



BRINGING ASEAN CLOSER TO THE PEOPLE

THE EXPERIENCE OF ASEAN VOLUNTEERS IN MYANMAR



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The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was established on 8 August 1967. The Member States of the Association are Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam. The ASEAN Secretariat is based in Jakarta, Indonesia

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We thank the Government of the Union of Myanmar for its guidance and leadership in assisting the people of Myanmar during the relief and recovery response. We are also grateful to the United Nations agencies, international and national organisations and all others who contributed to post-Nargis relief and recovery activities.

We thank the ASEAN Member States for their unwavering support during such a critical juncture. Our experiences over the course of the Task Force's two-year mandate are certain to shape ASEAN's approach to disaster management and humanitarian assistance for generations to come.

It is due to our collective efforts that two years after Cyclone Nargis we now see signs of recovery in Myanmar's Ayeyarwady Delta. Rice farmers plant seeds where rice fields once stood fallow, brand new school-cum-Cyclone shelters dot the landscape and bamboo plants and mangrove bushes are sprouting up around the once devastated areas.

This book is dedicated to the survivors of Cyclone Nargis, whose strength, courage and resilience in the face of unimaginable adversity is at once humbling and inspiring and, no doubt, will spur the ongoing recovery effort in the months ahead.

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Foreword by the Secretary-General of ASEAN

Death, destruction and despair followed in the path of Cyclone Nargis. As news spread that the Cyclone had flattened entire villages, killing or injuring hundreds of thousands of people, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) felt compelled, out of a sense of compassion, urgency and fraternity, to support one of our Member States. The ASEAN community immediately reached out to help Myanmar recover from the worst natural disaster in the country's recorded history.

The complexity of the emerging tragedy called for a cohesive and coordinated plan. ASEAN was urged to take the lead. Never before had we undertaken such an ambitious and large-scale undertaking. But buttressed by the Government of Myanmar and the international community, ASEAN's confidence grew and our association was "baptised" by the Cyclone that wreaked havoc on one of our Member States.

Cyclone Nargis occurred at a pivotal time, when ASEAN Member States were embracing the ASEAN Charter and the association was striving to become a more collective, dynamic and inclusive entity. The disaster provided ASEAN with a window of opportunity to make meaningful progress on the goals of the Charter to bring ASEAN closer to the people, enhance the well-being and livelihood of ASEAN peoples, and alleviate poverty and narrow development gaps through close cooperation with the Government of Myanmar.

Experience from Nargis demonstrates that ASEAN, with support from partners, can strengthen disaster risk reduction among Member States and provide an effective coordinating mechanism to facilitate the delivery of international assistance in a Member State during the post-disaster relief and recovery process. Our collective response in the aftermath of Cyclone Nargis is an example of the benefits that broader integration and closer partnerships can yield.

ASEAN's response to Nargis, in cooperation and collaboration with the United Nations, the international humanitarian community and civil society, helped ease the pain and suffering that the Cyclone inflicted on people living in Ayeyarwady and Yangon Divisions of Myanmar. Since the region as a whole is prone to disasters, it is imperative, particularly as we reach the end of the mandate of the ASEAN-led coordination mechanism in Myanmar, to document and disseminate the lessons ASEAN has learned in the wake of Nargis.

This publication focuses on how the volunteers brought ASEAN closer to the people in the Cyclone-affected areas, through mobilising ASEAN young and seasoned professionals to support cross-cultural exchange and recovery initiatives. It describes various projects initiated and supported by volunteers from different ASEAN Member States. It is dedicated to the communities who warmly welcomed our ASEAN volunteers into their families. The volunteers and their projects were instrumental in delivering hundreds of boats and fishing nets, several livelihoods inputs such as paddy seeds and fertilisers, ecosystem and sanitation restorations, and other livelihood assets, such as tractors and rice mills. The success of the projects is attributed mainly to the resilience of the people of Myanmar who have embraced the ASEAN community building spirit.

Through this publication, we wish to share within and across the region what we have gained from our experience carrying out ASEAN's first-ever large-scale humanitarian operation in a Member State. It is our sincere hope that our lessons will be of service to others and our best practices replicated in the event of future disasters.



SURIN PITSUWAN



Chapter One

Serving as Young ASEAN Ambassadors for Change

“Volunteering doesn’t come from the head. It comes from the heart.”

— *Kyaw Lyn Htike, ASEAN Volunteer from Myanmar*

Amoured with hope and dedication to help others, three volunteers from Thailand helped launch the ASEAN Volunteers Programme (AVP) in Myanmar. The AVP’s humble beginnings can be traced back to the immediate aftermath of the Cyclone. At that time, the three volunteers who were endorsed by the Secretary-General of ASEAN, Dr Surin Pitsuwan, journeyed to Myanmar to help survivors pick up the pieces of their lives.

Cyclone Nargis hit the southern coast of Myanmar on 2 and 3 May 2008 causing immense destruction to local communities, infrastructure networks and public service delivery mechanisms.

Initially, the three volunteers were assigned to assist in managing a control room for the Post-Nargis Joint Assessment (PONJA). The volunteers tirelessly monitored the movements of the assessment teams, who were tasked with determining the needs of the Cyclone survivors and the extent of the damage. The assessment served as a credible and comprehensive

reference for subsequent resource mobilisation initiatives and needs assessments.

After contributing to the success of the PONJA, the volunteers from Thailand proposed a pilot community-based early recovery project. Together with three more volunteers from Myanmar, they conducted a rapid assessment and implemented a project in Seik Gyi village funded through the ASEAN Special Cooperation Fund.

“It was through modest contributions from every staff member of ASEAN Secretariat, private individuals and foundations, which funded the first ASEAN volunteers project in Myanmar. Everyone was part of this initiative. In every sense, it was a collective commitment to bring ASEAN closer to the people,” said Ms Adelina Kamal, Head of Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance Division of the ASEAN Secretariat, who headed the AHTF Coordinating Office for the first six months.¹

Dr Surin Pitsuwan, Secretary-General of ASEAN (second from right), hands over the project to the community in Seik Gyi with Senior TCG members and ASEAN volunteers. Photo by AHTF Coordinating Office



Beneficiaries replant betel saplings in Seik Gyi village. Photo by AHTF Coordinating Office

“Even one simple person can make a difference, no matter how big or small as long as we have a common goal in mind. I remembered that we were a group of volunteers and NGOs in Thailand. We were trying to find a way to help the Cyclone Nargis survivors. Fortunately, we had the opportunity to have a meeting with the Secretary-General of ASEAN who gave us the chance to work with the ASEAN Humanitarian Task Force (AHTF) in Myanmar. We started with just three Thai volunteers to set-up a control room to back-up the assessment team. Then, we proposed a modest project in Seik Gyi village to support their livelihoods and make their community safer. I had a great time working with ASEAN embassies’ staff. At that time, I felt I was working with my brothers and sisters. I found that we all have so much in common. It was a very good experience. I missed the good Mohinga [local fish noodle soup] and Lahpet [local milk tea].”



— Nattaya ‘Moddang’ Davidson , ASEAN Volunteer from Thailand



ASEAN volunteers provide support in boat distribution in Seik Gyi village. Photo by AHTF Coordinating Office

The pilot project in Seik Gyi village became the flagship initiative of ASEAN at the community level. After the needs assessment, the Tripartite Core Group (TCG) endorsed and adopted the pilot project.

Building upon the good practices of pilot projects carried out in 2008 and 2009, the programme grew from six to 40 volunteers through a competitive recruitment process. A solicitation was released seeking interested partner. Donor funds were accessed to fund several grants to local organisations to support volunteer activities in the overall Cyclone recovery effort. ASEAN competitively advertised postings for the individual volunteer assignments.

During this phase, a formal five-day volunteer orientation was initiated in the interest of creating clear guidelines for the volunteers' involvement. Guidelines on visibility, project finance and reporting were developed.

From 2008 to 2010, 40 volunteers from Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand participated in six projects that were implemented with five civil society partners. This programme was the first of its kind in the ASEAN region and was funded by multiple donors, including Timor-Leste, Norway and through the ASEAN Special Cooperation Fund.

The volunteers assisted in carrying out three Community-Based Early Recovery (CBER) projects in Bogale, Kungyangon and Pyapon townships from 2008 to 2009. In order to maintain the momentum of medium-term recovery efforts, the volunteers supported PONREPP (Post-Nargis Recovery and Preparedness Plan) projects in Kungyangon/Kawhmu, Labutta and Pyapon townships from 2009 to 2010.



U Kyaw Thu, TCG Chair (right) and Ms Adelina Kamal, Head of Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance Division of the ASEAN Secretariat (second from right) and ASEAN Ambassadors based in Yangon hand-over the project to the community in Seik Gyi. Photo by AHTF Coordinating Office

ASEAN volunteers helped support efforts to address the early recovery needs of the most under-assisted communities and increase their capacities to be more resilient to disasters.

They worked closely with implementing partners to promote the ASEAN community spirit, assisting in needs assessments and training, documenting lessons learned and good practices and mobilising communities through consultation community meetings.

“It was a pleasant accident that prompted the establishment of the ASEAN Volunteers Programme and now it has evolved into a fantastic legacy for possible replication in the ASEAN region. [The volunteers] have become our young ASEAN Ambassadors, serving as catalyst for change to foster ASEAN

awareness and community development at the grassroots level,” said Dr Anish Kumar Roy, Director for Community Affairs Development Directorate of the ASEAN Secretariat, who also served as the Special Representative for the Secretary-General of ASEAN in Myanmar in 2008.² 🇲🇲

Fostering the Humanitarian Spirit of Volunteers

Aung Min Min Ko
ASEAN Volunteer from Myanmar



Aung Min marvels at the many things he learned as an ASEAN volunteer in Kungyangon. “We have learned a lot from the community. The villagers are very poor, they are just trying to live on with the few things they have by working hard but they live together peacefully and are not greedy. By seeing them working so hard, we learned that we should also be working hard like them and we should also be contented like them,” he says. Aung Min appreciates that the villagers treated the volunteers warmly and welcomed them to their houses for lunch or tea.

“People here in Kunyangon, including children, know what ASEAN is. Almost everybody knows what ASEAN does. ASEAN is giving humanitarian assistance to the victims of Nargis. To help the victims to recover and to give assistance to their livelihoods, ASEAN is giving humanitarian assistance. All the villages accepted that.” According to Aung Min, community members were very glad to see that ASEAN is an association carrying out humanitarian activities in their area. “ASEAN has brought better roads, bridges, and necessary boats together with fishing nets, ASEAN brings what is necessary for the villagers to build better their livelihoods,” he added.

Aung Min also commends his fellow regional volunteers and is enthusiastic about the diversity of experiences gained, which also helped improve the skills of the local volunteers. “I learned a lot from other regional volunteers because they shared their knowledge, and experiences. They also deal with us very closely and we work together like brothers and sisters. They come here to help as volunteers leaving their own families. They are very helpful. We also learned how they want to work hard, how much stamina they have and how persistent they are to carry out the activities. I would like to say that local volunteers have also improved a lot while working together with other regional volunteers,” he said. Aung Min hopes to meet and work with the regional volunteers again in future programmes.

Aung Min had such a good experience he is prepared to be an ASEAN volunteer in other countries facing disasters and to “give a helping hand in the spirit of volunteerism.”

ASEAN brings itself closer to the community when Southeast Asian countries cooperate to help the victims of disasters. “We, ASEAN volunteers, should help with affection, kindness and empathy,” he concludes.



Chapter Two

Advocating Volunteers for ASEAN Community Building

“ASEAN is an Association of Southeast Asian Nations. There are 10 members, including Myanmar. Ten members of ASEAN can be symbolised 10 fingers. Only one finger is nothing. You can’t do anything with that. But with all 10 fingers, you can handle anything.”

— U Saw Lwin, Beneficiary, Saluseik village

*Dr Anish Kumar Roy
(second from left), then
Special Representative
of Secretary-General
of ASEAN in 2008 with
ASEAN volunteers.
Photo by AHTF
Coordinating Office*

Delivering on a Promise

Through the AVP, ASEAN is delivering on a promise under the ASEAN Charter” to promote a people-oriented ASEAN in which all sectors of society are encouraged to participate in and benefit from the process of ASEAN integration and community building.” Member States are represented at the

grassroots level as one community bound by a common purpose, helping communities to help themselves.

A clear and focused mission and value statement is the cornerstone of the AVP. It mobilises volunteers ranging from recent college graduates to seasoned professionals through a variety of initiatives.

Fostering a Sense of ASEAN Community

Aung Kyi
ASEAN Volunteer from Myanmar

Aung Kyi became an ASEAN volunteer because he thought it would be a great opportunity to take part in relief and rehabilitation activities in his country, while working together with volunteers from other ASEAN Member States. His experience taught him that volunteers from other ASEAN nations are not so different. "We have similar working habits and our ways of thinking and seeing things were also the same," he said.

He did find that the volunteers from other countries were more outspoken than Myanmar volunteers. "We found it impressive that our counterparts from other ASEAN Member States could speak so boldly, bravely and openly in public. I



wish we could behave like them," he said. Looking back, Aung Kyi appreciates the hospitality and warm reception that he and other volunteers received from communities affected by Cyclone Nargis. He wishes he could have stayed longer in the community to provide even more assistance to alleviate the suffering. More than a year after the disaster, he could see the progress made but also the sadness and great sorrow in the eyes of villagers who were affected by the disaster. Cyclone Nargis has left deep scars but the presence of volunteers somehow eased their pain, he said.

