources for mitigation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community cash grants-micro projects Village emergency funds Crisis modifier – cash grants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disaster risk reduction sub-committee Crisis modifier-unconditional cash grants



“Within a few weeks of planting, we started harvesting radish, tomatoes and chillies that provide good nutrition to us”

Ma Oo Sein,
Cash for Seed project beneficiary

Cash for seeds impact story - Ma Oo Sein, from Ngan Chaung village has nine members in her family household. The family's main occupation is farming, supplemented by small scale fishing and casual village based labour to support family income. Fishing is very inconsistent due to restrictions on movements and labour opportunities are very rare. “After recent violence, there have been more challenges to earn a livelihood as a farmer due to lack of capacity to invest and limited access to market to sell vegetables”, said Ma Oo Sein.

Ma Oo Sein received cash support of MMK 15,000, through the MRCS cash for seeds initiative and participated in village agriculture training sessions. Her family has been able to cultivate a vegetable plot of 0.5 acres with eggplant, tomato, radish, corn, chili, cauliflower, okra, bitter melon, cucumber and beans. “Within a few weeks of planting, we started harvesting radish, tomatoes and chillies that provide good nutrition to us”, explains Ma So Sein.

Ma Oo Sein, along with other beneficiaries, plans to sell vegetables from farms to village as well as to Maungdaw town market, supported by local traders for town market distribution. Ma Oo Sein and other community members are now able to gradually restore pre-crisis livelihoods activities, inclusive of winter crops farming, providing households with nutritional food, in addition to supporting income generation.

Programme achievements

A. Community-based health and resilience programme (CBHR)



Health: 28 villages have volunteer network for first aid, health promotion and referrals.

WASH: 28 villages with increased access to household water, handwashing, latrine coverage and utilization.

Disaster risk reduction: 28 villages with household and village level disaster preparedness.

Branch: 2 branches supported with volunteer recruitment and leadership.

B. Community resilience programme (CRP)



Livelihoods: 2,289 households received cash grants. 77 women's revolving funds provided.

Health/WASH: 2,006 households supported with latrine construction. 30 villages with strengthened water points.

Disaster risk management: Disaster management plans & mitigation, Infrastructure and township linkages.

Branch: 2 branches supported with volunteer recruitment and leadership.

C. Livelihoods restoration programme



Livelihoods: 512 households received conditional cash grants. 150 community volunteers receive technical training. 200 households received cash for seeds. 248 beneficiaries participate in cash for work. Community-based first aid training in communities.

Programme review and reflection

1. Case studies

In addition to annual review and reflection, MRCS, supported by IFRC, has generated a series of case studies to document programme approaches and achievements towards the collective goal of building community resilience. These have been shared with external actors through clusters and working groups.

Community cash grants May 2019	Diverse cash transfer June 2019	Improving livelihoods July 2019
Village resilience committees are provided with CCGs to implement small scale community projects that are beneficial to the whole community. Read more here	MRCS cash interventions benefit communities at different stages bridging the immediate gap between humanitarian and development needs. Read more here	To strengthen recovery among the food aid dependent population, MRCS with multi-lateral support from IFRC, designed a livelihoods-focused recovery project in Maungdaw. Read more here & watch related video here produced by MRCS in November 2019.
Cash for latrines August 2019	Women's group revolving fund September 2019	Building social capital October 2019
To increase levels of access to sanitation facilities, MRCS with technical support from IFRC introduced "Cash for latrines construction" as a pilot intervention. Read more here	MRCS has been promoting women's group revolving funds to improve access to credit among women and to further strengthen livelihoods in communities. Read more here	MRCS's approach to social capital recognizes inherent local potential within communities to cope, adapt and respond to changing contexts. Read more here

