

## A.16 Myanmar – 2012 – Conflict

### Case study

**Keywords:** Emergency shelter; Site planning; Infrastructure.

**Emergency:** Inter-communal violence in Rakhine State, Myanmar.

**Date:** Early June 2012 and October 2012.

**Damage:** 8,600 (plus 1,500 public buildings).

**People affected:** 140,000 displaced.

**Project location:** Rakhine State.

**Beneficiaries:** 140,000 people.

**Outputs:** 2,843 temporary 8-unit shelters.

**Occupancy rate:** 99%.

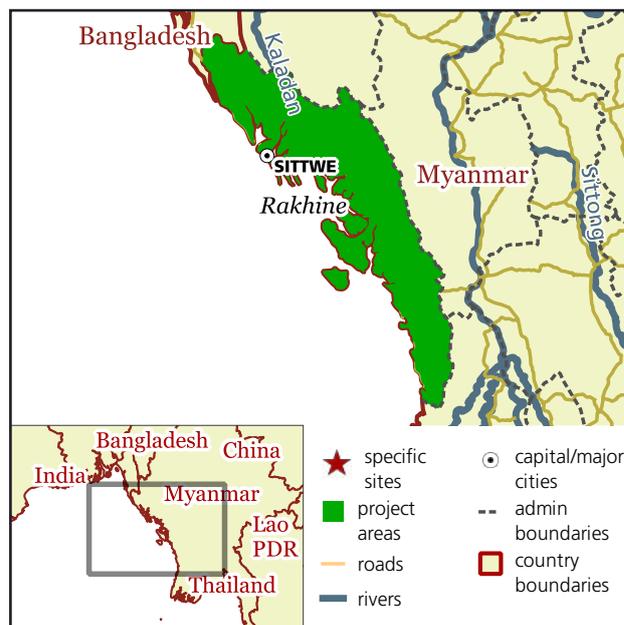
**Shelter size:** 8-unit building: 45 ft x 30 ft [13.7m x 9.1m = 124.7 m<sup>2</sup>].  
One room: 11.25 ft x 15 ft [3.4m x 4.6m = 15.6m<sup>2</sup>].

**Cost per 8-unit shelter:** Labour and materials: US\$ 4,800 (US\$ 600 per room). Project administration costs: US\$ 700 (US\$ 88 per room).

### Project description:

The project provided temporary shelter to IDPs displaced by conflict until a durable solution could be reached. Shelter was provided in the form of collective shelters, each housing eight families (8-unit buildings) with associated IDP camp infrastructure.

The shelters were constructed by both the main organisation (also the Cluster Lead), its partners in the Shelter Cluster, and the government. Beyond providing temporary shelter, the Shelter Cluster continues to advocate strongly for government provision of durable housing options.



### Emergency timeline:

- [a] June 2012: first wave of violence and displacement.
- [b] October 2012: second wave of violence.

### Project timeline (number of months):

- [1-7] June 2012: First phase of construction - 525 shelters (30,000 IDPs).
- [3] First shelters handed over and inhabited.
- [8-11] Shelter Cluster established. Second phase of construction – 262 shelters (15,000 IDPs)
- [12-18] Third phase of construction by multiple agencies and government – 2,056 shelters (95,000 IDPs).
- [18] Project end.



### Strengths (✓), weaknesses (✗) and notes (-)

- ✓ Following strong advocacy from humanitarian actors and donors, the Rakhine State Government (RSG) participated in a huge scaling-up of activity prior to the rainy season, funding and constructing 45% of the multi-family shelters.
- ✓ The Government was willing to adapt, and sought to respect *Sphere* minimum standards.
- ✓ The main organisation's coordination with the three key government departments resulted in collaborative site-planning, shortening the approval processes for the construction of IDP camps.
- ✓ The project aimed to reduce tensions by supporting both groups equitably and successfully engaging Buddhist contractors to build shelters for Muslims.
- ✓ Shelters used locally available materials.

### Weaknesses

- ✗ During the scaling-up of the project in May-September 2013, bamboo was not in season and the project was forced to use lower-quality materials.
- ✗ It took some time for the RSG to trust and become familiar with the Shelter Cluster system.
- ✗ Coordination with the WASH sector was not ideal; with WASH infrastructure set-up after IDPs had occupied shelters.

### Observations

- Initially the RSG was reluctant to approve land for IDP camp use and for the first six months before the Cluster was activated, only 20% of the target temporary shelter needs were met. There were also many disputes over government compensation of landowners and in a minority of cases the construction of camp infrastructure had to be cancelled.