Mission and Value Statement

Mobilising ASEAN young and seasoned professionals to support cross-cultural exchange for regional integration and early to medium-term disaster recovery projects throughout the ASEAN Member States.

Specific Objectives

- To involve ASEAN volunteers in supporting early and medium-term disaster recovery initiatives at the community level.
- To promote ASEAN cross-cultural exchange for regional integration.
- To implement people-centred initiatives in partnership with ASEAN volunteers and civil society.





Promoting ASEAN Community Building

The ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint recommends building disaster-resilient nations and safer communities by strengthening community-based disaster preparedness and response through: (i) promotion of public participation in programmes related to disaster risk reduction and emergency response; (ii) implementation of public awareness and education programmes; (iii) promotion of indigenous knowledge and practices; (iv) sharing of best practices and lessons learned; and, (v) promotion of sustainable livelihood options through socio-economic development activities to minimise disaster risks and enhance community-coping capacities.

Spheres of Action

The ASEAN Volunteers Programme brought together citizens from ASEAN Member States to support the implementation of community-led livelihood and disaster risk reduction initiatives. The programme in Myanmar had two main components: volunteer and project management as illustrated in the accompanying diagram.

The volunteer management component supported ongoing recovery efforts through partnerships with line ministries, community-based organisations and civil society in the spirit of the ASEAN Charter, which envisions a “process of ASEAN integration and community building, which all sectors of society are encouraged to participate in, and benefit from.” The volunteers aimed to foster a sense of “shared commitment and collective responsibility in enhancing regional peace, security and prosperity.”



From Visions to Actions

The project management component was endorsed by the TCG, which supports PONREPP and ASEAN's Framework Action Plan for Rural Development and Poverty Eradication (2004-2010) placing emphasis on "promoting the development of progressive, prosperous and self-reliant rural communities towards creating a caring society" among the ASEAN Member States.

The projects were implemented in three main spheres:

Livelihoods

Investments in agricultural and fishery inputs were designed to boost agricultural and fishery productivity and increase the supply of food available to subsistence farmers and fisher folks. Cash grants were provided to selected beneficiaries through an inclusive community-driven process of wealth ranking, livelihood asset ownerships and employment classification.

Initiatives considered the impact of disasters on livelihoods, particularly those in the informal sector and youth, and aimed

to stimulate the economies of local communities by providing daily employment opportunities that respected internationally accepted labour practices. Innovative mechanisms were encouraged that yielded sustainable income generation to reduce underlying risks and vulnerabilities. Examples included community infrastructures and action-oriented researchers focused on women-headed households.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

Initiatives were focused on improving household and community facilities and access to safe water and sanitation and raising family hygiene awareness and practices.

Disaster Risk Reduction

Greater priority was given to projects that demonstrated adherence to the priorities of the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA)³, the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER)⁴, the ASEAN Charter⁵ and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) Blueprint⁶.



ASEAN Volunteers Programme in Numbers

Livelihoods

- 6 two-wheel tractors, 6 trailers and 6 huller rice mills provided
- 1,110 acres of paddy field prepared, 11 power tillers and 255 gallons of diesel distributed
- 370 baskets of paddy seeds and 1,905 bags of fertiliser distributed to 489 farmers
- 253 farmers trained in the usage of modern seed storage techniques
- 478 beneficiaries provided with seeds for home gardening
- 250 vaccinations for piglets distributed with 32 kg of feed, vitamin tonic and mineral supplements
- 443 livestock vaccinated
- 352 boats distributed
- 86 nets and 427 fishing net repair kit provided to fisher folks
- 12 medium-scale bridges constructed
- 6 small-scale roads built and/or repaired
- 36 self-help groups with a total of 566 members
- 1,700 people participated in formulating community-based livelihood plans
- 150 people trained in fisheries, home-gardening and livestock
- 3,721 vulnerable households provided with cash grants for livelihood assistance and asset replacement

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

- 229 houses provided with concrete water container (capacity of 900 litres) with hand pump and rain water harvesting system
- 100 people trained on construction of rain water harvesting system
- 226 latrines built
- 250 households trained on good hygiene practices
- 33 wells renovated and 4 reservoirs built
- 4 artesian wells constructed
- 9 drinking water ponds renovated and fenced

Disaster Risk Reduction and Mitigation Measures

- 15 Disaster Management Committees set up and disaster risk management plans developed
- 90 task forces involving 452 members set up on first-aid, search & rescue and early warning systems
- 320 participants trained in “build-back-better approach” on safeguarding community assets
- 3 multi-purpose shelters constructed
- 1 school and 1 monastery building strengthened
- Approximately 64,500 mangroves planted

Contributing through Real Action

Krongkeaw “Keaw” Sritaborvornpaiboon ASEAN Volunteer from Thailand

As a graduate, fresh out of university in May 2008, Krongkeaw “Keaw” Sritaborvornpaiboon was seeking an opportunity to put to test the skills she learned. When the opportunity to become an ASEAN volunteer arose, she immediately signed up knowing that the programme was exactly what she was looking for. “I had no blink of hesitation to work in a community-based project and willingly dedicated my efforts to recover the livelihood that was destroyed by the disaster in one of our ASEAN family members,” she said.

Keaw said her deployment in Myanmar provided her with rich experiences. She learned how cooperation between communities and organisations enhances opportunities for longer-term development. She also values the lessons learned from living in a community in a foreign country. “Living with



the community gave me meaningful insights and, now, I have a deeper appreciation of the culture and traditions that have been preserved to this day and how these shape the uniqueness of the Myanmar society,” she said. Regular activities in the field also provide memorable, such as riding a motorbike through rough roads, observing local craftsmen and examining betel nut plantations. But the most rewarding experience for Kaew was the bonds of friendship she formed that lasted beyond the project. She also finds fulfillment knowing that she was able to help the community stand on its own, strengthen its capability and improve livelihoods. Kaew looks forward to visiting the village in the future to see how well it is progressing. “I think I would be speechless. I just wish to be reunited with them and give them multiple rounds of big embraces,” she said.

Volunteerism is identified as one of the priorities under ASCC Blueprint, which was adopted at the 14th ASEAN Summit on 28 February – 1 March 2009 in Cha-am Hua Hin, Thailand. The actions relevant to volunteers set forth in the ASCC Blueprint are as follows:

- Facilitate the rural volunteers movement and the exchange of young professional in rural development in ASEAN;
- Explore the establishment of an ASEAN Volunteers Programme, to be composed of young professionals, with focus on supporting rural development and assisting communities to help themselves;
- Support youth volunteers undertaking emergency or humanitarian missions by giving them recognition.

Encouraging Involvement for a Common Purpose

Since a volunteer programme is only as good as the calibre of volunteers it recruits, the recruitment process is critical. As the AVP in Myanmar evolved, the recruitment process attempted to understand the motivation and capacity of each volunteer. From fresh graduates to seasoned and young professionals, the recruitment process became the crucial first step to ensuring the success of projects. A call for volunteers was advertised and circulated in humanitarian websites, universities and relevant line ministries of ASEAN Member States. The programme maintained a balance in age, gender and diversity in professional background.

ASEAN volunteers in Kungyangon visit the community for field monitoring. Photo by AHTF Coordinating Office



Volunteering with an Impact

Zarlie Moe
ASEAN Volunteer from Myanmar

Zarlie Moe from Myanmar became an ASEAN volunteer aiming to help underdeveloped communities in his country access humanitarian aid that flowed in after Cyclone Nargis. "I wanted to work in improving the livelihood and the education system of the communities that were affected by the Cyclone," he said.

It turned out that he learned so much more than he had expected. "I learned how to approach and work with different organisations and interact with local communities. I also learned how to implement community livelihood projects, such as small scale paddy planting and fishing," Zarlie said.

Aside from that, he learned how to help communities improve access to clean water. For Zarlie, the most fulfilling part of being a volunteer was knowing that his efforts were not in vain.

"I will never forget the joy in the faces of the local community I was working with when they saw a cargo boat filled with timber to build boats. If given the chance, I will come back again to the community I worked with and continue helping them," he said.



Rebuilding Hopes and Dreams

Kyaw Soe "Hanzi" Win
ASEAN Volunteer from Myanmar

Even as he fixed and renovated his own home that was damaged by Cyclone Nargis, Hanzi felt the desire to help other disaster survivors. When he received a call from a friend, Phyu Mar who was already an ASEAN volunteer in the Delta, he decided to leave his home and join the volunteer programme.

Together with other fellow volunteers from Myanmar and Thailand, Hanzi helped implement a community project in Seik Gyi, which was ASEAN's first pilot project in Myanmar.

Aside from helping rebuild livelihoods and infrastructure in the village, Hanzi also helped in rebuilding shelter. "The villagers were happy with our assistance, I felt that we have not only rebuilt their houses and monasteries but also their hopes and dreams" he said. Hanzi learned that teamwork, especially in sharing information, as well as mutual understanding are very important to the success of the project.

Hanzi found the villagers to be very friendly and helpful.

"We felt that they were our relatives. My most memorable experience in the community was with the kids, like I am their 'big brother.' Every time I do morning exercise in the monastery compound, they came and did the same with me. It was a lot of fun and was truly unforgettable for me," he said.



Building Capacities before the Tasks Ahead

The programme in Myanmar recognises that volunteer orientation is an important initial step in the process of ensuring that a volunteer is fully equipped to optimise his or her benefit to the implementing partner that he/she supports.

Orientation activities took place immediately after the volunteers arrived in the country and before they left for assignment.

The amount of orientation needed, and the benefit of the orientation was usually directly related to the length of time that a volunteer expected to be in the country. In the case of the AVP in Myanmar, informal orientations in 2008-2009 were held depending on the stage of the disaster recovery and project initiatives. Since the programme was a flagship initiative, experimenting with different methods and approaches was necessary.

A formal five-day orientation was developed in the second phase (2009-2010) during the medium-term recovery stage. It centred on local community approaches, building trust amongst volunteers and assigned villages and implementing partners, and raising awareness about ASEAN. Orientation sessions focused on local customs, traditions, taboos, and etiquette.

Volunteers were also advised to learn how to appreciate and understand history and recent events in a given community through everyday informal encounters.

The orientation also included a three-day first-aid and security training facilitated by the Myanmar Red Cross Society (MRCS) to improve understanding of inherent risks in the area—whether they be health-related (is malaria present, or there risks of any other infectious diseases), or political/security (what is the security situation, are there parts of the town/country to avoid, any events—elections, anniversaries, etc. to be aware of).

Coordinator for ASEAN Volunteers and Project Management, Mr Philipp Danao coordinates with ASEAN volunteers and an implementing partner in Kungyangon. Photo by AHTF Coordinating Office

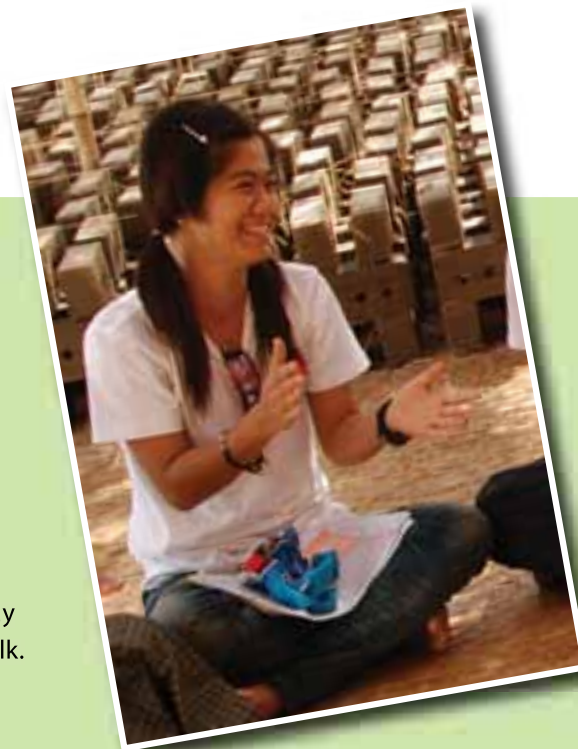


Reaching-out to ASEAN Family

Kay “Snow” Khine Soe
ASEAN Volunteer from Myanmar

“Snow” understood the unprecedented scale of the tragedy and considered it her moral obligation to help her countryfolk. As the relief and recovery effort commenced and donations and financial aid poured in, Snow recognised that she could not contribute financially so she opted to become an ASEAN volunteer. “Our country is a member of ASEAN, we are all family. If one country faces a natural disaster, we must help,” she stated.

