

CONCEPT NOTE

Overcoming barriers to strengthen the voices of all women in Rakhine State for social cohesion and peace



*Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.*

Status:	'New Project'
Brief Description:	The project has been designed within a women peace and security rights based framework to address the social and structural barriers that prevent women's participation and voices both in the formal peace process and in bottom up peacebuilding processes through fostering social cohesion between communities in Rakhine. It will do this by promoting women's participation and inclusion in inter-communal dialogue platforms, including online platforms and conflict resolution forums with a focus on ways to promote women's access to justice including for GBV cases.
Responsible Party:	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)
Estimated Budget (USD):	USD 1'865'408
Duration:	1 Mai 2018 – 30 September 2019 (17 months)
Thematic Area(s):	Protecting and strengthening the position of women in Rakhine
UNDAF Outcome(s):	People in Myanmar live in a more peaceful and inclusive society, governed by more democratic and accountable institutions, and benefit from strengthened human rights and rule of law protection
CPD Output/Project Result:	Sustainable peace through national reconciliation and building an effective democratic state
Implementation modality:	Implementing Partners: Government, National NGOs and networks, International NGOS
Government Counterparts:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement▪ Ministry of Health and Sports▪ Ministry of Ethnic Affairs▪ Ministry of Home Affairs▪ Union Attorney General Office (UAGO)▪ Office of the Supreme Court of the Union (OSCU)▪ Rakhine State Government

I. BACKGROUND

1.1 Development challenge

Rakhine is the second poorest state in Myanmar. It has a diverse ethnic composition, with the ethnic Rakhine comprising the majority. Muslims make-up between 30-35% of the total population. The conflict in Rakhine State is complex. In the past three years, inter-communal tensions and conflict between ethnic Rakhine and Muslim communities have resulted in a number of serious waves of violence (2012, 2014, 2016 and most recently in August 2017). These bouts of violence resulted in loss of life, destruction of livelihoods and public assets, and displacement: in 2012 approximately 140,000 people were displaced of whom only 20,000 have been returned or relocated; nearly 70,000 people and then a further exodus of approximately 313,000 people crossed into Bangladesh from October 2016 and August 2017 respectively after violence erupted as a result of a coordinated attack on dozens of police posts and an army by ARSA insurgents.

The spates of violence have impacted upon the Muslim community and women in particular who are the majority community in northern Rakhine state. Combined with widespread acceptance of gender inequality, normalization of gender based violence and extensive socio-cultural norms and structural barriers, the space and capacity for women's participation, including in local peace process and social cohesion activities, is limited. No female parliamentarians were elected to the Rakhine State Parliament in 2015, and only three were elected from Rakhine State constituencies to the Union Parliament in Naypyitaw. There are currently no female administrators (i.e. Village Tract, Township or District Administrators) in the state, though women do sometimes hold more junior civil service positions. Rakhine was also identified as the state where Myanmar women experience the highest levels of spousal violence and the second highest levels of physical violence and sexual violence in the country.

In sum, given the low levels of women's participation in politics, peace processes and decision making from the national to the village level administration structures, there remains a key gap in addressing GBV and access to justice for women. Furthermore, until now, critical programming to support the participation of women and young people in the peace process continues to remain within selected geographic locations where women and young people are well mobilized and educated, such as in Kachin state.

Behind this background, the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State in its final report urged in various recommendations to focus on strengthening women's positions in Rakhine.

II. OVERALL STRATEGY

2.1 Implementation strategy

The Peacebuilding Fund provides UNDP and UNFPA with the unique opportunity to bring together respective areas of expertise and experience to address the structural and systemic barriers for women's access to social cohesion and peace building activities. UNDP's expertise in social cohesion strategies and access to justice programming complements the UNFPA expertise in women's empowerment programming, including GBV response and prevention interventions.

The Project will develop a Rakhine-specific outreach strategy to ensure inclusiveness in reaching both Rakhine and Muslim communities. Specifically, the project strategy is based on 3 interlinked parts, all contributing to a protection, prevention and participation focused approach.

1. Strengthen protection and participation of marginalized women

This encompasses a range of interventions to strengthen local platforms, including through ICT modalities and research, through which women's inclusion and participation can be supported in a social cohesion and peace context more broadly. Further, women's access to information will be expanded through development of basic computer skills and ability to engage online for increased knowledge about legal rights, sexual and reproductive health, and GBV, as well as to access service information or remote service delivery. Ultimately, the project will foster local inter-communal consultations and dialogue, that include women's priorities on peace and reconciliation, GBV response and prevention and access to justice, including transitional justice mechanisms, in order to pave the way for more consistent discussions on reforms to tackle impunity of perpetrators of violence, and eventually, transitional justice as part of the national peace process.

2. Strengthen capacity of justice actors and local communities in providing gender and conflict sensitive mediation and conflict resolution

This includes institutional capacity development of relevant rule of law actors, such as police, judges, law officers, ward/village tract administrators and lawyers to generate more compliance of justice decisions with international standards and improved quality of justice dispensation for women, ethnic and other vulnerable groups, including survivors of GBV. In addition, the project will target community level to strengthen capacities for gender and conflict sensitive mediation, dispute and conflict resolution. A Rule of Law Centre will be established in Sittwe to serve as a neutral safe space to talk about local issues, strengthen local authorities' capacity on dialogue and mediation, as well as assist in creating networks across a wide range of government, justice and civil society actors around shared understanding of justice issues, solutions and trust, in order to gradually contribute to mindset change to improve rule of law, justice and human rights.