### Situation before the violence

Rakhine State is the least developed state in Myanmar, characterised by high population density, high malnutrition rates, low income levels, poverty, and weak infrastructure. Conditions are worsened by two cyclone seasons, with associated flash flooding and landslides during the rainy season. There are two main ethnic groups in conflict with each other in Rakhine State. The first are the Rakhine, who are Buddhist. The second call themselves "Rohingya", and are Muslim.

### Situation after the violence

Inter-community violence in parts of Rakhine State commenced in early June 2012 and flared once more in October 2012, resulting in the deaths of 167 people and injuries to 223 people. 10,100 buildings, including homes, churches and public buildings were damaged or destroyed and 140,000 people were displaced (95 per cent Muslim; 5 per cent Rakhine). There were two distinct IDP caseloads: those displaced from urban areas and those from rural areas. The IDP camps in rural Sittwe were home to 88,500 Muslim IDPs (63% of all IDPs) who fled urban areas in Sittwe where they had worked mostly as traders or as porters in Sittwe port, living in slum-like conditions.

IDPs originating from rural areas were generally displaced only a small

distance from their original villages, where the quality of shelter was sub-standard. As part of the initial emergency response, the RSG distributed tents in rural Sittwe but the stock, residual from the 2010 Cyclone Giri response, was quickly exhausted. The main organisation distributed tarpaulins, rope and approximately 5,500 tents following the second wave of displacement.

### Shelter strategy

Within a month of the first wave of the conflict in June 2012, the Union Ministry for Border Affairs published a shelter response plan targeting 7,110 households displaced from areas within urban Sittwe. The shelter response plan mirrored the emergency shelter response implemented previously in Kachin State by constructing communal shelters (30ft x 45ft), each with 10 family units. While this plan was being developed, the RSG constructed 235 temporary 10-unit shelters (37 for Rakhine IDPs and 198 for Muslims). The main organisation planned to build 300 shelters, but as construction started the RSG halted its own efforts and called on the international community for shelter assistance.

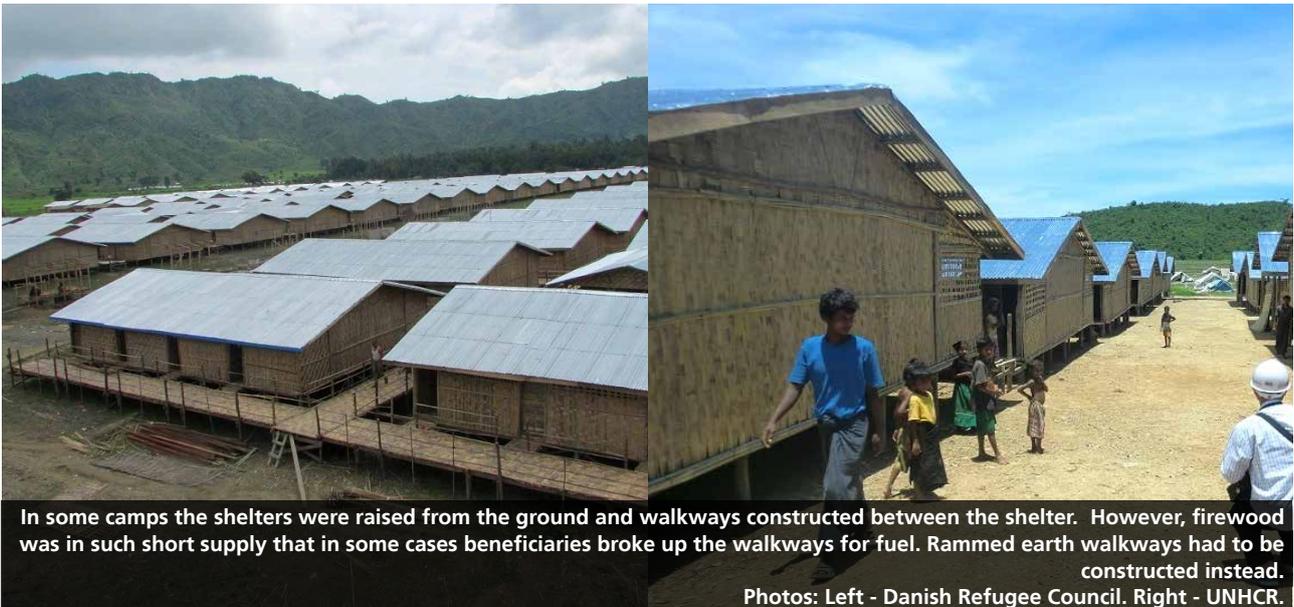
By the end of 2012, 525 temporary shelters, covering the needs of approximately 29,000 IDPs, had been constructed. In the first few months of 2013, it became clear that immediate return to place of origin was not possible on security grounds.

With the oncoming rainy season, and an average rainfall of three to four metres in as many months, providing improved temporary shelter to the remaining case load of tens of thousands of IDPs became urgent. The situation was chronic.