As a volunteer, “Snow” worked in Salu Seik, one of the largest and most severely affected villages in Labutta. She was involved in a water and sanitation project that also provided assistance on livelihoods and boat distribution. “Snow” recalls that the villagers were very cooperative and friendly. “We got their full cooperation and we respect each other. They welcomed all volunteer groups. We are all friendly with the villagers,” she stated. “The component that I think was the most successful was on DRR. People want to learn and understand this, especially due to recent events and experiences. The



village has ample knowledge of risk reduction, but focus need to be given to their disaster managing committee. We have gently pointed out that helping each other is important. Now they can identify and have gained awareness of the need for protection and preparedness,” she said. With regard to the challenges she faced, Snow felt that some of it were the long journey in delivering the raw materials for the boats, and the need to verify the beneficiaries, among others. But overall, “Snow” said she was very pleased to have been involved and gained a lot of valuable experiences as an ASEAN volunteer in Salu Seik village.

Obtaining Endorsement for Progressive Facilitation

The programme's project management component was determined by the endorsement of the TCG as it expanded its scope of activities from strategic to broader technical roles. Prior to project implementation of any project, the programme

solicited the TCG's endorsement. From the call for proposals to the selection of projects and implementing partners, the TCG provided guidance and approval. The endorsement of the TCG became an effective mechanism in issuing visas and travel authorisations and scaling up the overall programme. The progress and concerns of the projects were presented to the TCG for facilitation.

U Kyaw Thu, TCG Chair (far right) and Dr. Anish Kumar Roy (second from right) together with other TCG members consult the community in Seik Gyi village. Photo by AHTF Coordinating Office



Unity in Adversity

Phyu Mar Aung
ASEAN Volunteer from Myanmar

When Phyu Mar learned about the hundreds of thousands of deaths that resulted from the Cyclone Nargis, she had an urge to help, but did not know how to go about it. She responded to a newspaper announcement calling for volunteers and that led her to join a Damage and Loss Assessment Team (DALA) and Village Tract Assessment Team (VTA) along with NGOs and Government Officers.

After the assessment deployment, Phyu Mar was invited to join the AVP in launching an early recovery project in Seik Gyi, ASEAN's first pilot project in Myanmar. Together with volunteers from Thailand, "we implemented the project step-by-step and had to work very carefully," she remembers. "I worked harmoniously with all organisations such as NGOs, local authorities and village committees. The community paid great respect to the Head Monk and we worked together hand-in-hand with him and the village committees. The villagers were very helpful and friendly. Sometimes, they said they felt as if we were part of their family," she recalled.



Phyu Mar learned a great deal about teamwork, coordination and livelihoods. She said that teamwork is very important in ensuring the success of the project. "If we can fill the weaknesses of others with our strengths and vice versa, we will be successful. The villagers' even the children, were unforgettable for me. They were our strength," she said. Her most memorable experience was after the fourth TCG visit, "our team and the villagers were very happy about the success of our project and we sang songs, clapped together and had lunch together ... Until now, every time I come back to the village, the kids always welcome me by shouting my name, like a family reunion. Their smiles make me active and I was very happy in the community," she recalled. Phyu Mar's message to the community is: "Please keep your unity and lovely smiles."



Director for Cross-sectoral Cooperation of ASEAN Secretariat, Mr Dhannan Sunoto (right) and Special Envoy of the Secretary-General of ASEAN for Post-Nargis Recovery in Myanmar, Dr William Sabandar (second from right) consult the community of the ASEAN volunteer project in Pyapon. Photo by AHTF Coordinating Office

Fostering Civil Society Partnerships

The importance of strong local partnership and networks for any successful volunteer programme is hard to understate. The effectiveness of any given programme is intrinsically tied to local partnerships. These partnerships were the delivery mechanism for the ASEAN volunteers' assistance and, as such, directly impacted the success of volunteer assignments more than any other component of the ASEAN Volunteers Programme.

Local partnerships, on the other hand, offered a more effective alternative, but do reduce the level of control that can be exercised over the programme and, depending on the partner, can sometimes prove less reliable. As such, the process of creating and nurturing these partnerships is of utmost importance.

ASEAN, in Myanmar, partnered with a range of technical agencies from NGOs to Government line ministries —taking

advantage of local presence and infrastructure to place volunteers in locations where they were deemed to be most useful.

Moreover, the partnerships united local village volunteers and provided resources that they would not have been able to access otherwise.

The Myanmar experience showed that a simple way to establish networks was through a competitive process—bidding out requests for in-country services and/or issuing a call for proposals from local groups that would benefit from volunteer assistance or had innovative ideas for in-country volunteer projects.

With this approach, the partnerships offered an additional tool for local capacity building that help strengthened national and local organisations and provided an opportunity to access resources that otherwise would not be available to them. 🇲🇲

Providing a Listening Post for Community Needs

Nongluk “Lak” Pituktammanat
ASEAN Volunteer from Thailand

Nongluk “Lak” Pituktammanat decided to become an ASEAN Volunteer when she learned about the devastation wrecked on the Ayeyarwady Delta in May 2008. The event hit home for her because it brought back memories of disaster and relief activities that followed the Indian Ocean Tsunami that struck the southern provinces of Thailand in December 2004. Lak volunteered with the Tsunami Volunteer Centre in Phang Nga Province, working with local communities to help them rebuild their livelihoods. Thus, it was serendipity when ASEAN issued a call for volunteers. She immediately seized the opportunity to volunteer and found herself in Myanmar in July 2008.

Life in the Cyclone-affected areas was not easy and devoid of the convenience of city living so anyone who considers volunteering in disaster-ravaged countries must be ready to face harsh circumstances, learn to focus on their projects and appreciate the efforts of the community to make life easier for volunteers. “I was very thankful that that the community gave us the best living place in the area and made sure that a group of women in the community prepared food for us while we were working there,” she recalls. “I really admire the people of Myanmar.



Even if they lost a lot in the Cyclone, this did not stop them from thinking about the needs of others.”

Looking back, Lak said the most valuable lessons that she learned from the experience were the importance of listening, being responsive to the needs of the community, being aware of cultural differences and abandoning preconceived ideas of a country. “We need to learn how to adjust and be respectful so we can encourage the cooperation of the community and we can work together to implement the project,” she said.

The strength of a community can help to fast track the implementation of recovery projects so volunteers must be aware of the capability of the local people. Lak said that she was fortunate to work with Seik Gyi village in Kungyangon Township, where the local leaders took initiative to assess their community needs and gather resources to start re-construction activities. The villagers are the experts. “We were just there to facilitate the recovery process, as listening post for their community needs,” she said.



Chapter Three

Integrating Volunteers into Sustainable Livelihoods and Disaster Risk Reduction Strategies

ASEAN volunteers and an implementing partner in Bogale consult the community on mangrove planting. Photo by AHTF Coordinating Office

Under the programme, volunteers were integrated into sustainable livelihood initiatives, according to the priorities identified for disaster recovery outlined in the PONREPP. These projects contributed mutual capacity development, cultural exchange and fostered personal and professional linkages.

The efficiency and effectiveness of the programme also required identifying complementarities

between volunteers and the implementing partners so that volunteers could be matched accordingly.

In addition, raising awareness on disaster risks continued to be a key component of all of the projects as was minimising loss and damage in future disasters.

Through the implementation of the projects, the ASEAN volunteers advocated for community development and nurturing the ASEAN community building spirit.

Exchanging Knowledge with Our Neighbours

Thanapon "A" Songput
ASEAN Volunteer from Thailand



When Thanapon "A" Songput and his friends from a group of NGOs in Thailand learned from news reports about the struggles faced by those affected by Cyclone Nargis, they immediately organised a meeting to brainstorm possible ways that they could help those in need across the border.

Having worked the post-Indian Ocean Tsunami relief efforts in 2004, "A" and his friends used their skills to evaluate the situation in the Delta and they forecasted relief and

recovery needs for up to three months.

They then met with the Secretary-General of ASEAN, who gave them the opportunity to work with the AHTF in Myanmar. "A" says his experiences working with the AHTF and the TCG were worthwhile and he learned the value of working in clusters during post-disaster response activities. "I think I can use it as a model in Thailand about disaster preparedness and mitigation," he said. His work in Myanmar gave him confidence that ASEAN has the capacity to respond to large-scale and complex disasters in the region. "For future disasters, I have no worries because ASEAN has shown that it is strong and it already has model to handle these types of situation," he added.

Golden Opportunity for ASEAN Integration

Kyaw Myint Aung (Emo)
ASEAN Volunteer from Myanmar

Emo began his volunteer work one week after Cyclone Nargis struck. He was a member of a local NGO called Nargis Action Group (NAG) before he became an ASEAN volunteer. Because of Emo's work in the NGO, he already had an understanding of the suffering of victims who lost their families and homes to the Cyclone.

He recounts that he learned a very important lesson on cooperation during his volunteer experiences after a project was unnecessarily delayed because of differing opinions. He learned how important cooperation was between team members. "Working with people from other international countries enhances my knowledge," he noted.

Emo considers his experience as an ASEAN volunteer as one of his most humbling experiences ever and he would like to continue to actively participate in community work in the future. "This gives me a golden opportunity," he said.





Pioneering Volunteerism in Kunyangan

“A few days after Cyclone Nargis, I was thinking I would have to borrow money from a loan provider with high interest as I needed to support my parents. Thanks to ASEAN, I now earn money from fishing and am using this money to start a duck farm. This project has really helped me move further. If I hadn’t received the boat I would still be in debt and getting poorer and poorer because of the high interest. Now, I can fish and start saving money.”

— *Ko Tun Tun Naing, fisherman*

Between August and November 2008, a Community-Based Early Recovery (CBER) pilot project was carried out in Seik Gyi village, Kungyangan Township to restore livelihoods and rebuild damaged infrastructure. Activities included: i) replacing destroyed boats and relaunching betel leaf cultivation (the principal source of income prior to Cyclone Nargis); and, ii) repairing the monastery and village wells. The project capitalised on active community participation and sought to “build back better.”

The project represents a significant achievement for ASEAN as it was initiated and implemented directly by six ASEAN volunteers from Thailand and Myanmar. In the spirit of “bringing ASEAN closer to the people,” the volunteers worked closely with the community to create a robust participatory dynamic volunteers programme, improve upon an existing community communication mechanism, and nurture meaningful cultural exchange.



Re-establishing betel cultivation. The principal source of income for Seik Gyi villagers was cultivation of betel leaf plants, which constituted 49 per cent of livelihood activity. Rebuilding this vital livelihood option was identified as one of the project's priorities. Together with the Nargis Village Committee, the ASEAN volunteers identified 200 families who were betel farmers or interested in cultivating betel to receive grants to revitalise their livelihood. Of these, 41 could not participate in the project because they did not have sufficient land or their land was unsuitable. The remaining 159 undertook betel cultivation.

The project also promoted capacity building and knowledge transfer between agents at the village, township and district level with ASEAN volunteers as a bridge. When a number of the newly established betel plantations were attacked by disease, the ASEAN volunteers organised a workshop on the practice of betel cultivation, which was facilitated by an expert from the Plant Protection Division of the Ministry of Agriculture.

Boat building and the provision of fishing nets. The needs assessment established that 40 of the 50 boats existing in Seik Gyi prior to Cyclone Nargis were lost during the storm. The Village Nargis Committee provided the names of the fisherman who had lost their boats and nets and the ASEAN volunteers initiated the construction of 35 new boats following consultation with these fishermen.

Utilisation of local skills, labour, knowledge and resources provides a means of empowering communities. After consultation with the fisherman and 30 local carpenters, it was agreed that rock dammar wood, which is sourced locally and has a lifespan of 10 years, would be used to construct the boats. In so doing, the project assisted not only the fishermen, but also

carpenters who were mobilised to build boats through a cash-for-work scheme. Furthermore, it helped revive local economy as the woods used to make boats were purchased locally.

Repairing the monastery. The population of Seik Gyi is predominately Buddhist. The monastery serves as the focal point of village activities. The ASEAN volunteers worked with the community to repair the main hall of the monastery and restore the stupa. Guided by the principles of "building back better", the centre of the monastery, was completely rebuilt to make it more resistant to future disasters and now acts as the village Cyclone shelter.

Repairing wells. Although Seik Gyi did not experience a shortage of water following the Cyclone, 33 of the 39 wells, which were the main sources of water for drinking and washing, were either damaged or contaminated with seawater following the storm. The wells were deemed unsafe for children and livestock because they had insufficient ground elevation. To prevent a possible water shortage, ASEAN volunteers in partnership with the villagers undertook to rebuild and clean the wells by pumping seawater out and reconstructing the wells to make the water safe for drinking.

Constructing public toilets. The existing public toilets in Seik Gyi were limited and poor in condition. The monks and villagers requested that new public toilets be situated in the grounds of the Seik Gyi monastery and school in Kyun Chaung to improve hygiene and sanitation. The toilet design received approval from the villagers and the monks and school staff accepted responsibility for cleaning them. Similar to the boat building, the toilets were constructed through a cash-for-work scheme, which helped generate income for local casual labours.

A Learning Experience Beyond Imagination

**Nattakan “Beau” Songpagdee
ASEAN Volunteer from Thailand**

Nattakan Songpagdee volunteered at the Tsunami Volunteer Centre in Khao Lak, Thailand after the Indian Ocean Tsunami hit in 2004 and had hoped that her experience in post-disaster response could help the people of Myanmar. Little did she know that being a volunteer in Myanmar would prove to be such a rich learning experience.

