



IOM International Organization for Migration



Australian Government
Department of Immigration
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Photo: Darun Jansawartd/IOM

LIVELIHOODS AND COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS PROJECT LESSONS-LEARNED REPORT

Project Title: Livelihoods and Community Solutions (LCS)

Executing Agency: International Organization for Migration (IOM) Thailand

Overall objectives

The overall objectives of this project are two-fold: firstly, to promote livelihood opportunities and the socio-economic self-reliance of vulnerable Rohingya, Myanmar Muslims and disadvantaged Thais in communities in Tak province; and secondly, to strengthen and facilitate the relationships, understanding and cooperation between vulnerable Myanmar Muslims minorities, Thai communities, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), and other relevant stakeholders. In this respect the project will relate to livelihoods, education and community development.

Final beneficiaries

Marginalised Myanmar Muslim minorities and vulnerable Thais, their communities and leaders, neighbouring Thai communities, Tak Community College (TCC), NGOs and CBOs.

Reporting period

Year Two from January 2014 – December 2014

Project Description and Key Lessons-Learned

Brief description of context

In Mae Sot, Tak Province, a number of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) are providing services to uprooted persons from Myanmar. These services range from community schools, clinics, and legal counselling. However, due to linguistic, religious, and cultural differences coupled with a history of discrimination, minority groups are often unable to effectively reach services. Accordingly, special efforts are required to address the vulnerabilities of these minority groups, especially those of children, women and youth. This situation is further complicated by the on-going violence and instability in Myanmar, particularly against minority groups.

In order to address the challenges faced by minority groups in Mae Sot, IOM Thailand implemented in 2010 the project titled: “Reducing the Vulnerabilities of Myanmar Muslims through Community Outreach and Increasing their Access to Social and Health Services”. Now in its fourth phase, the project aims to alleviate the acute vulnerabilities of displaced Myanmar Muslims in the provinces of Tak and Ranong. The project aims to improve: 1) the environmental health of communities; 2) access to health information and services 3) integration of Myanmar Muslim migrants’ community-based initiatives within local governmental structures, and; 4) migrants’ skills, work experiences and economic opportunities. In the long term, the project will create synergies among local stakeholders including government agencies, NGOs, CBOs, Thai-Muslim leaders, Myanmar-Muslim leaders, Myanmar-Muslim volunteers and Thai community volunteers – to ensure long-term protection of the Myanmar Muslim population.

“Livelihoods and Community Solutions” (LCS) is a new IOM action that will complement and expand the work that began under the 2010 project, with a focus on the development of livelihoods, community and education for minority groups in Mae Sot, and in particular, for youth, women and children.

Brief description of project

The aim of “Livelihoods and Community Solutions” (LCS) is to complement and expand the work under the “Reducing the Vulnerabilities of Myanmar Muslims through Community Outreach and Increasing their Access to Social and Health Services” project, with a

focus on the development of livelihoods, community and education for minority groups in Mae Sot, and in particular, for youth, women and children. This project aims to promote livelihood opportunities and the socio-economic self-reliance of marginalised Myanmar Muslim minority groups and vulnerable Thais in six communities in Mae Sot District, Tak province. The project strengthens and facilitates relationships, mutual understanding and cooperation between marginalised Myanmar Muslim minority groups, vulnerable Thais, neighbouring Thai communities, NGOs, CBOs and Royal Thai Government authorities. The major outputs and results of the LCS Project are as follows:

1. A Project Steering Committee is established;
2. Multilingual (English, Thai, Burmese) promotional materials are developed and disseminated at various events and workshops to raise awareness of the project activities and the issues facing Myanmar Muslim minorities and vulnerable Thais;
3. The Project launch is held with 40 participants, including a Delegation from the European Union, IOM staff in Thailand and Mae Sot, community leaders, Community Extension Workers (CEWs), as well as NGO, CBO, and RTG representatives and relevant UN agencies;
4. Marginalized Myanmar Muslims and vulnerable Thai youth (aged 15 – 25) receive vocational training in leadership, management and humanitarian aid skills;
5. Marginalized Myanmar Muslim women receive vocational training in relevant income generating activities, for example sewing, as well as basic mathematics and accounting;
6. Multilingual (English, Thai, Burmese) information materials are produced promoting the importance of education for children;
7. Myanmar Muslim minorities and other marginalized Myanmar Muslim households are informed of the importance of children’s education through information materials and household visits by Community Extension Workers (CEWs) and vocational training Youth Alumni;
8. A "Household Support Fund" (HSF) is established. This Fund supports marginalized Myanmar Muslim and vulnerable Thai families to provide education for their children;
9. A Local Community Youth Council (LCYC) is established;