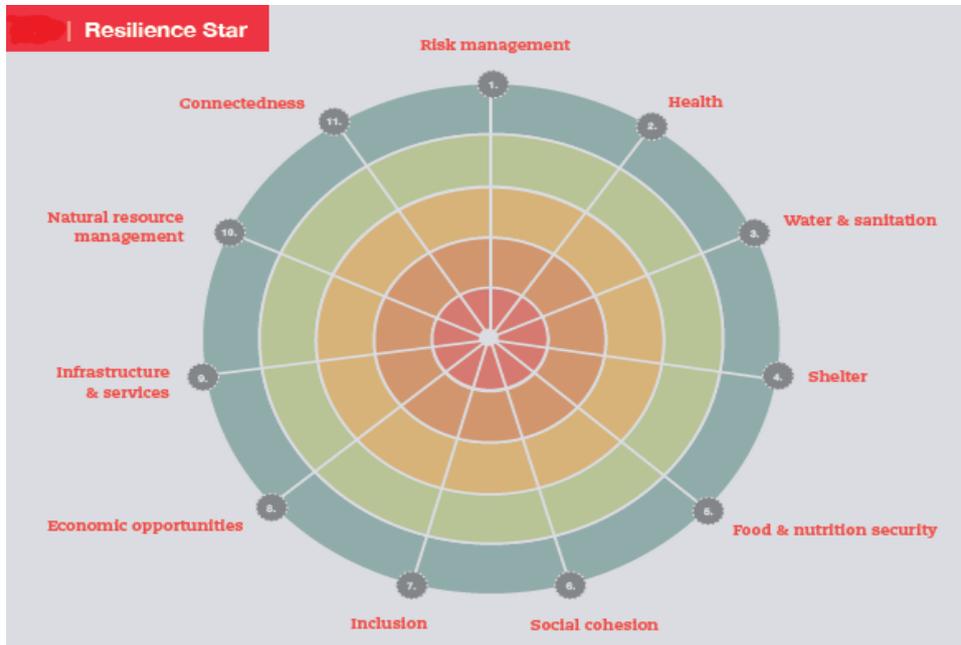
2. External studies

Rakhine reflection study October 2018	CBHR programme evaluation October 2019	Cash study November 2019
<i>Learning from IFRC's support to MRCS in the context of acute and protracted crisis.</i> Commissioned by MRCS, IFRC, and British Red Cross (BRC) Conducted by external study team through interviews and workshops with the red cross movement partners and external agencies including visit to Rakhine state. Application by MRCS, IFRC, BRC and other partners for reflection on principled, quality programming in fragile and violence affected contexts.	<i>Review of Programme outcomes on target villages: Phase 1 2017-2019 Participatory (workshop-based) review</i> Commissioned by MRCS, IFRC and Swedish Red Cross (SRC) Conducted by external team through structured workshop utilizing the resilience star (see programme measurement tools) to measure change across nine sample villages. Application by MRCS, IFRC and SRC to consolidate programme outcomes under Phase 1 of the programme and apply findings to new phase of programme delivery 2020-2022	<i>Participatory (field and workshop based) review of cash study approaches across MRCS/IFRC Rakhine programmes.</i> Commissioned by MRCS, IFRC and British Red Cross (BRC) Conducted by BRC's cash specialist/M&E advisory team through workshops and field-based consultations on cash delivery methods and generation of change stories from beneficiaries. Application by MRCS, IFRC and BRC to Phase 2 programme's delivery with refinement and scale-up of cash delivery modalities in protracted crisis context.

Programme measurement frameworks

Programme analysis and reflection have been guided by measurement criteria, informing progress towards sustainable outcomes for target communities. The two frameworks below have informed this analysis.

Measuring impact



Resilience star

Piloted as an evaluation tool in the recent community-based health and resilience programme evaluation. The resilience star aligns with the MRCS Resilience Strategy 2018-2030 and supports impact measurement from a community perspective across 11 domains of change representing community resilience.

Measuring sustainability



1. Village Institutions

- Well organized and functional community institutions
- Red Cross volunteers, WASH & disaster risk reduction committees



2. Access to credit for women

- Sustainable and improved access to credit for women
- Women's revolving fund



3-4 Red Cross branch engagement

- Red Cross branches continue engagement and follow-up
- Community Red Cross volunteers continue voluntary actions to address community needs



5. Township disaster management linkages

- Established linkages with township disaster management committees for early warning systems (EWS)



6. Gov't line dept linkages

- Established linkages by community with Government's line departments and stakeholders for Community Action Plan (CAP) delivery



7. Village emergency Fund

- Established mechanism at community level for village emergency funds management

Sustainability pillars

These seven pillars were developed through the Community Resilience Programme (CRP).

The pillars align closely to social capital and institution building at the village and township level.