“It changed my attitude in handling unexpected situations. I learned that you have to be more prepared before going out to help the people in need, physically and psychologically,” she



said. Beau said that first step for any volunteer is learning about the language and the culture. Though the language barrier and cultural difference were initially obstacles, she was able to overcome them by forging strong friendships both with fellow ASEAN volunteers and the local people. She said she learned a lot from the villagers and was inspired by their unbelievable resilience.

A Treasure Trove of Learning Experiences

Ruby Bernardo Pineda
ASEAN Volunteer from the Philippines

Ruby Bernardo Pineda learned about the opportunity to do volunteer work in Myanmar through an e-mail from a friend. Having always been interested in development work, she replied to the call and a few weeks later she'd be lugging a backpack through the airport on her way to Tha Leik Gyi Village Tract in Pyapon Township in the Ayeyarwady Delta.

Months have passed since her four-month stint as an ASEAN volunteer had ended but she continues to ponder on the wealth of lessons she learned from the experience. "As a development worker, I learned that you don't just go out and implement a project with the community. You ease into it. It is a process. You introduce yourself to the community. You find out who exactly the 'community' is and engage them in dialogues," she said. Ruby learned that results can be achieved by focusing on specific aspects of the problem that matches with available resources. "With limited time, funds, and manpower, you cannot do it all. To appear like you intend to do it all opens the door for disappointment and frustration, each having the potential to erode the cooperation and initial trust you have worked hard to build with the community," she mused.



She also learned that respect for community members counts a lot as well as knowing how to work with officials from the local government. "I learned that people in the community are your brothers and sisters, not beneficiaries, and that to treat them like the latter impairs, in the long run, their capability to solve community problems on their own," she said. She also found out that working with the local government often can be a big part in finding solutions to the problems. "Often times, [local government officials] are the ones in the best position to provide support. They have the local knowledge, contacts, and resources that can support your organisation's project," she said. In general, working as an ASEAN volunteer showed Ruby that addressing fundamental needs such as putting food on the table, having safe water to drink, sustaining livelihoods and ensuring the safety of our families unites people to work together towards a common goal and this usually outweighs the issues that cause divisiveness. "That last lesson is perhaps the most over-arching one and the message I want to say to the community in Tha Leik Gyi is to hold fast to our commonalities and the aspirations we share so that we can overcome whatever differences we may have," she said.



Rebuilding Small-Farm Livelihoods during the Dry Season in Pyapon

“We never dreamed that our bridge would be wooden with a concrete foundation. It not only connects two villages, but also gives us a link to our families and our livelihoods. I will always remember the faces and smiles of the ASEAN volunteers. They are engraved in my heart and I think of them every time I use and see the bridge...”

— Sixty-year old Tha Leik Chaung villager Daw Thein Myint on the footbridge linking Tha Leik Chaung and Tha Leik Too Myaung villages

The distribution of agricultural inputs as well as prioritisation and subsequent construction of small-scale infrastructure helped stimulate agricultural productivity and incomes in six Cyclone Nargis-affected communities of Tha Leik Gyi village tract in Pyapon district in the Ayeyarwady Delta. The efforts spurred early livelihood recovery for small-plot farmers and landless households. The project was implemented from December 2008 to April 2009 by International Development Enterprise – Myanmar (IDE/M) together with ASEAN volunteers from Cambodia, Myanmar and the Philippines.

A community-led approach buoyed by the formation of informal village committees and engagement of villagers was critical to strengthening community solidarity towards sustainability.



ASEAN volunteers consult villagers on paddy farming. Photo by AHTF Coordinating Office

Stimulating Cyclone-disrupted agricultural productivity of the targeted villages

- 1,100 acres of paddy were prepared aided by the 11 hand power tillers and 255 gallons of diesel fuel provided by the project;
- Distributed 1,152 fertiliser bags to 472 rice paddy farmers, which cultivated approximately 944 acres of paddy. An estimated 103,840 baskets (2,160 metric tonnes) of rice paddy could be harvested. Approximately US\$224,672* of total income may be generated for the whole village tract or US\$476* per household;
- Provided vegetable seed packets to 170 vegetable growers, which is about US\$34,000* of total income could be generated for the village tract or US\$200 per household;
- Estimated market value (2008) as indicated by the villagers (1 US\$ = 1,000 Myanmar Kyats).

“The best thing about this project is that the ASEAN volunteers are living together in our village... somehow they know what we really need, our concerns as part of our families. I will always remember their strong commitment to rebuild our villages through mass meetings. The villagers now are more active in community consultation activities.”

— U Maung Naing, Tha Leik Gyi Village Tract Leader on recognising the efforts of the project and the ASEAN volunteers

Improving access to village infrastructure to provide opportunities to landless households. Approximately 70 landless villagers participated to work for the infrastructure activities with a daily wage of about US\$2. The agreed wage rate was slightly set lower than the existing market rate to ensure that the villagers who are most in need of work would have the opportunity to earn a continuous daily wage for the

Working for the Common Good

Naw Tar “Shamrock” Blut Bwe Moo ASEAN Volunteer from Myanmar

Prior to Cyclone Nargis, Naw Tar Blut Bwe Moo, “Shamrock” to friends, had spent her weekends volunteering at the Aye Myitta Disable Centre as a coordinator and facilitator. Her job included training a team of volunteers to teach the parents of disabled children proper health care practices and finding resource persons who could help the centre in its daily activities. The desire to share her knowledge and experience in community development and volunteer work encouraged Shamrock to become a disaster and relief volunteer, first with the local organisation Myanmar Egress Capacity Development Centre and later with the AVP. She was very excited to become an ASEAN volunteer not only because of her interest in community development work, but also because of her desire to help her countrymen affected by the Cyclone.

She later learned that life as a volunteer in disaster-stricken areas is not easy, but her work with her fellow volunteers spurred her on. “I am very thankful that I had been involved [in the TCG-endorsed project.] I also would like to commit to try and improve my capacities in order to contribute to constructive change in Myanmar,” she said. Knowing that the AVP made an impact in the local communities where they worked, Shamrock said she would like to volunteer in other countries if the need arises in the future. “I am grateful for all the help of ASEAN volunteers who sacrificed being away from their family to come and help my country and my people. If



there is a similar disaster in another country in the region, I will definitely come to help. That will be the least I can do to pay back what other volunteers are doing for Myanmar,” she said.

Her experience as a volunteer taught her the value of working together and looking after the greater good instead of individual gains. She called on various local organisations working to rehabilitate the Cyclone-affected areas to collaborate, work together and share knowledge in improving the lives of their countrymen. “We have to learn from past mistakes and improve. Only the development of our communities, our environment collectively will lead to the development of our country. Therefore, to perform development projects, we should all work together as one team with great synergy,” she said. Shamrock hopes the local communities will sustain the work that the ASEAN volunteers started.

“NGOs, and other organisations will not be in our community always... Only the community members and village volunteers will remain in the community. Therefore, the community members should participate and contribute to develop and sustain reconstruction efforts to build a brighter future,” she said.



U Kyaw Thu, TCG Chair (centre) together with TCG members and an implementing partner visit the project in Pyapon. Photo by AHTF Coordinating Office

dry season. In the construction of the small-scale infrastructure; the villagers, as project implementers, were heavily engaged in the process of prioritising their needs, in deciding on their working and rest hours, and in facilitating the purchase of proper local materials.

- Tha Leik Gyi - improved the road connecting the monastery and the farthest part of the village to the main Pyapon highway;
- Tha Leik Kalay - improved the road connecting the monastery and a part of the village to the main Pyapon highway;
- Mae Nyo - improved the village's main farm-to-market road;
- Tha Leik Chung and Tha Leik Too Myaung - connected the two villages through repairing a footbridge;
- Poe Swar - connected the villagers to its primary school and to Tha Leik Gyi village through the construction of two footbridges.

Distribution of pest control guides and installation of a trial drip irrigation system facilitated knowledge sharing

among the farmers and technical specialists. Through a needs assessment, pest control guides were distributed to the farmers and a trial drip irrigation system was installed and demonstrated with the help of IDE/M technical staff.

The small-scale infrastructure priorities fostered community empowerment and volunteers. The formation of informal committees in each village promoted a shared sense of responsibility, ensured the participation of women, and created a venue for interaction and cooperation among the ASEAN volunteers, villagers, local village authorities, and the village tract heads.

Volunteering the ASEAN Way

Kyi Phyu Win Thant
ASEAN Volunteer from Myanmar

The opportunity arose for Kyi Phyu to become an ASEAN volunteer five months after the Cyclone struck. Despite postponing his post-graduate diploma class to pursue volunteer work, Kyi Phyu was happy to have had the chance to help rebuild farms in the disaster-affected areas in Pyapon. At that time, he recalled that he was very excited and was full of ideas about rehabilitation and rural development.

Kyi Phyu said that becoming an ASEAN volunteer helped him improve his skills in community mobilisation. Even though there were challenges such as sickness and a lack of potable water, among others, none of the volunteers wanted to leave the affected communities where they were volunteering. The urge to help was too overwhelming, he notes.

He helped rebuild small farms and in the summer paddy production as well as the constructing roads and bridges.



Herecalls that every morning, the office where the volunteers were based was full of villagers happy to assist them.

Kyi Phyu and volunteers from other Member States made use of reference materials to guide them with their tasks. More importantly, a sense of teamwork helped them successfully accomplish what they set out to do. “We implemented our project in the ASEAN way. We brought about an awareness of ASEAN through the distribution flyers and palm flags. Eventually, villagers and ASEAN volunteers became like family. I will always keep a picture in my heart of the tear-filled eyes and sad faces of the villagers and fellow volunteers when the time came to say goodbye,” he recounted. Kyi Phyu said that he will never forget his experience as an ASEAN volunteer. “There were no foreigners, just ASEAN. We are all ASEAN and we are all family,” he concludes.

Making Waves in the Delta

Dwight Jason Ronan
ASEAN Volunteer from the Philippines

When Dwight Jason Ronan, 21, a new graduate from the Philippines was about to accept a job offer with a telecommunications company in Manila in December 2008, a phone call from Myanmar changed his mind. The phone call was an offer to be an ASEAN volunteer. "In December 2008, everything was in total blur. I just finished my university degree and I wasn't sure where I was headed next. I was totally at a lost and it was like being overwhelmed with the awaiting possibilities. I didn't know if I was to 'go with the flow' or 'make my own flow and go'. I was about to enter the 'corporate world' when the unexpected happened. Little did I know, another fate awaits me," narrates Dwight. He turned down a full time job offer in order to become an ASEAN volunteer in Pyapon Township. When Dwight happened to come across a picture of a dead body during the Cyclone Nargis, he was grieved and unhappy. "I felt angered because I think the people deserve more and I feel privileged because I am now part of the team to help rebuild people's livelihoods." Two weeks later, Dwight flew in to Yangon still expecting the unexpected.

After four months Dwight lived with the villagers of Tha Leik Gyi helping them rebuild their livelihoods which were destroyed by Cyclone Nargis. Dwight recounted his experience



in the Ayeyarwady Delta, "It's hard enough to adjust living in a country with a different culture, but it's even harder to adjust with the Myanmar people still coping from the Nargis's wrath. It took us awhile to adjust with a different country. But, I could still vividly remember seeing some of the raw photos from the initial assessment of IDE-Myanmar, our implementing partner, and it really shook me to my core. After seeing the photos, I told



myself that instead of being too fixated on thinking about my family and friends in the Philippines and the things that I don't have at the village, I will instead put all my efforts in helping the villagers of Tha Leik Gyi."

Despite language barriers, the bond between ASEAN volunteers and local people grew stronger as the project progressed. Although the living condition was very basic as

compared to home, Dwight felt that there was a need for the volunteers to live close to the villagers to let them know that ASEAN cares about them and that they are not alone in facing the hardship. "This also reflects our commitment to bringing ASEAN to the people and bringing people to ASEAN," Dwight said.

For Dwight, becoming an ASEAN volunteer was truly a once in- a-lifetime experience. As a budding development worker, Dwight said that the ASEAN experience has really helped him improve his skills. "More importantly, the experience really changed me personally. The villagers welcomed and treated us like family. It's especially heart-warming when you see the villagers actively participating in the consultation meetings for the infrastructure initiatives, visiting your house early in the morning just to say hi, inviting you to their houses to taste their home-cooked mohinga and lah pa toat, and the children asking to play football with you. The wide smiles on the villagers' faces, despite what they've been through, are evidences of how resilient the Myanmar people are," he said.

Saying goodbye to the villagers was not easy. Dwight recalls that the prevailing mood at the last meeting with the village leader was a mixture of sadness and hope. "We were sad because we we're about to leave Tha Leik Gyi, our second home. But we were also hopeful that the things that we've accomplished in the village would truly be sustainable and beneficial for the villagers. Our only wish, when the project ended in April 2009, was that in some little ways we hope we brought about change in the lives of the Tha Leik Gyi villagers, because they surely changed our lives," he concluded.

