

DRC Myanmar | Poverty and Hunger Alleviation through Support, Empowerment, and Increased Networking (PHASE IN II) **via the European Union**



PROJECT SNAPSHOT | **Cash for Work (CfW) in Rakhine State**

Getting a job in Myanmar's Rakhine State to support a family and buy for example food or medicine, is close to impossible these days. Ongoing and increasing armed conflict, worsened by Covid-19 has affected and isolated communities even more since early 2020. Mrauk-U and Kyauktaw Townships are two such locations, where DRC has worked since 2009 to support people in need. Since the pandemic reached also these poor and isolated areas, people have struggled to access health services, and to be connected to markets to buy and sell local produce. Eventually they have lost possibilities to earn an income and exhausted their capacity to cope with the crisis. In most parts of Rakhine, people are now increasingly depending on, and waiting for, international humanitarian aid, but also more cut off from support than ever before.

Masks for emergency response

Masks are in high demand across Myanmar, but hard to find, including in Rakhine, where they are equally important as one of the key measures for virus protection. In mid-2020, the Government of Myanmar classified the production and distribution of masks as a critical life-saving activity, opening income-generating opportunities for DRC-supported beneficiaries. The graduates from DRC's EU-funded TVET-programme (Technical Vocational and Educational Training) were requested to help running a local mask production. Through DRC's Cash for Work programme, the women were quickly trained to set up a mask production and 20,000 masks were produced in just 10 days. The entrepreneurs could bring home both masks and profit to protect and sustain their families. To DRC, it enabled an emergency response with awareness raising campaigns complemented by the distribution of locally produced masks, along with cash grants to people in Mrauk-U's isolated villages.

Cash for work and business sustainability

By late 2020, 20 women had started sewing and tailoring shops, and more are under way. Another 40,000 masks are to be produced by the DRC-supported trainees and the female-run sewing shops. A business owner in Rakhine told DRC, that though Covid-19 has had negative consequences on populations and economy, the demand for masks had brought new opportunities for her as a business entrepreneur. She tells that she is now better able to work and survive though the hard times of both Covid-19 and conflict.

A European Union-funded project is under way in Rakhine State targeting extremely vulnerable men and women. Given the need for people affected by conflict and crisis to remain adaptive to the rapidly changing needs and context, DRC will support 200 vulnerable households' economic well-being through a combination of market relevant technical skills and financial literacy trainings. This will equip and position participants to find local jobs or be supported to start their own businesses. DRC will help people with new business knowledge and technical skills that are designed particularly according to conditions in their community to enable them to be more risk adverse and adapt new livelihoods to the crisis context.

Building new resilience

An integral part of protection and promotion of psychosocial wellbeing in a protracted displacement situation is education and training. Because of internal displacements, death of adult family members, loss of employment, etc. many families are faced with complete disruption of their livelihoods, provoking a

dramatic decrease in income and inability to adapt to new situations due to lack of proper skills or information. This was further evidenced in [DRC's Rapid Needs Assessment \(July 2020\)](#).

Tailor-made training for 200 entrepreneurs

DRC will support 200 men and women in Rakhine with individual start-up grants, business follow-up, mentorship and coaching during the start-up phase. DRC technical staff will support beneficiaries so that they have the ability to assess their readiness to start their businesses, develop realistic business plans, cost their products or services, ensure financial management and record keeping and skills on how to start their actual business. This training and support will be based on the ILO [Start and Improve Your Business \(SIYB\)](#) concept.

The criteria for selecting these entities and giving the financial support is based on the sustainability/profitability analysis of the business proposal/plan developed by the individual. Appraisal criteria will be weighted to account for women's vulnerability and income potential, so that more women receive grants than using traditional cost benefit analysis.

PHASE IN II is funded by the European Union and implemented by DRC in Myanmar between 2017 and 2021 in Maungdaw, Mrauk-U, Kyauktaw, Sittwe, and Pauktaw townships of Rakhine State through seven main project components:

*Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) ● Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) ● **Cash for Work (CfW)** ● Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLA) ● Community-driven Development (CDD) ● Business start-up Support ● Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance (MPCA)*

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This publication was produced with the financial support of the [European Union](#). Its contents are the sole responsibility of DRC and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.