During this second phase of construction, the main organisation and its partners managed to construct just 262 additional shelters, well below the pace needed to provide temporary shelter to meet the needs of all 140,000 IDPs scattered across ten townships in Rakhine State, before the rainy season arrived.

In April 2013, the main organisation, which also led the Shelter Cluster, joined a high-level delegation to Rakhine State in April 2013, which included the ambassadors of several donor countries and national ministers. The delegation was critical in clarifying the maximum capacity of the international community and persuading the RSG to contribute to the shelter response.

Following the delegation, the decision was taken to scale-up shelter construction on a massive scale and to ensure that adequate shelter was provided for all displaced groups. The RSG achieved an extremely rapid construction pace and by November 2013, temporary shelter had been constructed for 99% of all eligible IDPs across all affected townships of Rakhine State. Of the 2,843 temporary shelters, 45% were constructed by the RSG, and 30% by



the main organisation and its implementing partner. The remaining 25% were constructed by the other eight Cluster members.

One potential donor was initially critical of the strategy of segregating the two communities, believing this would lead to a permanent divide, despite its life-saving necessity.

Noting the extreme dilemma faced on whether to build temporary shelters or not, all key discussions, decisions and by whom were systematically recorded and remain publicly available via the Cluster's website to ensure accountability and transparency.

### Project implementation

Shelters were constructed by hiring local building contractors that had been approved by the RSG. Contractors hired IDP labour (skilled and unskilled) where possible, to ensure cash injections into the fragile micro-economies evolving in the IDP camps. Workers were paid at the standard government rates. Site planning was conducted by the main organisation in collaboration with three government departments.

In the first two phases of the response, the availability of suitable land was a major restriction to progress, with many sites rejected for security reasons. Following the April 2013 delegation, land was made available with a compensation package organised for landowners.

Although the vast majority of beneficiaries were rehoused in the communal shelters by November 2013, some smaller groups refused to take up occupancy, remaining in their makeshift shelters. This was particularly true for the Kaman Muslims living in rural areas of Sittwe. Analysis suggests they used the issue to distinguish themselves from the Rohingya Muslims.

As well as the communal shelters, camp infrastructure was also built. Maintenance and repair programmes were then implemented, primarily through partners in the CCCM Cluster, a Cluster also led by the main organisation. This ensured a community-driven approach. The provision of toolkits to beneficiary families, however, was rejected by the RSG who feared that they would be used as weapons.

### Beneficiary selection

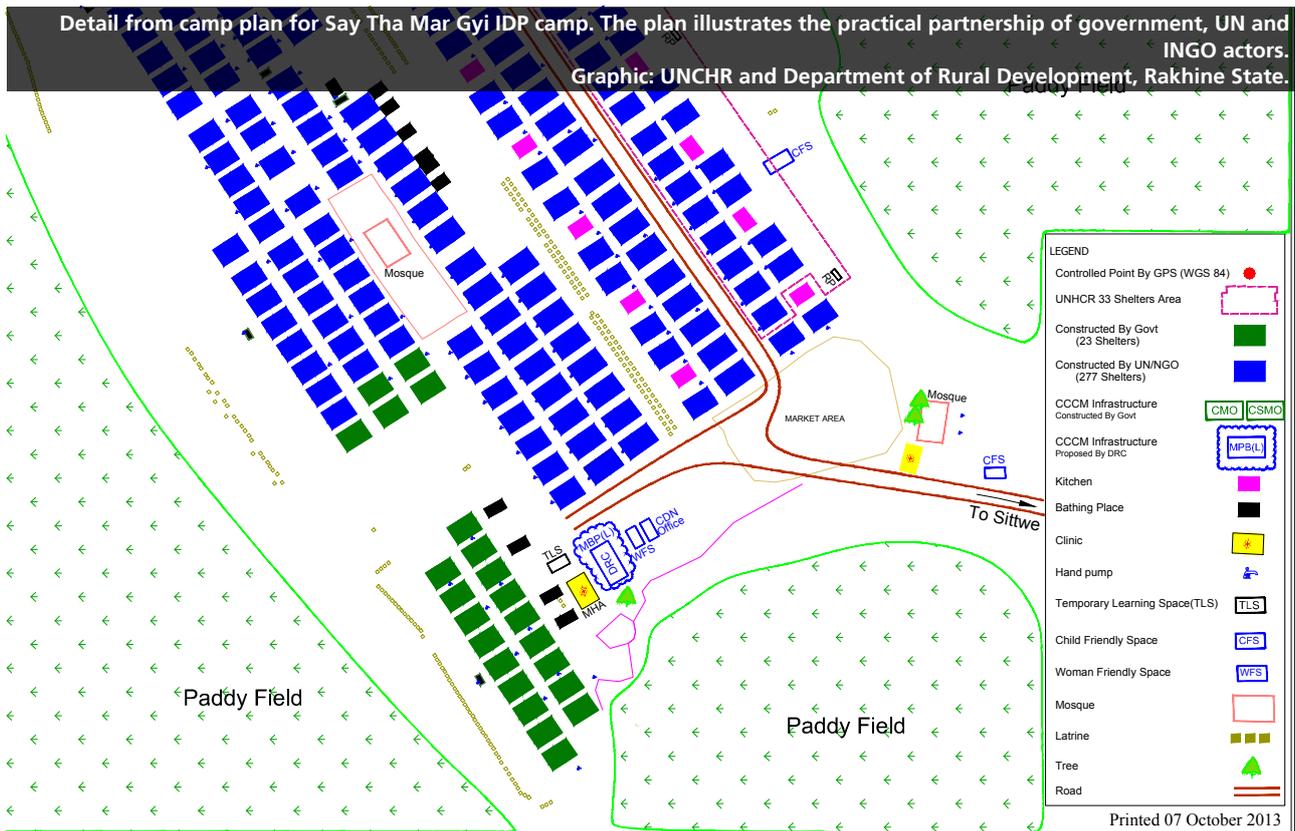
In the 2013 Shelter Cluster strategy, commitments were made to provide temporary shelter to all eligible IDPs. However, eligibility was strictly controlled by the RSG which has never produced clear criteria for entitlement, and during construction only the General Administration Department (GAD) knew which group of IDPs would move in, making planning very difficult.

