



**RESILIENCE BUILDING THROUGH
WASH AND WASTE MANAGEMENT SUPPORT
in informal settlements**

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in Informal Settlements

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UN-Habitat Myanmar
No. 8C, Saw Mahar Street, Bahan Township,
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Resilience Building against COVID-19 through WASH and Waste Management Support in Urban Informal Settlements

BACKGROUND

Yangon Region was undoubtedly the epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic in Myanmar. Among the hardest hit by the health and socio-economic impact of the pandemic are the urban poor of Yangon, specifically the residents of Yangon's informal settlements. The success of the battle against COVID-19 in the country was in large linked to the success of the Yangon Region, hosting the largest urban agglomeration in the country.

The COVID-19 pandemic reminded us once again of the central role that WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene) play in protecting us from diseases. The provision of safe water, sanitation and waste management and hygienic conditions was essential for preventing and protecting human health during all infectious disease outbreaks, including COVID-19.

However, most of the COVID-19 recommendations were almost impossible to implement in informal settlements, where overcrowding, poor housing design and lack of access to water, sanitation and waste management facilities, make any form of physical/social distancing and simple interventions, such as regular washing of hands, extremely difficult. In addition, most households rely on day-to-day work to meet their living costs and do not have any savings or financial buffer to rely on to pay for basic services such as water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH).

As informal settlements suffer from poverty,

inequalities, and chronic infrastructural under-investment, it was vital that residents living in these areas are equipped and supported to tackle the pandemic effectively so as to help ensure the safety of all residents of the city.

Therefore, it was deemed as urgent and essential to help build more resilient water, sanitation, and hygiene systems that would deliver these fundamental services particularly to the neediest – both in the short term for preventive and protective measures as well as in the medium term in improving the living conditions to prevent from future pandemic. Ensuring access to critical WASH services was an essential component of Yangon's battle against COVID-19.



PROJECT OVERVIEW

Based on the COVID-19 response survey to informal settlements in Yangon conducted in 2020, UN-Habitat implemented the project for “building resilience against COVID-19 through WASH and waste management support in urban informal settlements” from March 2021 to April 2024.

This project had a specific objective to contribute to the country's effort to control and cut the transmission of COVID-19 by securing access to and sustaining the availability of WASH and waste management services in informal settlements including schools which are being attended by children of the residents, and to reach most vulnerable households with responsible information with the aim to prevent further expansion of the pandemic at home and in the community. Moreover, the project also aimed to improve the resilience of local communities to organize people and work together with multiple stakeholders in ensuring the efficacy of COVID-19 prevention interventions.

UN-Habitat implemented the following three inter-related components in 45 locations, 257 schools, and 42 community health clinics in eight target townships in Yangon.

- Component A:** Enhancing access to safe water and improved environmental sanitation in informal settlements
- Component B:** Improving solid waste management in informal settlements
- Component C:** Improving hygiene awareness and capacity of communities in informal settlements

OBJECTIVE OF THIS PHOTOBOOK

This booklet showcases nearly three years of project implementation where the human spirit of the target population is united to work for the resilience building of vulnerable target informal settlements in Hlaing Thar Yar, Dagon Seikkan, South Dagon, Insein, Dala, Shwe Pyi Thar, Thanlyin, and North Okkalapa Townships.

The project directly benefitted approximately 25,000 households representing 102,500 individuals and 257 schools with 170,777 students.



People's Process: Community-Driven Development and Recovery

The programme's strategy was anchored on supporting vulnerable target communities through a community-driven approach that allows them to be at the center of their community development. UN-Habitat strongly believes that unleashing the potential of the people is the only way in which all the affected people can work together for their recovery and development in a short time.

UN-Habitat People's Process supports and empowers local communities to play a major role in prioritizing their needs, programme design and implementation of all activities, and improving capacities for leadership, local governance and self-reliance. UN-Habitat provides communities with technical support and guidance throughout the programme. Much of the construction work has been implemented by allocating funds in installments to the organized community. All programme activities are directly executed by UN-Habitat in target areas through the People's Process by involving local communities.