10. Two LCYC meetings are facilitated during this reporting period, focusing on organising joint recreational activities;
11. Material support is provided for community events/activities;
12. An end-of-year workshop is held on lessons learned and challenges ahead, and a 'lessons learned' report is produced and distributed at the end of year one.

Project's objective and outcomes

The overall objectives of the project are two-fold:

1. To promote livelihood opportunities and the socio-economic self-reliance of minority groups and disadvantaged Thais in communities in Tak province, and;
2. To strengthen and facilitate the relationships, understanding and cooperation between minority groups, Thai communities, NGOs, CBOs, and other relevant stakeholders. In these regards the action will focus on livelihoods, education and community development.

Outcomes

1. Youth belonging to minority groups, as well as vulnerable Thai youth (ages 15 – 25) empowered to prepare themselves for potential employment opportunities in the NGO/CBO/humanitarian aid sector, either in Thailand or in Myanmar if return becomes viable.
2. Income-generating skills and the self-reliance of vulnerable women in minority groups communities developed, including the provision of financial support in the form of initial capital.
3. Educational opportunities for children (ages 7–15) in minority group households expanded, by promoting the importance of education and contributing to relieving the associated financial burden.
4. Community development, participation and integration supported through the establishment of a joint minority group and a Thai Local Community Youth Council (LCYC), and the facilitation of their meetings and activities.
5. Awareness on project activities and the issues faced by minority groups and vulnerable Thais has been raised among beneficiaries and relevant stakeholders, in particular neighbouring Thai communities, NGOs, CBOs and RTG authorities,

Project Implementation and Key project successes

In the field, the project was implemented by the project officer under the supervision of the project manager, with administrative staff also supporting the project: "Reducing the Vulnerabilities of Myanmar Muslims through Community Outreach and Increasing their Access to Social and Health Services" (January 2010 to February 2015). The CEWs are working for both projects, and the Community Resource Centre (CRC) is a common focal point in the community. Thereby, there are a number of shared resources and some activities are jointly implemented. However, the LCS has an independent structure, with the project steering committee (PSC) meeting quarterly. The PSC members come from various agencies, both government and private, and include community organizations. The committee members are mostly professionals with the skills to guide and monitor the project and contribute to ensuring the smooth running of implementation. They represent a large section of the community and can share information, knowledge and build understanding and capacity. In this way the committee and individuals are a catalyst for exchanging information between government agencies, community organizations, civil society and the community, to create a better understanding and promote support for the project.

During year two of the project, from January 2014 to December 2014, there were four vocational training programmes for youth. The first three comprised of a basic community development worker course for 11 days; Thai language course of 60 hours; and leadership skills for 4 days. Those who successfully completed the training were given IOM certificates. The fourth training was a carefully crafted community development worker course of 85 hours. This course was developed over some time and approved by an internal committee, and then by a college committee comprised of representatives from the community, not directly associated with the college. Thus, on completion the project participants received a special certificate from the Tak Community College. The accredited course can now be duplicated anywhere in Thailand and is accessible to the public. A total of 80 participants attended the four abovementioned courses.

60 women participated in vocational training for local women, over the course of four training sessions in 2014. These include:

- 2-day course for 25 people, on beverages (hot and cold drinks)
- 3-day course for 15 people on bakery
- 2-day course for 17 people on sewing repairs
- 5-day course for 20 people on sewing hijab and making PVC rope knitted bags

Within the framework of the project, by 2014, IOM had provided six sewing machines (2 sets) including three different types, used to perform basic to more advanced techniques; ovens have also been provided, as well as a cart for beverages and bakery. The main mosque has its own funding mechanism, which is able to provide loans to local women, and can support these women and their equipment after the project finishes.