### Coordination

The Shelter and WASH Clusters were supported by an RSG State Minister and the main organisation, in its role as Shelter and CCCM Cluster leads, was able to develop strong personal and professional relationships with the key partners: the Department for Rural Development (DRD), the General Administration Department (GAD) and the Land Records Department (LRD). Joint site-planning activities created an opportunity to improve on the previously poor level of coordination between government departments and international organisations. A technical working group also provided the opportunity for all partners to contribute to the development of minimum standards.

### Design

The initial design used by the RSG was based on shelters used in an emergency response in Kachin state. These shelters were 30ft x 45ft, providing 10 family units at around 12.5 m<sup>2</sup> per unit. As the average family was around 6 people the living space was only around 2m<sup>2</sup> per person. The main organisation advocated for the shelters to meet the *Sphere Project* indicator of 3.5m<sup>2</sup> per person, by reducing the number of families in a shelter from ten to six. In the end, a compromise of eight families per shelter was reached. It was imperative that the shelters



were temporary in design and all structures, with the exception of the roof sheets, were built with local and degradable materials.

**Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)**

The technical design drawings, estimates and specifications of the temporary shelter were shared with headquarters for clearance of its DRR components. Wooden bracings and twisted steel plates were added to the roof framing to resist high winds. Walls and floors were also reinforced with proper wooden bracings or joists. In camps located in paddy fields or low lying areas, the floor elevation of the shelters was increased by 1ft (from 2ft to 3ft) so as to mitigate against the risk of flooding.

**Materials**

The materials were mainly sourced within Rakhine State. As the best weavers of bamboo matting were to be found in the IDP population, much of the walling and floors were prefabricated in rural areas of Sittwe, and then delivered to the remote townships. The responsibility for sourcing of materials was outsourced

to the contractors, but some did not follow state guidelines for the use of legal timber. This caused conflicts, though as the responsibility for procurement was out of the main organisation’s hands, this issue remained between the RSG and the contractors themselves.

**Wider project impacts**

The constructive relationship with the RSG is considered to be a major and significant success of the project. Without the government’s input, almost half of all IDP shelter needs would not have been met before the rains arrived.

From the beneficiaries’ point of view, the temporary shelter design does not take into account the cultural need for women to bathe and cook within their shelters. This, together with congested conditions, has meant there is less sense of ownership of the structures and many have rapidly deteriorated. However, given the sensitive political situation, it was imperative that the shelters were designed to be and remain temporary, and that durable solutions are to be found in the future.

**Bill of Quantities for one 8-unit shelter**

Item	Quantity
Myaw posts (4" dia.- 6" dia.)	35 pcs
Myaw posts (2" dia.- 4" dia.)	215 pcs
Timber scant (local hardwood)	1.74 tons
7' 32G CGI sheets (roof cover)	162 sheets
GI plain sheet (2' wide) for ridging	56ft
Wire nails	30 kg
Bamboo (seasoned/dry)	2,345 pcs
Dahnee/nipa	820 pcs
Roofing nails (umbrella nail)	12 kg
Nylon rope	15 coils
Plastic rope	5 coils
Twisted steel plate (min. 1/16" thick x 1" x 6") with screws	15 pcs