Conquering Fears with Community Smiles

Hasimah Ismail
ASEAN Volunteer from Malaysia

Before she arrived in Myanmar, Hasimah was a volunteer for the Rakan Muda Volunteer Programme. “I was upset when I first saw the level of destruction caused by Cyclone Nargis. The living conditions of the local people are so poor as compared to Malaysia,” she said. Hasimah has a keen interest in community development and is proud of what she and the other volunteers managed to accomplish in Bogale Township. As an ASEAN volunteer, she supported a Disaster Risk Management (DRM) project, which Mingalar Myanmar (MM) spearheaded. The project aimed to raise community awareness through meetings and workshops with stakeholders and also to gather data and develop a DRM action plan to build the community’s capacity. It also included the planting of mangrove with community participation.

Hasimah felt nervous prior to her arrival in Myanmar since she had never travelled alone abroad. However, her anxiety vanished as soon as she joined the team in Bogale because of



warm reception from the team and the villagers. “I am happy to be with my team because we learned from each other, and shared stories with them and the villagers. I think this is the benefit of being an ASEAN volunteer. And without the support of Myanmar volunteers, it would have been impossible for us to carry out the project,” she said.

She considered memorable her experience planting mangroves for the first time, particularly dipping her feet in the mud during the dry season. Her memories with the community remain engraved in her heart. “Despite all the difficulties of living far away from home, our team was hoping to stay longer in order to contribute more to the Delta,” she said.



Building Resilient Communities in Bogale

Improving community resilience to future disasters by raising community awareness through the development of disaster preparedness and mitigation initiatives was the goal of a CBDRM project. The project was implemented between January and August 2009 in five villages in Hay Man Village Tract, Bogale Township.

Six ASEAN volunteers from four countries, i.e. Thailand, Malaysia, Cambodia and Myanmar, worked hand-in-hand with Mingalar Myanmar and villagers to foster community engagement in all CBDRM activities, from planning to implementation. Communities were encouraged to plant mangroves and in doing so were made aware of the importance

of environmental protection as a disaster mitigation activity. A livelihood-based activity also was conducted in targeted villages to support the most vulnerable families.

Building capacities to reduce disaster-related risks.

The Community-Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) training significantly raised community awareness on disaster risk management and strengthened the capacities of villagers and community leaders, which are shared with neighboring villages. In each village, CBDRM trainings were conducted twice. The first training was conducted for two days, which provided a common understanding on disaster risk reduction measures. Participants were oriented on some assessment tools, such as Participatory Risk Assessment (PRA) and Participatory Vulnerability Assessment (PVA). It served as a platform for the



Former Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN for Socio-Cultural Community Dr Soeung Rathchavy (centre) together with Senior TCG members inaugurate reconstructed bridge in Bogale, 1 May 2009. Photo by AHTF Coordinating Office

villages to form village disaster risk management committees (VDRMC). The follow-up training was carried out in four days, the VDRMCs were encouraged to make a SWOT (Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Threat) analysis to design a village risk assessment, draw a village hazard and resource map, and make a Village DRM action plan.

- **Community Hazard and Resource Maps.** A series of CBDRM trainings were facilitated by the ASEAN volunteers. One of the results of the trainings was community maps, which enabled the villagers to be aware of their hazard risks, vulnerabilities and resources. This is a first step to build resilience to future disasters;
- **Learning about Early Warning.** As part of the CBDRM trainings, the communities learned practical ways to understand early warning tools and how to act upon them;
- **Mangroves Planting.** In order to raise community awareness on the importance of mangroves and to share

knowledge on mangroves planting techniques, a series of Training of Trainers for proper mangroves planting techniques was provided;

- A Mangroves Preservation Committee was also formed to ensure the mangroves plantation plan is implemented;
- A total of 61,277 mangroves plants were planted in five villages. Several species of mangroves were introduced to ensure a higher percentage of preservation;
- The following species were deemed to have a higher survival rate in the given environment: *Nypa Frruticans*, *Sonneria Caseolaris*, *Aegiceras Corniculatum*, *Heritiera Fomes*, *Barringtonia Gymnorhiza*, *Punt Tha Kar*, *Bruguieva Parviflora*, *Ceriops Tagal* and *Kandeliar Candel*.

Livelihoods support. Based on the community meetings, 436 out of 438 households received livelihood support packages in five villages. Two households later declined to receive livelihood assistance because they had already



purchased farming animals. Among the most vulnerable households, livelihood support prioritised: women-headed, aged, disable, orphans, widow and widower.

The supported livelihood items included chicken, piglet, duck, buffalo, fishing boat, fishing gear, sewing machine, carpenter tools and cash for small-scale trading and gardening/farm. After providing the livelihood support, the ASEAN volunteers monitored and evaluated the project outcomes for further interventions to enhance resilience among the villagers. The results noted that villagers could earn better income, plan their livelihoods, and contribute to food security.

Through this project, the ASEAN volunteers have introduced conserving mangroves to reduce disaster risks and revive the ecosystems affected by the Cyclone. Village Mangroves Preservation Committees were also formed to ensure a regular monitoring and preservation. The project has demonstrated a good example of disaster mitigation initiatives for possible replication in other areas or of other agencies.

Village infrastructure development. A total of seven bridges, three jetties, small dams improvement, five water ponds, four village roads improvement and five community centers were built in five villages.

Through the cash-for-work approach, the following infrastructure were built and/or renovated:

- Kyone Lhut Thit village: pond renovation, jetty, village road improvement and community centre as a primary school;
- Kyone Lhut Gyi village: gasifier and electricity and community centre.
- Nga Man Chaung village: pond renovation, village bridge, village road, jetty, community centre, and gasifier and electricity support;
- Tha Htay Gone: village bridge, jetty, two ponds, village road, community centre as a nursery school.

Cooperating Across Borders

Colleen Koh
ASEAN Volunteer from Singapore

Colleen had always been interested in volunteering. She was between jobs when the opportunity to volunteer in Myanmar arose, and she didn't hesitate to become an ASEAN volunteer. Colleen had no expectations upon her arrival. She simply wanted to do her best and contribute in whatever way she could.

She helped rehabilitate fishing and farming livelihoods in the village where she was assigned. The project she participated in also included the construction of roads and other infrastructure improvement activities. "For me personally, I think the largest impact would be the infrastructure projects, which were mainly the construction of roads. For the villagers specifically it will really reduce the amount of time to reach town which is important in selling the local produce, for going to school, and even just going to town to buy all the necessities," she said. She found the villagers to be warm, hospitable and attentive to the needs of the volunteers. "I also want to say that the villagers are very knowledgeable in their own ways. They are all farmers, fishermen... So, they are actually the experts, they really need to be the consultant in this kind of project," she added. Colleen said she learned a lot from other volunteers.



In particular, she enjoyed singing songs and playing games on improving study habits among community children.

"For the adults, we conducted specific trainings such as home gardening for the housewives as well as agriculture training for the farmers. We also provided conversational English lessons for some of the villagers. We tried our best to contribute something beneficial to the villagers." But for her, the most memorable part of her volunteer experience was organising a movie screening for the village. "It was very heart-warming to see the crowds of villagers. They came to watch the movie. And they enjoyed themselves. I found it really touching," she said. Despite the differences in cultures, Colleen really appreciated working with other ASEAN volunteers, especially those from Myanmar. "Seriously, without them, regional volunteers would not be able to do much. We do not have the local knowledge. We can't even speak the language. They really provided a great help. They even check the feasibility of some of my suggestions. That's something that I really appreciate," she concluded.



Restoring Livelihood Opportunities through Community Building in Kawhmu and Kunyangon

“I am thankful to ASEAN and BDA for building the bridge and renovating the road in our village. When we have good roads and mode of transportation becomes more accessible, our living situation will improve. The project also provided the villagers with power tillers and rice mills that are very useful for the farmers to restore their livelihoods. With the inputs provided to us, I am confident that if all the villagers work hard together and we will enjoy the benefits of our labour.”

— U Zaw Win, Village Head

The objective of the project was to provide livelihood support to under-assisted communities affected by Cyclone Nargis. It was implemented by Border Development Association (BDA) with ASEAN volunteers in Thongwa, Paygone, Tawkayan and Yaytainvillage tracts of Kunyangon Township as well as the Nyaungbinthar and Pyamatvillage tracts of Kawhmu Township. Livelihood packages were provided in the three sectors of agriculture, fishery and livestock breeding. The target beneficiaries were casual labourers as they are the most vulnerable group and account for about half of the village population.

The main priority for the project was the provision of livelihood packages in the three sectors of agriculture, fishery and livestock breeding. The target beneficiaries will be casual labourers as they are the most vulnerable group and



Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN for ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community, Dato' Misran Karmain (centre) and Special Envoy of the Secretary-General of ASEAN for Post-Nargis Recovery in Myanmar, Dr William Sabandar together with implementing partner inspect the project-funded rice-mill in Kungyangon on 28 June 2010. Photo by AHTF Coordinating Office

now account for about half of the village population.

Seven ASEAN volunteers, three regional (Cambodia, Thailand and Singapore) and four Myanmar nationals, were deployed to assist the local implementing partner, BDA. The team of volunteers carried out initial groundwork at the village by conducting needs assessments and facilitated the election of the village committees. The volunteers were instrumental in supervising the construction of the infrastructures and undertaking project monitoring and evaluation in the villages. The volunteers also actively carried out training and enrichment programs for the village communities that included first aid training, conversational English lessons, township marathon, and management training for the village committee.

Fostering collective ownership of assets by the community. The project initiated the collective ownership of assets by the village communities. The mechanism and

facilitation for the usage of the assets was formulated by the village development committee. A minimal rental is charged for the usage of the assets and the cash will be utilised for the development of the village. The communal ownership of assets ensures that everyone in the village has an opportunity to use the assets provided and provides a mean for longer term development at the village.

Ensuring sustainability. Village development committee to facilitate and monitor project – the role of the village committee was crucial to ensure that the communities had ownership of the project. The village committee took the lead in ensuring that project infrastructures and activities were carried out as planned in each of the village. The capacity of the committee members was further strengthened by the trainings provided to them.

Fostering Community Partnerships

Un Bunneng ASEAN Volunteer from Cambodia

Bunneng became an ASEAN volunteer not only to help people in need, but also to learn from them. He wanted to learn from the projects he was involved in and, hopefully, someday use that knowledge by fulfilling his goal of becoming a Project Manager. Because of his mindset, Un was not discouraged when he and other volunteers encountered problems in implementing projects. “We tried to improve the situation for the good of future projects, for future projects of the region, not only in Myanmar,” he said.

Bunneng had several expectations when he began his stint as a volunteer and he quite happily met most of them. The villagers are very open and helpful and they had very good ideas when it came to needs assessment, he said, adding that community meetings on needs assessment were particularly successful. “Everyone in the village came and participated in the discussion freely. Through these community meetings, the villagers are somehow empowered to say what they need and want for their villages, which fostered ownership of the projects.” he explained.

According to him, one good thing about the project is that the people are more aware of what ASEAN is. “I think that



people got to know ASEAN more through these projects. And I think they felt that ASEAN countries came to help them as brothers and sisters, also they don't feel alone anymore, they don't feel isolated. This is my second time, the project and the challenges may be different but their warm smiles are still the same.” he said.

Bunneng enjoyed being an ASEAN volunteer and would recommend the programme to his friends. “If one of my friends wanted to join, I would tell that I have learned a lot from this ASEAN project,” he concluded.

ASEAN without Strangers

Azman Irawady bin Haji Mohd Yusof
ASEAN Volunteer from Brunei Darussalam

Besides accepting an assignment from the Brunei Government, Azman Irawady became an ASEAN Volunteer because he thought it was a great opportunity to learn lessons about volunteer work that he could apply to Datalish Adventure, an NGO in Brunei where he also works as a volunteer. And his wish indeed came true.

Azman's experience in Myanmar taught him life lessons in leadership and showed him the value of resilience, honesty and friendship.

He fondly recalls one incident where he had high fever and his co-volunteer from Cambodia Ly Vongrith sacrificed time and energy to nurse him back to health. "He was there every second looking out for me at the guesthouse where we were staying. That was when I truly understood the value of real friendship. I realise he is like my ASEAN brother helping another brother selflessly. Even though we didn't speak the same language and we're from different cultures, there were no boundaries between the ASEAN community," Azman said.



On the second instance that he fell ill, the people from the local community where Azman was working took care of him. "Like the previous instance when I got sick, we did not speak the same language but that did not stop them from understanding my dire straits and helping me recover," he said.

Azman will never forget the warm welcome he received when he arrived in Saluseik in Labutta Township. "Everyone was so friendly and smiles were everywhere. It was like coming home." It was also there that the importance of ASEAN to the community really hit home. "I remembered a local telling me, 'ASEAN is like the 10 fingers of our hand. Without all 10 fingers, we would not be able to do a good job,'" he added. Azman hopes the people of Saluseik build on the efforts that the ASEAN volunteers initiated in their community.



Supporting Safer and Productive Communities in Labutta

“Usually commercial fishermen like me are often overlooked by aid agencies because we are not the most vulnerable people in the village. The truth is that after Nargis, we are as poor as everyone else in the village after losing all our assets. I am very happy and grateful to receive to receive this boat. I never imagined that I would be able own a boat again, let alone build it myself. I will treasure the experience and knowledge learned from taking part in the boat constructions and maintenance. I look forwards to being able to repair my own boat if there is any problem with it in future.”