Limited WASH
accessibility
in
informal settlements





6%
have access to piped water
(26% depend on rainwater)

55%
Share toilets with neighbors.
(11% practice open defecation)

59%
frequently dispose of their waste at
a community dumping site.

71%
of people take at least 30 minutes to
access the nearest health facility.

30%
of income was reduced on average in
the last 12 months after COVID-19.





Most of the COVID-19 recommendations were almost impossible to implement in informal settlements

COVID-19 preventive measures



The purpose of COVID-19 preventive measures was to support vulnerable households in informal settlements to practice major COVID-19 preventive practices by providing handwashing stations with soap, health care support packages that contain personal protective equipment (PPEs), distribution of Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials, reusable cloth masks and critical cleaning supplies in target communities, schools, and community health clinics.

COVID-19 preventive measures for communities







COVID-19 preventive measures for schools





COVID-19 preventive measures for community health clinics



Upgrading basic infrastructure and services



The purpose of upgrading basic infrastructure and services was to enhance accessibility to WASH and clean potable water sources. The project improved/ upgraded road segments to/ from water supply systems, improved drainage/ culverts alongside the roads, and installation of solar street lamps.



Enhancing safe water supply



The purpose of activities related to safe water supply was to improve accessibility of vulnerable households in informal settlements to treated potable water. The project distributed potable drinking water bottles for 4 consecutive weeks to vulnerable households because they normally are not able to access treated water, especially in the Dry Season.

To improve long-term clean water accessibility in communities and schools, the project also constructed water supply systems.



Water Supply Systems (Type 1) for vulnerable communities





Water
Distribution











Water Supply Systems (Type 2)
for schools in informal settlements
(Tametotto rainwater harvesting tank)





Construction of appropriate latrines
with septic tanks



To improve sanitation of the most vulnerable households and schools in informal settlements, the project constructed household and school latrines that appropriately manage defecation and minimize risks of virus transmission.





Establishment of solid waste management system at community level



To support the communities in building community-led waste management systems, UN-Habitat Myanmar together with Thant Myanmar implemented solid waste management (SWM) activities.

Specifically, the project conducted the following activities: a waste audit in selected communities, a KAP (Knowledge, Attitudes, Practices) survey, capacity building trainings on SWM and segregation, a plastic bag use reduction campaign, waste collection by community volunteers, clean-up campaign, compost making, and animal feeding by using organic wastes in cooperation with community volunteer and local authorities.











The United Nations Human Settlements Programme, UN-Habitat, is the agency of the United Nations dedicated to promoting socially and environmentally sustainable development of human settlements in an urbanizing world, with the goal of providing safer and inclusive human settlements. The agency provides technical assistance to countries and cities in the areas of urban governance, urban safety, housing, poverty reduction strategies, water management, post-disaster rehabilitation and disaster mitigation in human settlements. During the provision of support, UN-Habitat's approach, the People's Process instills capacities of hundreds of communities for achieving safer settlements, while delivering cross cutting impacts of local governance, sustainable livelihoods, empowerment and capacity building.

The project for “building resilience against COVID-19 through WASH and waste management support in urban informal settlements” had a specific objective to contribute to the country's effort to control and cut the transmission of COVID-19 by securing access to and sustain availability of WASH and waste management services in informal settlements including schools which are being attended by children of the residents, and to reach most vulnerable households with responsible information with the aim to prevent further expansion of the pandemic at home and in the community. Moreover, the project also aimed at improving resilience of local communities to organize people and worked together with multiple stakeholders in ensuring the efficacy of COVID-19 preventive interventions. UN-Habitat implemented three inter-related components in 45 locations, 257 schools, and 42 community health clinics in Hlaing Thar Yar, Dagon Seikkan, South Dagon, Insein, Dala, Shwe Pyi Thar, Thanlyin, and North Okkalapa Townships in Yangon.