The Household Support Fund was the main catalyst for expanding the educational opportunities of children aged 7–15 years old. Along with campaigns, the HSF also promotes the importance of education within households and communities. Campaigns have been undertaken to raise awareness on the importance of education convening at public spaces and visiting communities to distribute educational posters, leaflets and screen a purpose-made video. Two campaigns have been conducted outside Islam Bamrung, namely at the Garbage Dump and Khok Wua communities. While the economic situation of these Muslim communities is stable, with income from agriculture for the former, and cattle raising for the latter, getting children to attend school is problematic. As such, IOM and partners organised three campaigns in 2014 reaching 700 families from seven communities.

The LCYC comprises six youth groups with IOM youth group as a key organizer. Each of the youth groups have their own strengths and types of projects they work on. They come together, usually on a monthly basis. During this meeting, one group will take the lead in developing an activity to promote social issues, leadership skills, and devise creative methods to reach out to the community.



LCYC youth members at the garbage dump to raise awareness on education for people who live near the dump and give information for them to send the children to get an education.

Photo: Chidchanok Khobluang/IOM

Key Achievements

Vocational training for youth

The great majority of youth participants built up skills and knowledge that can make them more employable in the future, in Thailand or if they return to Myanmar. They have valuable expertise in community development and have built networks with other youth from different backgrounds and ethnic groups. The importance of exchanges with other youth, trainers, CEWs, project staff and others cannot be stressed enough. Most of them come away from training feeling more informed and empowered to contribute to society.

Women's vocational training



Twenty Myanmar Muslim women were trained in basic sewing provided by IOM in April, 2015.

Photo: Nonglak Kaeophokha/IOM

The CRC was somewhere for women to go to, not only to develop skills and open small businesses as many have, but also to meet and form a women's group that meets regularly and can serve as a support structure. For some women this was the first time they were able to make a contribution to their family economy and participate in the community. This activity has indirectly promoted the motivation women needed to be more involved in their community. It has been noted that there is also great potential for reducing crime overtime, as households become more financially secure, and more families may seek education for their children, making for a more stable and emotionally secure family life. Women have set-up businesses from the above mentioned training courses. The head of the women's group is proficient in using all three sewing machines, thereby producing sophisticated products with the most advanced machine. In addition, other women have graduated from a very basic knowledge of sewing to mastering two machines. Products are sold locally in regular outlets and in markets.

Household Support Fund (HSF)



The children enjoyed playing with the mascot during the education campaign in Muslim communities

Photo: Kanda Phoprasobchok/IOM

Fifty Muslim children from Myanmar are now enrolled in on-going education at two private schools. Under the project, low income families are financially supported, allowing their children to access an education in a Thai school. As a result, children are less likely to drop out of schools, and have opportunities, which would not otherwise be available to them in Thailand, without a Thai education. The families increasingly became aware of the importance of education, as did their neighbours and others exposed to the education campaigns and became aware of the opportunities which come from educating children in their community. The HSF builds on campaigns to promote the importance of education.

Local Community Youth Council (LCYC)



LCYC youth members presented their creative ideas with materials for the workshop on anti-human trafficking campaign in March, 2015.

Photo: Chidchanok Khobluang/IOM

The 'IOM Youth Group' brought together many of the project participants in the various activities held. Activities in 2014 included: a youth summer camp; a learning activity; a theatre training; annual national youth

day; theatre training in the community; participating in "The day ended, violence against children" and 25 year anniversary Children's Rights with the children's rights networks of over 60 organizations.

The LCYC is a network comprised of six active local youth groups who cooperate to raise awareness, through forums and drama, that address social issues, including human trafficking, domestic violence, child abuse, and drug use. More than 100 youth can come together for the larger activities. Thus, LCYC facilitates community cooperation and exchanges between different community members, encapsulating objective 2 of the project.

Project shortcomings and solutions



The Myanmar Muslim participated the cooking class which IOM by provide IOM and the NGO partner in 2014.

Photo: Nonglak Kaeophokha/IOM

Youth members participating in the planning stage for LCYC activities do not always attend meetings due to personal circumstances. Their contribution and regular attendance is nonetheless crucial to ensure consistency in the implementation of these important activities supported by IOM.