— U Hla Win, beneficiary of commercial boat

Seven volunteers from Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Malaysia and Myanmar supported the implementation of the project. The volunteers worked together with the Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED) and the village in supporting the process of stimulating local economy and making safer communities.

The project was a multi-level interventions in the livelihoods (agriculture and fisheries), water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and disaster risk reduction (DRR) sectors. The project activities were aimed at working with communities to improve their capacity to respond to and reduce the effect of disasters. In addition communities will have an improved asset base in the agricultural and fishery sectors and improved skills to manage these livelihood assets in the future. Lastly, improved access to clean water and sanitation facilities will contribute to restoring the pre-Nargis living conditions. It will also reduce the risk and

prevalence of diseases which represents a serious impediment to households' livelihoods development and increases their vulnerability.

Initial needs assessment showed that communities still need direct assistance to rebuild their livelihoods including such activities as provision of piglets, seeds and fertilizers and fishing equipment and fishing net repair kits. The project aimed to work with the communities so that they manage their own assets effectively and efficiently.

The volunteers were deployed to the project sites to provide support to the disaster risk management team by contributing to the definition of the strategy, participating in community mobilisation sessions and CBDRM process. The volunteers assigned to the WASH team facilitated the communities for CFW (Cash For Work), conducted analysis on hygiene KAP (knowledge, attitudes, practices) and carried out training to enhance hygiene practicing and water storage capacity. The team that was assigned to the fisheries sector provided support to boat construction and fishing net distribution by verifying the list of beneficiaries, contributing to the survey carried out on boat maintenance and repair needs and participated in a first selection of villages for potential boat distribution in Middle Islands.

Transfer of skills. The project focused the active transfer of skills from the project implementers to the community. The training on build back better was done to ensure that communities knew the method to integrate DRR techniques in all constructions. The trainings were held in the form of knowledge-sharing discussions to initiate two way flow of information. The boat building activity in the two boat stations in the projects villages involved the beneficiaries who were provided with on the job training in carpentry and boat-building. During the set-up of the rain water harvesting system, each household representative was provided with practical demonstrations on the construction methods and training on good water storage practices.

Re-establishing business networks. The ASEAN volunteers facilitated the meeting between beneficiaries with fishing gear suppliers in Labutta town interested in strengthening their business relations with fishermen in villages in the Delta. The initiative creates as well as recreates connections between fishermen and local suppliers, thus promoting the local economic network which was severely disturbed by Nargis and the subsequent flow of external aid.

Sustainable livestock rearing - piglet banking system – is intended to foster pig breeding at village level and to promote the local livestock trade. The mechanism for the banking system was aimed at formalising and fine-tuning the already existing traditional type of banking system that operates in the communities. Beneficiaries were divided into loose groups of six of which one would be provided with a boar that services the other five females. The primary beneficiaries with a sow would be obliged to breed it and piglets would be handed over in pre-determined proportions to secondary beneficiaries. This also ensures that a larger number of beneficiaries benefit from the distribution of livestock. 250 piglets were initially distributed across 21 villages and based on the banking system the secondary beneficiaries are projected to be around 209 households. However the establishment of successful livestock banking systems requires considerable investments of time and effort by all concerned stakeholders. A longer duration is essential to attain desirable results and to ensure that the mechanism is in place as well as sustainable.

Assistance to commercial fishermen. Commercial fishermen were severely effected by Cyclone Nargis when they lost their boats and the means to continue fishing. The impact of the Cyclone on commercial boat-owners is often overlooked. The lost of assets by the commercial boat-owners not only had an impact on their livelihoods but also impacted the overall village communities that depend on them for income generating opportunities. The provision of commercial boats to 18 households ensures that commercial boat-owners are able to re-establish their fishing activity.

Learning the Value of Community Engagement

Ly Vongrith
ASEAN Volunteer from Cambodia

Vongrith had been working in community development and disaster management in Cambodia before becoming an ASEAN volunteer in Myanmar. Encouraged by his commitment to help the most vulnerable people affected by natural disasters, he decided to join the volunteer programme, especially because the affected population was part of the ASEAN community. Vongrith said his experience in Myanmar greatly improved his technical knowledge in responding to large-scale natural disasters.

“Cambodia has not experienced a cyclone like Nargis. I learned a lot — how to protect communities, how to set up early warning systems and how to build safe zones and reduce the risk of disasters,” he said.

Working with colleagues from Brunei Darussalam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand and Singapore also



taught him the value of community engagement. Living together in the same facility with the other volunteers allowed them to share experiences, ideas and responsibilities in moving their projects forward and fostered a sense of community among the ASEAN volunteers.

He considers the hospitality and trust extended by the people in the affected areas to the ASEAN volunteers his most treasured memory. Vongrith hopes that the communities he worked with will continue working together through their local disaster management committees to protect and reduce the risk if disasters strike again in the future. “For the communities, they should work together and advocate for more Government participation and investment in community development. They should also develop a community network,” he suggested.

Overcoming Barriers

Mangala Namasivayam
ASEAN Volunteer from Malaysia

Mangala found it very appealing to take six months off from work and go to a place she would be of use in helping someone's life change for the better. That was why she wanted to become an ASEAN volunteer. As a volunteer, Mangala said she had no expectations, and did not expect anything in return. "It has been an awesome experience. I think I learned more than what anyone else has learned from me. It has given me a new perspective," she said.

Mangala said that by working in the village she learned that life is a struggle, but the people endeavoured to go on surviving. She learned to tackle things without complaining, and expects that in going back to her life in Malaysia, she will see life differently. Mangala said she learned from her fellow volunteers as well. Coming from different cultures, mindsets and backgrounds, there were adjustments that had to be ironed out. However, she said the volunteers learned to overcome the challenges because they realised they were there for one purpose, and that is to help people who were in need.

Her experience in the village also taught her that culture and language is never a barrier when the intention to help is clear. She recounted a time she went to a village where seeing a foreigner was a first for most of the people. "They knew why you were there. The intention was clear. So language was never



a barrier. Every house we went to, whatever little they have, they shared it with us. To have somebody from outside 'come in,' for them it was indication that they will not be completely forgotten," she said.

Mangala feels that the participatory element of the programme is its biggest success. She said, "Every part, every stage of the project was implemented with the full participation of community. From the volunteer selection to needs assessments, it was done through mass meetings... And then from that step on, I felt that the villagers had ownership of the project. The villagers were allowed an opportunity to participate at each stage of the project activities.

"I think we sparked off something. We initiated the ability to mobilise the community. It was a collective decision-making process, which involves an approach on taking responsibility and doing it collectively. I believe we have initiated that. That's something that even if we leave, I would like to believe that this style or decision-making process would be continued. I personally think that this is the biggest strength of the project," she explained.



ASEAN volunteers together with an implementing partner facilitate the bridge construction in Pyapon. Photo by AHTF Coordinating Office

Strengthening and Restoring Livelihood Capacities in Pyapon

“Heading the family for the past 17 years has been a challenge. Being a casual labourer, I was never sure how much I was going to earn per day and always depended on others to provide me with job opportunity. Now, I have purchased a boat with the cash grant and use the boat for fishing and to ferry people from one village to another. Although I have to work hard but I am happy now because for the first time I feel in control of my own life.”

— Daw Than Kyin, Cash grant beneficiary

Through a process of local capacity building, the project aimed to meet the needs of landless labourers, small-scale fisher folk, households with large numbers of dependants, female-headed households, older people and the disabled who tend to be disproportionately affected by natural hazards and struggle the hardest to recover. ActionAid International-Myanmar (AA) and Aung Yadanar Social Association (ASA), along with the ASEAN volunteers, carried out the project in 13 villages in the village tracts of Let Pan Pin, Day DaLu, Ka Ni and Tin Pu Lwe in Pyapon Township. It focused on replacing and protecting livelihood assets of the poorest households while building resilient communities using participatory rural appraisal tools to strengthen family and community capacity to reduce disaster risks.

Six volunteers from Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia and Myanmar supported ASA cluster leaders and village volunteers in the facilitation and implementation of project activities. The volunteers played a crucial role in facilitating beneficiary selection, task force formation, community consultation for mitigation measures and in building the capacities of the field level team. The team also carried out a research project that aimed to improve understanding about the impact of disasters on the livelihoods of women and provide strategies to ensure livelihoods are better protected in the event of disasters.

“Through the first-aid and early warning trainings, the villagers including myself are feeling more informed and confident about our reactions to an eventual disaster. Furthermore, as most of the participants in these trainings were women, we feel empowered. With the skills acquired, we are more capable to take care of ourselves and our children. We also believe that we can now assist the men to safeguard our livelihood assets.”

— *Daw Moe Moe Thae, Phar Yar Gyi Kone, Member of the Disaster Management Committee (DMC) member*

The project approach looks at the entire community, but specifically targets those classified as most vulnerable (landless labourers, female headed households, older people and people with disabilities). The project used the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) tools to facilitate collection and analysis of information by community members. This approach shows a paradigm shift from a top-down, blueprint approach to a bottom up, people-centred, and process-oriented approach in project management.

It facilitated the usage of Participatory Vulnerability Assessment (PVA) in the villages to select cash-grant beneficiaries. The beneficiaries were selected by the villagers based on the list of criteria that they had collectively formulated

Participatory Methods

PRA is intended to enable people to conduct and have their own investigations and analysis. It emphasises local knowledge and involves communities in the inventorying, monitoring, and planning of the project activities. It is a collaborative process that actively empowers marginalised communities, de-emphasises hierarchies, helps to identify resource needs and promotes sustainability. The process of collecting PRA information is as important as the data itself and is part of the capacity training for the village volunteers. The PRA process actively triggers dialogues with the community and enables them to examine existing resource use practices, problems, conflicts, and opportunities thus providing a basis for developing more sustainable and productive livelihood activities.

to identify the most vulnerable people of the village. The beneficiaries chose their own livelihood option and the livelihood asset they needed.

Feasibility of the choice was analysed by Village Youth Volunteers with assistance from ASA field staff, ASEAN volunteers and ActionAid project staff. Once the cash grant was disbursed, the beneficiaries purchased assets according to their preferences. The cash grant are to be repaid into a revolving fund, which will be managed by the community-led Livelihoods Self-Help Groups (SHG). Through the revolving loan fund, the community members will achieve sustainable access to affordable credit which will stimulate economic activities as well as decrease and/or prevent indebtedness.

Promoting volunteers at every level – the volunteers from the ASEAN regional countries, Myanmar and the village communities worked together at every stage to achieve the

Volunteers as Agents of Change

Kyaw “Eric” Lyn Htike
ASEAN Volunteer from Myanmar

Eric became an ASEAN volunteer because he wanted to help the people affected by Cyclone Nargis and share the knowledge and experiences that he had gained from his previous work with humanitarian organisations and volunteering with MRCS.

As an ASEAN volunteer, he wanted to help as much as he can. “The ASEAN Charter includes a community-based rehabilitation strategy that can reach people at the community level. I want to help people. Whenever an ASEAN country needs help, we should help,” he stated. Eric was involved in a project that aimed to raise the community’s standard of living and reduce the risk of future natural disasters. “There were a lot of challenges working with different people and organisations, it was a first for all of us, but these were overcome by setting-aside our differences. The cooperation and capacity of the local implementing partner and village volunteers were very admirable. I was really inspired about it,” he recalls.

“By becoming an ASEAN volunteer, I learned that volunteering doesn’t come from the head, but comes from



the heart,” he said. His experience as a volunteer was fulfilling because it allowed him to learn from the communities, where knowledge was mutually shared. He did not mind working until all hours of the day and night to support the formation of self-help groups within the communities.

Eric also talked about the valuable experience of working with fellow volunteers from other ASEAN Member States. The experience gave him the chance to learn about and share knowledge about their respective traditions and cultures. “We all worked together to find a solution to our challenges. We can use this experience to guide us in the future. I hope that the communities take advantage of what they learned to achieve a much stronger life,” he concludes.

project objectives. The many interactions ensured active sharing of experiences and knowledge.

Creating ownership by empowering communities - the selection of village volunteers that were later trained to take the lead in the facilitation of the activities established ownership. The village volunteers will ensure that project initiatives remain sustainable even after the project phases out.

Promoting a participatory approach – villagers chose the beneficiaries based on what they categorised as vulnerable during mass meeting. As the selection process was done collectively and in consultation with the entire community, the possibility of conflict is reduced.

“When the ASEAN volunteers stayed in our village, in our houses and shared meals with us, we felt very happy and touched as we realised that we were not forgotten. As I saw the project team working hard to explain the projects to us and involve us in discussions about the project, I realised that this project was for our benefit and that I should also contribute. For me the SHG is the most significant part of the project because we, the members sat down and formed the rules and regulations. This was something that we set up, it belongs to us and we will try our best to continue it as we realise the importance of a back-up mechanism to help us in times of difficulty.”

— U Myo Myint, Tamar Pin, Member of Self-Help Group (SHG)

Facilitating longer-term solutions in providing assistance – the setting-up of Self-Help Groups (SHG) to manage the cash grants ensures that the livelihood assistance is more sustainable. The set-up and mechanism of the SHG is formulated by the community, giving them control and the responsibility to continue with the fund even after the project phases out.

