

**WHY MYANMAR?**

Myanmar is plagued by **internal conflicts** which have been described as **the world's longest running civil war**. The country is also one of the most disaster-affected countries in the world. In the past 10 years, Myanmar has endured three powerful cyclones, two earthquakes, heavy flooding, and deadly landslides. In each case, thousands of families were forced from their homes, while the most severely affected suffered from drastic food shortages and loss of livelihoods.

The 2016 Global Climate Risk Index ranked Myanmar as one of the countries **the most affected by natural hazards** between 1995 and 2014. With a long coastline, a lengthy monsoon season, mountainous areas, communities in Rakhine State are particularly vulnerable to extreme natural hazards. Repeated exposure to events such as cyclones, flooding rivers, and landslides throughout their history has cultivated the innate ability of the people of Rakhine State to adapt and endure. However, as scientists within Myanmar and in the international community are discovering and communities are experiencing, weather patterns are starting to change throughout Rakhine State and the potential for larger and more devastating natural disasters is increasing. Add to this the ongoing intercommunal conflict displacing more people within the state, and the result is a "climate-conflict nexus" increasing risks for and testing the resilience of the local population.

In October 2016, following attacks on border posts by the Muslim community in Northern Rakhine State border with Bangladesh, the military commenced operations in this area. **All humanitarian access was cut off** from October to February 2017 and access was still limited in April. As a consequence of this recent round of conflict, a further estimated 74,000 people in Northern Rakhine State have been displaced to neighbouring Bangladesh, with an estimated 22,000 people displaced within Northern Rakhine State. Renewed tensions in Northern Rakhine State in Myanmar on 25 August, made entire villages from the Muslim community flee to neighbouring Bangladesh. It is estimated that more than 500,000 Muslims have crossed the border arriving by foot and boat. UNHCR camps are already full and resources are being stretched. The incoming refugees are staying in makeshift tents and urgently need shelter, food, safe drinking water, and medical care.

Confronted with the human suffering stemming from natural disaster and conflict in Myanmar, Medair aims to bring relief to those devastated by crises and caught up in what seems like a hopeless situation.

**PROJECT LOCATION**

In 2016, Medair provided urgently needed relief through two projects in Myanmar's Rakhine State. In Buthidaung Township, Medair supported cash-for-work projects to assist flood-affected households. In Sittwe, we supported a shelter reconstruction project in a camp for internally displaced people. In 2017, we finalised another shelter project in a camp for internally displaced people in Sittwe.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS****Cash Assistance for Flood-Affected Households**

As a result of heavy flooding in 2015, many farm-based villages in Buthidaung Township, Rakhine State, lost much of their annual harvest. Without a crop to harvest, households were both deprived of their primary source of income as well as their main source of food. To survive, the most vulnerable families, already living hand-to-mouth, resorted to reducing their meal sizes or skipping meals entirely.

Medair funded cash-for-work projects in six of the most affected villages. Families were invited to earn money by participating in pond-renovation projects, which benefited everyone in the village by providing greater access to drinking water.

**Urgent Shelter Reconstruction**

In mid-2015, a powerful cyclone destroyed many of the communal shelters which accommodate internally displaced people (IDPs) living in one of Sittwe's camps. Nearly a year later, a number of the shelters had not been rebuilt. With Myanmar's long monsoon season fast approaching, 142 families were without adequate shelter.

In 2016, Medair provided funding to rebuild 15 shelters. The project was completed in time for the 142 families to move into the communal shelters before the arrival of the rainy season.

In February 2017, after completion of both a technical and household vulnerability assessment, Medair identified that there were 97 shelters in need of complete reconstruction or major rehabilitation. By the end of June 2017, Medair finalised a new project and provided shelter to 544 families, ensuring that over 2,600 vulnerable people are not required to sleep in the mud during the rainy season anymore, a terrible situation for any family to be in.

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## FUTURE PLANS

### Disaster Risk Reduction

Whilst we know that we cannot prevent disasters from happening, the more that a community or family is prepared before a disaster, the more likely it is that they will survive, and the more quickly they can recover. In partnership with government agencies and international actors involved in disaster risk management, Medair proposes to complement existing efforts in disaster preparedness, hazard mitigation, and recovery planning by partnering with the most vulnerable communities in hard-to-reach places. These communities will engage in community-led preparedness education activities, with a long-term focus on potential recovery and rehabilitation strategies. When the next wave comes, or storm blows, or the ground shakes, these families will stand ready, and we will be standing with them. To this end, Medair seeks to be prepared and ready to respond in case of a natural disaster both Rakhine State and other disaster prone areas within Myanmar.

## FUNDING PARTNERS

Medair's relief work in Myanmar has been made possible thanks to the generosity of Swiss Solidarity and our private donors.

## IMPACT REPORT 2016 / 2017

- 3,340 people directly benefited from Medair's cash-for-work projects in Buthidaung Township.
- 1,805 people directly benefited from the construction of new shelters in Sittwe.

## THE PEOPLE WE SERVE

*"The village authorities came to find the poor people and they selected me. I had heard they were selecting people and I asked them to consider me. I wanted to be selected because I have no job and because my family faces difficulties. They knew we had no income to buy food to eat... We are very thankful for those people and for their help; for providing us with a job and income."*

**Jubair\***, a 66-year-old great-grandfather, who worked as a supervisor on a Medair-funded cash-for-work project

*"This is a much better situation for us. We used to wish for no heavy rain or strong wind. But now we don't need to worry about that. I would like to thank those who provided this shelter. Now we can sleep, even when it is raining heavily, because we are inside a good, safe shelter."*

**Laysa\***, a mother of five young children, describing the rebuilt shelter she lives in with her family

### For Media

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*A small child peeks out of a communal shelter in a camp for internally displaced people in Sittwe, Myanmar. © Medair*



*Participants in a cash-for-work project help build a new village well in Buthidaung, Myanmar. © Medair*



*An internally displaced family stands inside their rebuilt communal shelter in Sittwe, Myanmar. © Medair*

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