National Society Development

MRCS, with support from IFRC, is continuously engaged in strengthening capacities of the Rakhine state branch and Red Cross township branches, while supporting its staff to plan, design and deliver principled humanitarian interventions in Rakhine state. Preparedness for natural disasters is a priority for all 17 townships in Rakhine state and strengthened capacity to support violence-affected and displaced communities is required for most Rakhine township branches.

Programme capacity

MRCS actively engages with its branches and supports staff development through its programme delivery in targeted townships, strengthening institutional capacities in the following areas:

Community volunteer networks: Sustained networks of community-level volunteers and well-established relationships and trust with communities for long-term programming.

Organisational positioning: Enhanced recognition as a principled humanitarian actor at the township and state level, as well as with other humanitarian stakeholders through inter-agency coordination.

Context-sensitive programming: Capability to communicate and negotiate with actors for access to communities for programming and to undertake assessments to identify humanitarian needs and design programmes in the context of protracted crisis.

Infrastructure and logistics

IFRC has supported MRCS to renovate and expand its state branch office, as well as reconstructed and upgraded MRCS branches in Sittwe, Buthidaung and Minbya townships. In addition, MRCS hub-office facilities in Sittwe township have been expanded. These investments have enhanced MRCS's logistics and operational capacity.

Response-operational capacity

Warehouse and Logistics support: Logistics and warehouse management training provided to Rakhine branches has strengthened the capacities of the branch.

Monsoon Preparedness: A contingency planning workshop supported MRCS's key departments alongside Rakhine state and township branch leaders to enhance overall coordination for monsoon preparedness and response.

Volunteer and staff development

Joint MRCS & IFRC training has invested in building staff and branch capacity to reach affected communities in Rakhine state in line with MRCS standards and humanitarian principles.

HR Support: Volunteer recruitment and retention with a focus on diversification, principles orientation and code of conduct.

Financial management: Strengthening systems for financial management, procurement and fraud & corruption prevention.

Security Systems: Provision of "Stay Safe" and "Safer Access Training," as well as supporting security risk analysis & assessment for Rakhine branch and staff leadership.

MRCS & IFRC operational and programmatic support in Rakhine

MRCS Rakhine Operations Management Unit

The Rakhine Operations Management Unit (ROMU) is comprised of 179 staff, led by the Director of Rakhine operations based in Yangon and incorporating programme and operational staff in Maungdaw and Sittwe hub-offices. The Sittwe hub-office includes warehouse and logistics capacity to support state-wide emergency responses and coordinates Rakhine State Government (RSG) representation.

MRCS CBHR-HiE Programme Team

Led by the MRCS Health Department in Yangon, the Mrauk-U field team of 26 staff supports the Community Based Health and Resilience Programme – Health in Emergencies (CBHR-HiE) programme team in Minbya and Mrauk-U townships in close coordination with the Rakhine Operations Management Unit.

MRCS state and township branches

Led by the State Chairman, the MRCS Rakhine State Branch coordinates 17 township branches. Branch leadership and Red Cross volunteers provide ongoing programme assistance and humanitarian response to communities across Rakhine State to all communities affected by both violence and natural disasters.

IFRC Rakhine sub-office

The IFRC Rakhine sub-office provides technical assistance and programme support for joint programmes in central and northern areas of Rakhine. The Sittwe based team comprises a head of sub-office, a livelihoods delegate and a programme support coordinator. In Maungdaw, a programme support coordinator, based in the MRCS hub-office supports MRCS programme engagement in the Northern areas of Rakhine.

Programme coordination

MRCS hub-office management teams, state and township branch leadership and the IFRC head of sub-office together with ICRC, participate in the Red Cross Movement coordination meetings in Rakhine. MRCS and IFRC coordinate with other actors through Rakhine coordination group meetings and sector clusters.

Key contacts

MRCS Rakhine Operations Management Unit

Daw Aye Aye Nyein

Director

Email: ayeayenyein@redcross.org.mm

Sithu Toe Nyunt

Manager

Sittwe hub-office

Email: sithutoenyunt@redcross.org.mm

Tin Lin Htike

Manager

Maungdaw hub-office

Email: tinlinhtike@redcross.org.mm

IFRC Rakhine sub-office, Sittwe

Kate Bunbury

Head of sub-office, Rakhine

Email: katherine.bunbury@ifrc.org

Gurudatta Shirodkar

Livelihoods delegate, Rakhine

Email: gurudatta.shirodkar@ifrc.org