Building capacity of local agencies and partners – various training activities were conducted in collaboration with local partners like Myanmar Red Crescent Society (MRCS), Myanmar Fisheries Federation, Township Livestock Department, Myanmar Agriculture Services and Township Fire Brigade to tap on the local knowledge that is readily available. The capacity building of local implementing partner facilitates the transfer of knowledge and skills for effective project management and implementation. This eventually ensures that the local partner staffs have the capacity to implement projects. 🍌

Looking Beyond Cultural Boundaries

Hsie Hsar Htun
ASEAN Volunteer from Myanmar

Joining the ASEAN volunteer project in Myanmar was an excellent opportunity for Hsie Hsar Htun to help the communities affected by Cyclone Nargis. Even in merely six months, Hsie Hsar managed to contribute her knowledge and her time to the community.

She also learned how to define what a volunteer is and improved her understanding about the critical needs in post-disaster situations. “I learned a lot from my experience working with volunteers from other ASEAN Member States. Though we had different cultural backgrounds and lifestyles, we overcame these challenges by relying on each other and working towards a common goal,” she said. Hsie Hsar believes that the assistance provided by the volunteer projects in the Ayeyarwady Delta to the communities is only a seed.



“We could see the plant grow fully in the future by working together. The role of the communities is to water the seed and to share the harvest. I believe that one day the seed will grow and flourish,” she said.



Chapter Four

Harnessing Lessons for Capacity Building

The ASEAN volunteers played a critical role in ASEAN's recovery operations in Myanmar and AVP represented a crucial initial step in realising an ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community in the region.

Living among the beneficiaries served as an opportunity for volunteers from different ASEAN Member States to share their respective cultures and also to assess the actual needs and concerns of the communities.

Successful programmes require community integration and that, in turn, requires that villagers be involved from the planning phase, including helping to coordinate with local authorities and other humanitarian agencies working within the community. In the case of the AVP in Myanmar, the consistent engagement of villagers through mass meetings enhanced community ownership and collaborative actions.

An ASEAN volunteer exchanges knowledge with the community. Photo by AHTF Coordinating Office



ASEAN volunteers together with implementing partner facilitate mass meeting for bridge construction in Pyapon. Photo by AHTF Coordinating Office

Lessons Learned in Volunteer Management

- **Recruitment.** It is essential to involve implementing partners in the process of the recruitment and identification of roles and responsibilities. Identifying the motivation of prospective volunteers is critical to the overall success of the programme;
- **Proper orientation and group dynamics** should be facilitated with implementing partners and volunteers to optimise management of expectations and roles;
- **Government endorsement** enhances responsibility and accountability to the programme while manifesting a sense of ASEAN community spirit;
- **Timely and consistent feedback and evaluation** is important in the promotion of volunteer solidarity and motivation (feedback on project progress, administrative matters and recognition);
- **Volunteers' duty station.** Living with targeted beneficiaries paves the way for improved mutual understanding of critical needs and enhanced project facilitation;
- **Formal Volunteer Code of Conduct and Manual** optimises project administration and promotes a sense of responsibility (including Volunteer and Implementing Partners Guidance Notes);
- **Local Government interaction and joint initiatives** with the volunteers helps build trust and improves understanding of ASEAN at the community level;
- **Timely and proper guidelines on calls for project proposals, finance and reporting** help improve project management and volunteer involvement.
- **Sufficient legal and institutional arrangements** is the key to good volunteer deployment and retention (e.g. Visa and Travel Authorisation);
- **Documentation and knowledge management** must be embedded in the programme at the beginning for better "entry and exit strategies."

Lessons Learned in Project Management

Community involvement is essential to conduct proper needs assessment

Together with the implementing partners, the ASEAN volunteers were instrumental in providing opportunities to villagers to express their immediate needs for accurate early recovery assessment. The ASEAN volunteers gathered household information from the Village Nargis Committees and established clustered occupational group meetings to assess and analyse the needs of villagers.

Villagers as the project implementers encourage ownership

ASEAN volunteers facilitated ongoing community meetings that gave villagers the opportunity to brainstorm how to share responsibilities and assign tasks for projects based on existing capacities. The meetings provided a perfect venue for project participants to report on their progress and address concerns. During the consultations, the villagers were encouraged to make decisions, with support from volunteers, about the design of the projects, including the steps necessary to carry them out and sequencing of activities.

Feedback mechanisms foster a sense of solidarity

To ensure a credible evaluation process for community-based projects, ASEAN volunteers trained villagers how to conduct interviews and focus group discussions. The presence of ASEAN volunteers in the community allowed for continuous monitoring and feedback as well as prompt problem solving.

Living in the community enhances knowledge and cultural exchange

The volunteers lived among the villagers, creating opportunities for a unique knowledge and cultural exchange. By living in proximity to the beneficiaries of the projects, volunteers not only heard about the needs and concerns of the community, they experienced them firsthand. For their part, the beneficiaries appreciated that the ASEAN volunteers lived among them as opposed to some agencies that they noted, “just come, give and go.”

Accountability and transparency improve coordination while building trust and confidence

ASEAN volunteers and implementing partners were involved in developing and distributing project information documents both in English and the local language, which were used to track beneficiaries and activities as well as solicit feedback. Community accountability banners were erected detailing the total cost, target completion dates, construction supplies and contact details for each activity. Such materials helped villagers, local authorities and humanitarian agencies stay informed about activities.

Civil society partnerships are essential to project success

Implementing partners contributed not only their expertise in livelihoods development but also their local wisdom. They had considerable experience working the villages and were able to pass on valuable feedback on the approaches and practices that had worked well for them in the communities. 🇲🇻



Chapter Five

Advancing Development Through ASEAN Volunteers

The spirit that propelled communities from all over the ASEAN community to devote their time, energy and resources to assisting survivors of Cyclone Nargis is the same spirit that is the cornerstone of the AVP. Through the programme, Member States were represented at the grassroots level as one community bound by a common purpose. Volunteers from across ASEAN Member States worked closely with local volunteers and partners to support community projects, blending expertise from across the ASEAN community with local culture, knowledge and skills. ASEAN volunteers not only learned from each other, they also brought ASEAN closer to the communities in which they worked.

The portrayal of volunteers as young ASEAN ambassadors for change is evident in the implementation of the projects. Working with villagers, the volunteers helped bring about change and development at the community level. They were

held in high regard because of their selfless work and respect for different cultural practices.

The volunteers also fostered lasting friendships at the community-level and with their fellow volunteers from different Member States. Based on mutual respect and cultural similarities, this bond allowed them to mutually come up with innovative ways to overcome obstacles.

Capitalising on experience-based approaches.

The ASEAN volunteers facilitated economic, social, cultural and emotional support essential for continuing recovery efforts in Myanmar that accelerate resilience in targeted communities. However, the effectiveness of volunteers depends highly upon how well volunteers and partners are coordinated to implement their respective projects. It is essential to document and disseminate effectively the concept and methodologies used in the programme, which provided invaluable lessons for future initiatives.

ASEAN volunteers assist in boat distribution in Labutta. Photo by AHTF Coordinating Office



**Institutionalising the concept of ASEAN volunteers.**

The programme demonstrated how volunteers from ASEAN Member States could support each other at the regional and local levels. It also spoke to the importance and potential of cultural exchange and assistance in promoting a culture of volunteers outlined in the ASEAN Charter and ASEAN Socio-Cultural Blueprint. It is vital to maintain the momentum and build upon the success of the ASEAN Volunteers Programme in Myanmar to further enrich cross-cultural exchange and understanding in the region. Manuals and guidelines on how to start and operationalise an AVP in each of the Member State must be thoroughly developed and institutionalised. ASEAN must continue to be strategic and creative in increasing outreach efforts. The ASEAN volunteers' website could be a springboard to raise awareness and encourage participation from even more volunteers in the ASEAN region. A roster of volunteers and civil society partners with specific expertise could be developed depending on specific needs. The AVP could be used to fill voids in needs for assistance.

Expanding volunteers programmes into development strategies. The AVP in Myanmar is one of ASEAN milestones and could be replicated in other ASEAN Member States, not only in the field of humanitarian assistance but also in other socio-development areas outlined in the ASEAN Charter and Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint. A measure of ASEAN's success in demonstrating the effectiveness of volunteers could be realised through the replication and scaling up of the programme by partners of development initiatives and further engagement with civil society. 🇲🇲

*An ASEAN volunteer supports a community activity (brick-making) in Labutta.
Photo by AHTF Coordinating Office*





ASEAN Secretariat convenes an ASEAN Awareness Workshop for the volunteers and other AHTF staff in March 2009. Photo by AHTF Coordinating Office

Coordinator for ASEAN Volunteers and Project Management :

Philipp Danao (Philippines)

The volunteers:

Thanapon Songput (Thailand)
Krongkeaw Sritaborvornpaiboon (Thailand)
Nattakan Songpagdee (Thailand)
Nattaya Davidson (Thailand)
Phyu Mar Aung (Myanmar)
Aung Myo Hein (Myanmar)
Kyaw Myint Aung (Myanmar)
Un Bunneng (Cambodia)
Tar Blut Bwe Moo (Myanmar)
Khin Thazin Myint (Myanmar)
Kyi Phyu Win Thant (Myanmar)
Ruby Bernardo Pineda (Philippines)
Dwight Jason Magro Ronan (Philippines)
Hasimah Ismail (Malaysia)
Boeun Chan Born (Cambodia)
Chit Min Htun (Myanmar)
Aug Myao Kyaw (Myanmar)
Kyaw Zin Oo (Myanmar)
Colleen Koh Lay Kah (Singapore)
Amornrat Rattanapan (Thailand)
Aung Min Min Ko (Myanmar)
Thet Myint Htoo Ba Saing (Myanmar)
Aung Ko Ko (Myanmar)
Pyi Sone Shwe Win (Myanmar)
Mangala Namasivayam (Malaysia)
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Implementing Partners:

ActionAid International-Myanmar (AA)
 Aung Yadanar Social Association (ASA)
 Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED)
 Border Development Association (BDA)
 International Development Enterprise-Myanmar (IDE)
 Mingalar Myanmar (MM)

Community Based Early Recovery Projects ASEAN VOLUNTEERS PROGRAMME 2008-2009

Title	TCG Pilot Project Seik Gyi Village Community-based Early Recovery Project	TCG Pilot Project Tha Leik Gyi Village Tract: Rebuilding Small Farm Livelihoods During the Dry Season	TCG Pilot Project Hayman Village Tract Community-based Disaster Risk Management
Target villages	Seik Gyi village, Myat Lay Yone Village, Naung Wine Village and Kyun Chaung Village Tawkhayan West Village Tract, Kungyangon Township	Tha Leik Gyi Village Tract (Tha Leik Kalay Village, Tha Leik Gyi Village, Mae Nyo village, Tha Leik Chaung Village, Tha Leik too Myaung, Poe Swar), Pyapon Township	Hay Man Village Tract (Tha Htay Gone village, Kyone Lout Thit Village, Kyone Lout Gyi Village, Nga Man Chaung village, Pa Tat/ Kan Su Vllilage), Bogale Township
Period	August-Nov 2008	December 2008-April 2009	Phase I: January-May 2009 Phase II: June-August 2009
Partner		International Development Enterprises Myanmar	Mingalar Myanmar
Budget	US\$ 138,725	US\$ 193,731	US\$ 199,040
Target Direct Beneficiaries	288 households in three villages	995 households in six villages	448 households in five villages
Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Restore the livelihood of Seik Gyi community through "Build Back Better" (BBB) methodology and process. 2) Repair community's micro-infrastructure. 3) Set up a pilot project to share knowledge and experience with other communities (villages, townships, divisions and Tripartite Core Group (TCG)). 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Improve household food security and reduce dependency on food aid. 2) Provide rural households with significant income gains. 3) Create season-long wage employment for landless households. 4) Improve agricultural production in the Village Tract. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Raise Disaster Risk Management (DRM) awareness. 2) Gather data and develop initial DRM action plan. 3) Facilitate village community discussions on the need to improve community assets. 4) Planting mangrove with expert advice and meeting and planning with the community. 5) Provide livelihood support packages to 65% of the community and provide wage employment in building village infrastructure with community engagement.
Title	TCG Pilot Project Seik Gyi Village Community-based Early Recovery Project	TCG Pilot Project Tha Leik Gyi Village Tract: Rebuilding Small Farm Livelihoods During the Dry Season	TCG Pilot Project Hayman Village Tract Community-based Disaster Risk Management
Approach	Build Back Better as part of a Community-based Early Recovery Approach.	A community-led approach with community participation and feedback through periodic needs assessment and progress monitoring surveys with close collaboration with ASEAN Hub team.	Community-focused approach by discussing and planning with the community to support needs and beneficiary identification while providing Disaster Risk Management training and expert assistance for mangrove plantation.