The needs of the community in terms of vocational trainings could not always be fully met, with limitations of the project prohibiting further support; in terms of education assistance available through the project's HSF.

Accessing activities, such as those at the CRC, can be difficult for those who do not possess identity cards or official documents to stay in Thailand. These migrants fear arrest or extortion if apprehended by police on their way to the activities, or when returning home. As a result of these concerns many women spend a lot of time at home, or nearby. Some of those who have established small businesses have set them up at home, in front of or nearby. In addition, some lack motivation and live from day-to-day, with little or no sense of community. Thus, the objective of this project to build a sense of community, especially for women with little or no formal education, who are often illiterate in their own language, and do not speak Thai.

Lessons learned/ Good Practices

One of the main lessons learned was that education is an unmet need which requires effort to be fulfilled in difficult circumstances, where income opportunities are usually the main priority for the family. While there is a free education for all' policy in Thailand including undocumented migrants, there are still obstacles to getting children into Thai schools. The closest and most convenient school for the Islam Bamrung community was the Islam Seuksa school, a private school, which charges tuition fees. IOM demonstrated that it is possible to get children into private schools, with the capital outlay offset by the commitment of the schools to support the children to Year 9. A great deal of effort is required to get children into private or public schools. Firstly, it is necessary to develop a relationship with the school, and, secondly, to ensure cooperation between families, children and the school, with detailed planning and logistics. This was particularly the case with those private schools where full fees and other costs also had to be administered for Islam Seuksa. Concerning Santawa Maitri School extra curricula costs, including the cost and logistics of travel, had to be administered. Most activities involved some level of collaboration between youth and adults, particularly with the youth groups and the youth vocational training. The exchanges between adults and youth were a major contribution to the long term success of community development. Similarly, the exchanges between different ethnic groups, disadvantaged people and educated professionals also contributed to such success. This was intended to be one of the main purposes of the project: to bring people together and enable everyone to learn from each other. Without giving youth a sense of ownership of the project and an opportunity to engage with adults, the outcome of community development may have been more fragmented than integrated. It is a learning process for adults too, as they now better appreciate youth abilities and perspectives, and this is in the best interests of project outcomes. For the youth participants, they have become more aware of how learning during their younger years can assist their current situation as well as have longer term benefits for themselves and their families.

Project officers and CEWs have built up relationships with partners and stakeholders. IOM has learned how to coordinate with senior officials of government agencies, Muslim community leaders, community colleges, and school officials, as well as improved cooperation with partner NGOs. In order to work with disadvantaged and marginal groups, high level cooperation across the spectrum of agencies is essential. However, it is the work, exchanges and support that occurs on the ground that is critical to success. CEWs, most of whom have been working with IOM since 2010, are crucial for



The Myanmar Muslim community's member participated in the education campaign, they drove a tricycle with the IEC material to give an information how the important of education to people in the communities.

Photo: Kanda Phoprasobchok/IOM

such achievements. Only they know the true situation of programming on the ground, as they are involved in preparation of activities, and communicate at all levels, including between themselves and with target groups on a daily basis. CEWs continually move between the office, the CRC and the community. They also live in the communities, share the same culture and are able to communicate in relevant languages. They fulfill multiple functions – they are the translators, the go-betweens, and provide valuable insights into what is happening on the ground. Within the group their language skills include: Thai, Burmese, Karen, and Rohingya/Bangla.

Feedback from Beneficiaries

Representative of school scholarship recipients (parent of the boy).

"This project gave my child the opportunity to receive 2 years of schooling. Thank you to the teachers and everybody in the community that supported the project. And because he has this scholarship he will be a good student, and we hope that he will continue to get scholarships to study."

Representative from youth groups.

"We have such a good relationship in the group, and we convey our knowledge to younger youth. I advise them on all matters, not just education and vocations. IOM staff are considerate and caring, we work with them as if we are family or friends, and they provide experiences that increase our knowledge and give us new skills. The training courses provided through the LCS Project by IOM such as "Community Development Worker", "Youth Summer Camp" and "Community Theatre" help us to develop ourselves through leadership skills. Youth now have a greater role in the community, participating in more community activities, and are more

confident in taking part in good activities and ongoing community development. Thank you to the IOM project and community members that were so considerate and contributed so much to enhancing the knowledge, skills and abilities to the youth of LCYC."

