

People  
Change  
the World

# Diakonia

## Myanmar Gender and Resilience Project



### The Project at a glance

The Gender and Resilience Project (GARP) was created as a response to Diakonia's ambition to strengthen its work on disaster risk reduction and to bridge the humanitarian and development work. The vision of the project was to contribute to gender equality and resilient communities through disaster risk reduction innovation projects. Six countries were involved and together they identified and developed gender sensitive tools and methodologies to analyse risks and plan for how to overcome them.

Myanmar was one of these countries that developed an innovative project working with Gender sensitive and Climate smart agricultural practices with the possibility to replicate across the region. Experiences and practices were shared between the countries and common lessons could be drawn.

Myanmar is one of the most disaster affected countries in Southeast Asia and ranks 17 on the INFORM risk index, this is visible in the frequency of extreme weathers such as flooding, droughts, and storms.

Deforestation, soil erosion, wildfires, biodiversity loss, degradation of mangrove forests, pollution of air, water and soil are the most important issues which are disproportionately effecting people dependent on agriculture and living in poverty.

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## Climate Smart Agriculture

The GARP Project in Myanmar aimed at increasing awareness of disaster risks and its gendered dimensions among men and women, teachers, students and parents and build their capacity to address them. This was done by modeling how to adapt and mitigate the consequences of climate change through the practice of climate smart agriculture and livelihoods. Vulnerable women, men and children were also provided the necessary training and support to initiate and scale up

community based disaster risk management. This included the formation and support of village Disaster Management Committees (DMC) with local Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) plans. These plans included for example DRR drills in schools, swimming classes, first aid training, planting trees, connecting with township DMC and communicate with irrigation department for early warning system.



## Villagers understanding risks

Diakonia partner KBC used the Gender Crunch Model, to analyze the situation together with the villagers. It helped them to understand and analyze risks, its gendered dimensions, systems, and structures that either build capacity or vulnerabilities and their root causes that limit men and women to prevent, adapt or mitigate risks.

Based on the results of the analysis three villages were selected, and they decided to try climate smart agriculture initiatives, form disaster management committees and train teachers, parents, and students in school-based disaster risk reduction.

## Women taking the lead

In all three villages knowledge on disaster risks improved and disaster management committees were formed with women and men sharing the roles and responsibilities. Risk of yearly flash floods were identified but as linkages with the Irrigation departments were created an early warning system could be set up. All villages got access to climate resilient paddy seeds from the agriculture department, they also measured soil quality and supported with appropriate agriculture techniques.

School children identified their risks and where they could find safe places. Farmers started growing climate resilient seeds and learnt how to make organic fertilizer and pesticides to maintain environmental sustainability. This also helped them to avoid debt as they did not have to buy expensive fertilizers. Women became the leaders in making compost and communicate with local authorities and government departments. Women also took the lead in teaching others their new skills.

## Lessons learnt

At the start of the project, it was a challenge to get the women to participate. The project staff visited every household to encourage the women to join the project. Due to the persistence and empowerment of the women they became leaders in the different activities.

As a result of the project methodology of practicing transparency and participation, the trainings and meetings were held in monasteries and schools which led to improved peace and social cohesion in the community.

The platform that was created between the community, the government department and the local authorities led to a better communication between duty bearers and right holders, greater sensitivity for the needs and risks faced by the community, and an improved access to government services, which was not happening in the past.





## Resilient farming for food security

Diakonia and partners contributed to risk reduction practices at the local level, improved resilience through transformed gender views, empowerment, and linkages with authorities. This was done through making sure women and men are prepared for and can mitigate risks by understanding risk and its gendered dimensions. To influence decision makers and policies, at national, regional, and global levels, networking for joint advocacy initiatives are essential.



Naw Zar Lo, who participated in the GARP project in Tha Baw Kone village

“We never grow vegetables in the rainy season as it was flooded every year for many weeks. By growing on floating rafts or raised gardens, we do not need to think about the water level in flooding time. We have enough vegetables such as lady fingers, roselles, and watercresses for our own family” said a farmer from the Climate Smart Initiative Project.

My village Tha Baw Kone was always flooded for 2 months every year and we could not grow any rice or vegetables during that time. As people do not have work or income it meant no food on the table. I participated in the training on how to identify risks, build and grow in a floating garden or in a raised garden. I also learnt how to use organic fertilizers and natural insecticides, as that is much better for the climate.

The garden has improved my income, as well as the nutrition and health of my family . The project has really changed my mindset on what I as a woman can do. I can learn and use new farming techniques; I can build a floating garden and I can be the main communicator between the community and the local government department.