<p>Outputs/ Outcomes</p>	<p>1) 4.5 month break even point period; at least monthly US\$40-50 income every 15 days up to US\$200 per month/ household with addition of chemicals to prevent disease and fertilizer provided to households over 3-month project period.</p> <p>2) 34 fishing boats with providing drift for Seik Gyi village and extended support to build 29 fishing boats and 31 drift nets for Mayt Lay Yon Village.</p> <p>3) Monastery hall as a shelter, monastery walkway entrance and stupa hall were reconstructed. Renovation of Ordination Hall (Some renovation costs were covered by individual donors).</p> <p>4) Three new toilets built and two MSP drinking water tanks installed within the monastery compound in Seik Gyi Village and three toilets built in Kyun Chaung Village.</p> <p>5) 33 wells renovated and two reservoir tanks built (supported by a local company).</p> <p>6) Betel Leave Lesson Learnt Document drafted.</p> <p>7) DRM workshops, an initial preparedness plan and 25 ducks provided by Mingalar Myanmar as a partner of this project.</p>	<p>1) 1,100 acres of paddy were prepared, 11 hand power tillers and 255 gallons of diesel provided to villagers.</p> <p>2) Distributed 1,152 fertilizer bags to 472 rice paddy farmers covering 944 acres of paddy. About 103,840 baskets (2,160 metric tons) of rice paddy worth approximately US\$224,672 of total income for the whole village tract or US\$476 per household.</p> <p>3) Provided vegetable seed packets to 170 vegetable growers or about US\$34,000 of total income generated for the village tract or approximately US\$200 per household. (Value estimated by villagers at the rate of 1,000Kyats=1 US\$.)</p> <p>4) Construction/renovation of small-scale infrastructure: i) improved roads in Tha Leik Gyi and Tha Leik Kalay, Mae Nyo; ii) repaired footbridges in Tha Leik Chaung, Tha Leik Too Myaung and Poe Swa; and, iii) improved village's main farm-to-market road.</p>	<p>1) Community awareness raised and DRM action plan produced through 2-day CBDRM awareness workshop and second 4-day awareness workshops conducted in all villages. 500 villagers were trained.</p> <p>2) 436 households received livelihood support of animals, sewing machines, small scale trading, gardening and farm tools, fishing boats and gears and carpenter tools.</p> <p>3) 7 bridges, three jetties and five water ponds, village roads, gas fire, electricity, telephone, community centres, and village roads have been built or improved. Jobs and wages created for villagers.</p> <p>4) Nearly 58,000 mangrove plants planted and support plan produced. Mangrove plantation and preservation with community engagement.</p>
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Post-Nargis Preparedness and Recovery Projects

ASEAN VOLUNTEERS PROGRAMME 2009-2010

Title	Restoring Livelihood Opportunities through Community Building in Kungyangon and Kawhmu townships	Supporting Safer and Productive Communities in Labutta township	Strengthening and Restoring Livelihood Capacities in Pyapon township
Target Villages	Yaytain, Paygone, Ywartharyar and Wègyaungmingalar in Kungyangon Township Nyaungbinthar and Pyamut in Kawhmu Township	Five village tracts of Labutta Township: Gant Eik, Sin Chay Yar, Sa Lu Seik, Kant Ba Lar, and Thin Gan Gyi. Four village tracts located on Middle Island: Thone Gwa VT, A Htet Pyun VT, Kone Tan VT and Zee Phyu Seik VT	15 village communities in four village tracts of Let Pan Pin; DayDa Lau; Ka Ni and Tin Pu Lwe Village in Pyapon Township.
Period	16 Nov 2009 – 15 June 2010	16 Nov 2009 – 15 June 2010	16 Nov 2009 – 15 June 2010
Partner/s	Border Areas Development Association (BDA)	Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED)	ActionAid International – Myanmar (AA) with Local Implementing Partner - Aung Yadanar Social Association (ASA)
Budget	US\$ 109,280	US\$ 337,996	US\$ 167,688
Target Direct Beneficiaries	1,396 households in six village communities	3,322 households in 25 villages.	1,562 households in 15 village communities
Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) To increase farming crops / output through the use of farming equipment. 2) To restore fisheries production through replacement of boats and fishing equipment 3) To provide a permanent means of livelihood for casual laborers 4) To increase livelihood opportunities through employment opportunities associated with community infrastructure projects 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Communities are engaged and empowered to manage and reduce disaster related risks 2) Fisheries production restored and sustainability of fishing resources improved 3) The affected population has access to adequate safe water for drinking, cooking and personal and domestic hygiene, and to equitable and adequate sanitation 4) Farming communities' crops sustainably restored and improved, and productive capacity strengthened by replacing livestock, building livestock management capacity, and protecting existing livestock. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) To reinstate livelihoods by enabling villagers to replace assets through access to sustainable, affordable financial capital. 2) To build resilient communities through the implementation of disaster preparedness and mitigation measures. 3) To strengthen local capacity through training local NGO partner staff, Village Youth Volunteers, Livelihood Self Help Groups and village Disaster Management Committees. 4) To study the impact of disasters on women, particularly in relation to food security, income sources/livelihood options and coping mechanisms in order to better understand and address their specific strengths, vulnerabilities and needs
Approach	The project approach is centred on provision of livelihood support to under-assisted communities to serve as community assets to foster collective and cooperative ownership. These assets are used by the farmers and fishermen who will be supervised by the their respective Village Supervision Committees (VSC). The members of VSCs are mainly chosen by the communities and are envisaged as mechanisms for community solidarity and sustainability.	An integrated strategy, combining livelihoods support, disaster risk reduction and support to improve access to safe water and sanitation. It is based on four main components, each one contributing to the achievement of one or several of the targets set in the Post-Nargis Recovery and Preparedness Plan (PONREPP).	Replace and protect livelihoods assets of the poorest households and build resilient communities using a community based approach which will strengthen family and community capacity and reduce disaster risk.

Title	Restoring Livelihood Opportunities through Community Building in Kungyangon and Kawhmu townships	Supporting Safer and Productive Communities in Labutta township	Strengthening and Restoring Livelihood Capacities in Pyapon township
Outputs/ Outcomes	<p>1) Six rice mills, six two-wheel tractors and six trailers distributed for communal usage.</p> <p>2) 12 boats (with engine) distributed.</p> <p>3) Construction of two bridges.</p> <p>4) One school drinking concrete tank 4,000 gallons completed.</p> <p>5) Brick path and dyke built in two villages.</p> <p>6) Renovation and/or fencing for seven drinking water ponds.</p> <p>7) Construction and/or renovation of six village access roads.</p> <p>8) Four Artesian wells constructed.</p> <p>9) 440 most vulnerable people provided with a cash grant of 30,000 kyat each to purchase livestock or other livelihood assets.</p> <p>10) Organised training in agriculture for the farmers of six villages attended by 160 farmers.</p> <p>11) Organised First Aid Training for 45 trainers.</p>	<p>1) Disaster Management Committee (DMC) set up and Disaster Risk Management (DRM) plans developed for 15 villages.</p> <p>2) 209 community members representing 10-15% of households from 15 villages trained in emergency health response and search & rescue techniques.</p> <p>3) One first aid kit distributed for each of the 25 villages.</p> <p>4) 320 beneficiaries from 19 villages trained on build-back-better techniques to make building structures more resilient to environmental shocks.</p> <p>5) Students in 13 schools trained to raise awareness on disaster, importance of DRR in schools and evacuation plans for school children.</p> <p>6) 300 small boats handed over to beneficiaries.</p> <p>7) Six commercial boats with 28 HP engine distributed to a total of 18 beneficiaries.</p> <p>8) 83 beneficiaries trained on boat construction.</p> <p>9) 86 nets distributed to small boat beneficiaries.</p> <p>10) Fishing net repair kit distributed to 427 beneficiaries.</p> <p>11) Fishermen from 15 villages trained in better practices for boat maintenance.</p> <p>12) 229 houses constructed with concrete water container with hand pump (storage capacity 900 litres) and rain water harvesting system.</p> <p>13) 226 latrines built and 250 households trained in good hygiene practices.</p> <p>14) 16 farmers given cash grants of 24,000 kyat to employ casual labours for transplanting.</p> <p>15) 370 baskets (21 kg each) of paddy seeds and 753 bags (50 kg each) distributed to 16 farmers.</p> <p>16) 253 farmers from 5 villages took part in demonstration plots established to introduce the usage of modern seed storage techniques.</p> <p>17) 250 vaccinated piglets distributed and each recipient supplied with 32 kg of feed, vitamin tonic and mineral supplement.</p>	<p>1) 566 most vulnerable households from 13 villages provided with individual interest-free grants amounting to 100 US\$ each to replace livelihood assets.</p> <p>2) 2,279 vulnerable groups provided with loans with a nominal interest of 2% and repayment of the capital would depend on the group to which the grant is handed over.</p> <p>3) A total of 1,794 community members participated in Participatory Vulnerability Analysis (PVA) exercise to help communities understand and analyse their vulnerabilities related to their livelihoods.</p> <p>4) Setting up of self-help groups (SHG) for beneficiaries. In total, 36 SHG with 566 members were formed in the 15 communities.</p> <p>5) A total of 308 beneficiaries who were primarily women were selected for seeds disbursement.</p> <p>6) 1700 people participated in the preparation of community livelihood plans.</p> <p>7) Task forces involving 452 members' set-up in all 15 villages. The task forces formed were; i) search and rescue; ii) first aid; iii) early warning system; and iv) village disaster management committee (VDMC).</p> <p>8) 443 livestock vaccinated involving 109 households in 13 villages.</p> <p>9) Approximately 6,500 mangroves replanted as natural barriers to reduce risks of hazards and to improve the bio-diversity.</p> <p>10) Three multi-purpose shelters constructed.</p> <p>11) Three bridges constructed.</p> <p>12) One village school and one community hall renovated and strengthened.</p> <p>13) Construction of one village access road.</p> <p>14) IEC materials reprinted and distributed to raise awareness on disaster preparedness in all 15 villages</p> <p>15) 150 people trained in fisheries, home-gardening and livestock.</p> <p>16) Four drinking water ponds constructed and village community trained in safe hygiene practices.</p>

Notes

1. Ms. Adelina Kamal, Head of Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance Division of the ASEAN Secretariat, who headed the AHTF Coordinating Office for the first six months.
2. Dr. Anish Kumar Roy, Director for Community Affairs Development Directorate of the ASEAN Secretariat, who also served as the Special Representative for the Secretary-General of ASEAN in Myanmar in 2008. Personal interview. 11 August 2010.
3. The Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) is the key instrument for implementing disaster risk reduction, adopted by the Member States of the United Nations in Kobe, Hyogo, Japan in January 2005. Its overarching goal is to build resilience of nations and communities to disasters, by achieving substantive reduction of disaster losses by 2015 - in lives, and in the social, economic, and environmental assets of communities and countries. (Source: www.unisdr.org)
4. The ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) was signed by the ASEAN Foreign Ministers in July 2005 and entered into force on 24 December 2009, following ratification by all Member States. AADMER is a legal framework for ASEAN Member States to cooperate on disaster management and collectively respond to emergencies in the region. (Source: www.asean.org)
5. The ASEAN Charter is a legally-binding international agreement signed by the ASEAN Heads of State and Governments in November 2007 and entered into force in December 2008 by all 10 Member States. It serves as a firm foundation in achieving the ASEAN Community by providing legal status and institutional framework for ASEAN. It also codifies ASEAN norms, rules and values; sets clear targets for ASEAN; and presents accountability and compliance. (Source: www.asean.org)
6. The ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) Blueprint is one of the instruments under the Cebu Declaration on the Acceleration of an ASEAN Community by 2015 signed in January 2007. The primary goal of the ASCC is to contribute to realising an ASEAN Community that is people-centred and socially responsible with a view to achieving enduring solidarity and unity among the nations and peoples of ASEAN by forging a common identity and building a caring and sharing society which is inclusive and harmonious where the well-being, livelihood, and welfare of the peoples are enhanced. (Source: www.asean.org)

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

AADMER	ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response	RHO	Recovery Hub Office
ADB	Asian Development Bank	RIAS	Recovery Information and Accountability System
AHA Centre	ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management	RWG	Recovery Working Group
AHTF	ASEAN Humanitarian Task Force for the Victims of Cyclone Nargis	SASOP	Standard Operating Procedure for Regional Standby Arrangements and Coordination of Joint Disaster Relief and Emergency Response Operations
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations	SIM	Social Impacts Monitoring
BRR	Bureau for Recovery and Reconstruction Agency	TCC	Township Coordination Committee
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund	TCG	Tripartite Core Group
DALA	Damage and Loss Assessment	UN	United Nations
DFID	Department for International Development	UNCT	United Nations Country Team
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction	UNDAC	United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination
DRWG	Delta Recovery Working Group	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
ERAT	Emergency Rapid Assessment Team	UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
FRWG	Field Recovery Working Group	UNHC	United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee	UN Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
MoSWRR	Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement	UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
NDPCC	National Disaster Preparedness Central Committee	UNRC	United Nations Resident Coordinator
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation	UNRC/HC	United Nations Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator
ODA	Official Development Assistance	US	United States
PONAC	Post-Nargis and Regional Partnership Conference	VTA	Village Tract Assessment
PONJA	Post-Nargis Joint Assessment	WFP	World Food Programme
PONREPP	Post-Nargis Recovery and Preparedness Plan	WHO	World Health Organisation
PR	Periodic Review	YRWG	Yangon Recovery Working Group
RCC	Recovery Coordination Centre		
RF	Recovery Forum		
RH	Recovery Hub		

Government refers to the Government of the Union of Myanmar



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