3. Strengthen women's access to local justice, peace and policy-mechanisms

This is achieved by promoting a number of initiatives to make local justice and peace mechanisms more accessible to women and ensure that these mechanisms are sensitive to women's justice issues and foster effective legitimacy, engagement and cooperation with women and other vulnerable groups, including ethnic minorities. Working with different duty bearers including the MoSWRR, RSG, MoHS, UAGO, OSCU, MoEA, police, courts, bar associations, as well as rights holders, the Project will provide targeted support to the Rakhine Coordinating Body for Rule of Law and Justice Affairs, in order to inform local solutions and policy-related actions to address women's peace and justice concerns and channel its recommendations to the Union Coordinating Body for Rule of Law and Justice Affairs chaired by the Attorney General and co-chaired by the Deputy Minister of Home Affairs. Support will be provided to local CSOs and NGOs, bar associations and women legal aid providers, to carry out strategic initiatives to increase access to justice for women, survivors of GBV and other vulnerable groups, including legal advice information, mediation and representation in courts.

2.2 Modalities

1. Location and distribution

The Project will be implemented in Rakhine State, Sittwe township, where the Rule of Law Centre will be established and where the four Women and Girls Centres (WGCs), which for example will be engaged in the ICT training and platform, will be based. Two of the WGCs will be from Rakhine sites and two will be Muslim sites. In this way, there is overall support for access to justice throughout Sittwe township with a specific focus on the balanced approach of working with women from centres from each of the two communities, Rakhine and Muslim.

2. Implementing Partners

In addition to target groups which include Government authorities, implementing partners include International Development Law Organization (together with UNDP) for the Rule of Law Centre and International Rescue Committee (together with UNFPA) for the Women and Girls Centres.

III. THEORY OF CHANGE

The theory of change is premised in a view of women as central actors in strengthening rule of law and peacebuilding, and as such, as necessary participants in policy-making in these areas. The project therefore aims to enhance the knowledge and capacity of women as rights holders, rule of law advocates, and agents of peace, who will ultimately shape local and national policy.

The project strategy is built on a theory of change assumption that if women are provided with the enabling environment through social norm changing programmes and spaces and platforms to voice their priorities, they would be empowered to claim their rights, promote solutions for increased social cohesion and inform evidence-based initiatives in the peace process which are inclusive of women and other vulnerable groups.

IV. Summary of Key Results & Partnerships (Results Framework Annexed)

4.1 Key Results

See Results Framework in the Project Document.

4.2 Outcome and Outputs

The overall goal of the project is to address social and structural barriers that prevent women's participation and voices both in the formal peace process and in bottom up peacebuilding processes through fostering social cohesion between communities in Rakhine.

Outcome 1: Protection and participation of marginalized women, including IDP women and survivors of GBV, strengthened to support increased civic engagement and inter-communal dialogue

Output 1.1	Local intercommunal consultations and dialogue, that include women priorities on peace and reconciliation, GBV and access to justice, including transitional justice, fostered as part of the national peace process
Output 1.2	Evidence generation and data collection strengthened to inform stronger formal justice responses for survivors of GBV
Output 1.3	Provision of an information platform to enable inter communal consultation and dialogue

Outcome 2: Values, skills, and knowledge of local communities and justice actors enhanced to provide gender and conflict sensitive mediation and resolutions

Output 2.1	Enhanced aptitude and skills of local justice institutions and security providers to uphold human rights and improve access to justice for women, ethnic groups and other vulnerable groups, including survivors of GBV
Output 2.2	Local capacities for gender and conflict sensitive mediation, dispute and conflict resolution enhanced

Outcome 3: Women's access to local justice, peace and policy-making mechanisms increased

Output 3.1	Strengthened relationships between Rakhine women and national civil society and networks
Output 3.2	Local justice and peace mechanisms are more accessible to women and sensitive to their identified justice priority needs
Output 3.3	Women and vulnerable groups are more aware of their rights and empowered to demand accessible and equitable legal services

V. Governance and Project Management

5.1 Project Management

A Project Board at Union level to steer the project, consisting of:

- Relevant Government authorities (Co-chair), including Office of the Attorney General and Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement
- UNDP and UNFPA Senior Executive
- Senior Beneficiaries: Representatives from Union level and Rakhine State
- Senior Suppliers/partners: International and national development partners
- Women organizations (TBD)

The Quality Assurance supports the Executive Board and is assumed by the Programme Analyst, UNDP; the Programme Analyst, UNFPA, the Programme Manager, UNFPA and by the Head of the UNDP Peace and Governance Outcome. Together, they carry out objective and independent oversight and monitoring functions on behalf of the Board.

5.2 Project Governance

- UNDP, UNFPA, and implementing partners
- Project assurance and oversight conducted by the Project Board, UNDP, UNFPA