Representative of women's group

"I had the opportunity to join the IOM activities, and my favourite activities were sewing fabric bags and cooking. I can do everything myself, and I sell the products to generate income. Thank you to LCS for the knowledge and skills. I think of the group I worked with as family, we have developed the skills together. But the time goes so fast, I do hope that we can continue this project"



The Myanmar Muslim women's member who were trained basic sewing skills got the order to produce 500 bags, by using the sewing machine provided by the EU in 2014.

Photo: Nonglak Kaeophokha/IOM

Recommendation for future programming

The two private schools who have enrolled undocumented children are limited in their capacity to take extra students. Any future programming may require finding new Thai schools, which by necessity, must be public schools. Other organizations such as Help Without Frontiers have placed many Burmese in Thai schools, and they also support Migrant Learning Centres (MLC) where in some cases, if families wish at some stage to return to Myanmar, the Myanmar language curriculum may be of more benefit than a Thai curriculum.

1. Investigate the possibility of enrolling students in Thai public schools
2. Investigate how to bring MLCs into the mix of private and public Thai schools in Islam Bamrung, the Garbage Dump Community and Khok Wua Community.
3. Determine the use of, and needs of, MLCs in Islam Bamrung
4. Determine the approximate number of families that wish to use MLCs

5. Determine and report on the group that has been working closely with local education and municipal officials to allow the children with IOM scholarships to have an identity card with a 13 digit number, which would mean the government would subsidize their education (the manager of Santawa Maitri School is part of the group).

LCYC is seen as an important component for youth linkages across Mae Sot and including Muslim communities in the broader community. While IOM established LCYC and facilitated some events, it is largely run by the groups themselves. However, it would require some leadership and funds to continue, in the absence of IOM.

6. Investigate if the Ray of Youth Group (who have the know-how and ability) ,with support from Help Without Frontiers, can support the continuance of LCYC.
7. Determine the financial and other possible commitments from other members of LCYC.

The women's group and the vocational training has already received funding from the mosque to assist in setting up small businesses, but there is also an offer to house the sewing machines and other equipment if and when the CRC is not available. As trainers and equipment is available, some training could continue, through the mosque committee and with the encouragement of the women's group that came out of the vocational training. However, this would continue to a limited extent.

8. Investigate how further support could be provided to make the project more sustainable. As World Vision has worked in Islam Bamrung previously, they may be in a position to support them.
9. Investigate whether any agencies can encourage the women to continue meeting as a group, and perhaps create other groups to discuss themes on health, education, domestic violence, child abuse and so on.

Many adults do not have documents to reside or work legally in Thailand. This is a complex problem which is tied up with the central government and national security issues, but also local government. Steps have been taken to do more, especially at the national level; and steps have been made to facilitate birth registration and follow-up citizenship; however, more could be accomplished locally. Most longer-term residents of Islam Bamrung have valid claims, and the government could better facilitate the processing of these claims.

10. Investigate and report on the obstacles to residency and citizenship claims in Islam Bamrung and in Mae Sot generally.
11. Determine how there can be more consultations with Islam Bamrung leaders and the municipal office on these issues.



Photo: Chidchanok Khobluang/IOM

Project Information

Donor

With funding by the European Union (EU) and co-financed by the Australian Government, Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP)

CO Focal Points

IOM Thailand Country Office, Bangkok

Mr. Martin Wyndham

Assistance to Vulnerable Migrants (AVM)

Programme Manager

Office phone: 02-343-9355

Fax: 02-343-9399

E-mail: mwyndham@iom.int

IOM Thailand Sub-Office, Mae Sot

Ms. Nonglak Kaeophokha

Acting Field Coordinator

Office phone/fax: 055-546-645

E-mail: nkaeophokha@iom.int

Partners

Tak Community College (TCC), Compasio, and the Sana Yar-Thi Pann Women's Centre (SWC)

Project location

Mae Sot District, Tak Province, Thailand

Project duration

January 2013 – July 2015



IOM International Organization for Migration



Australian Government
Department of Immigration
and Border Protection

This project is implemented by the International Organization for Migration and is co-funded by the European Union and the Australian Government, Department of Immigration and Border Protection.

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