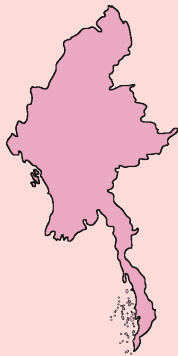


MYANMAR



HAKHA THAR, CHIN STATE

CLIMATE JUSTICE
FEMINIST
PARTICIPATORY
ACTION RESEARCH
2017-18

COUNTRY PROFILE

In the global climate risk index of 2016, Myanmar is ranked the second most vulnerable country in the world. It faces very high risks from cyclones, floods, heavy rains and extreme temperatures. Experts warn Myanmar that failure to build capacities and mitigate adverse impacts of disasters and climate change, on displacement and migration, will undermine development and create political instability in the country.¹

Myanmar Climate Change Alliance (MCCA) was launched in 2013, as a platform to mainstream climate change into Myanmar's development and reform agenda. The MCCA is implemented by the United Nations Human Resettlement Programme (UN-Habitat) and United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment).²

Amplifying women's voices in Hakha Thar resettlement community in reviewing the post- landslide situation

This Climate Justice FPAR was conducted by Community Care for Emergency Response and Rehabilitation (CCERR). The community is located in the resettlement area in the suburbs of Hakha, the capital city of Chin state. The community was displaced by Cyclone Komen in 2015 and resettled immediately in the present area.

The Climate Justice FPAR aimed to install Hakha Thar women at the local governance body through whom the community women can voice their issues and take part in decision-making.



Cyclone Komen is a case that demonstrates the hazards of climate change in Myanmar. It caused widespread flooding across 12 out of the country's 14 states on 30th July, 2015. The cyclone was followed by a massive landslide in Chin State. Almost 55,000 people were affected by the disaster³, with close to 20,000 displaced⁴. On 31st July, President U Thein Sein declared Chin and Rakhine states, and Magway and Sagaing regions as natural disaster zones.

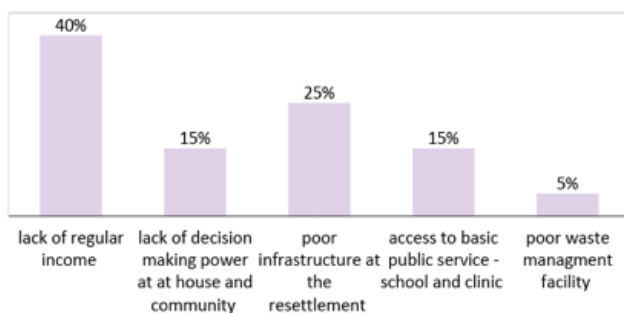


ISSUES FACING THE COMMUNITY



At the community-level, women are active and resourceful disaster respondents. Most often, however, they are regarded as passive agents or victims. Women are commonly perceived as incapable of making decisions. Similar prejudices and gender roles within communities impacted capacities and vulnerabilities while responding to Cyclone Komen too. Very few women in Hakha Thar are involved in various consultations and coordination meetings conducted by the government and aid agencies, for example.

Hakha Thar women's problem rating in the resettlement



Disaster, marginalisation and identities: During the early recovery period in the aftermath of Cyclone Komen, thousands of people were put in camps by the Government's Emergency Management Committee and the UN facility. Hakha Thar community was created during that exigent time. Although they are from different places such as Khuabe, Beute, Khua Chung and Dawr Hlun, they have a commonality in viewing

their situation in the resettlement. Hakha town's governance structure does not apply to the resettlement community. The community in the resettlement area differentiate themselves from the town people and refer to themselves as *har tong* (the ones who suffered from the landslide).

Lack of regular income: The most challenging problem at Hakha Thar resettlement is that the community as a whole does not have a regular income source. Originally, most people who were resettled in Hakha Thar were farmers. In the resettlement area, they have to find new, unfamiliar livelihoods. They identified farming, apprentices in carpentry and masonry, weaving, and working for the government as their main sources of income.

Irregular Weather Pattern: 81% of the population in Hakha Thar are vegetable producers. They depend on the climate for their production. However, irregular rainfall, rising temperature, degrading soil quality and diseases have been affecting their primary livelihood.

'10 years ago, it was sufficient for one family to sustain itself from what was farmed in their homes. Now, the quality of our soil is degrading. Thus, some vegetables and seasonal crops just die out without any known reasons. Also, there are a wide range of new worms and insects in my farm. In the past, we never had to use pesticides. But now it is quite risky to farm without (pesticides). We cannot end this cyclic process now...When it rains from the sky, some leaves are immediately visibly changing their color, close to being dead... Rain is like acid. That's why this irregular weather destroys and is unfavorable for our livelihood.' said Pi Ki lang, a community woman leader.

Lack of women's participation in decision-making: Women are not consulted in decision-making processes, traditionally as well as in the resettled community. Land

allocation, NGO meetings, government decisions and community actions, are all done without any participation of women. Due to this practice and lack of information, women themselves shy away from participating in these processes.

Poor infrastructure at resettlement: The resettled community faces lack of basic infrastructure facilities such as proper housing, roads, water supply, etc. This, in turn, affects the women as they have to work hard under these conditions to grow food, fetch water, work for festivals and funerals and sell their produce in the market, etc.

Lack of public services: Along with the infrastructure, Haka Thar lacks basic services like schools and health clinics. Children have to travel long distances on bad roads to reach schools and often drop out due to this. Women, particularly pregnant women, face serious health issues due to lack of immunisation, nutrition supplement, etc.⁵

'We are informed that the government has a plan to build a school and 25 bedded hospital in Hakha Thar. However, we go through a harrowing time when our children, elders and pregnant women need medical assistance, or others need emergency health attention.

This happens as there is no hospital yet in the resettlement. There is none who is skilled in treating basic health problems such as flu and diarrhea. There are already cases of death due to delay in hospitalising patients to Hakha General Hospital in town. We requested that this issue be addressed by our male elders at the *htwe-ouak* meeting. We were told that they do not have time to discuss these issues, compared to bigger issues like land tenure and land confiscation.

There is a support program for pregnant women and children under two years old with 15000 MMK per month by UN/INGOs. It is such a great program but it would have been more effective if they and the local government could have informed the public with less technical language about the formalities.' said Sui Sung, a community leader.

Inadequate waste management facility: Women are culturally perceived as the caretaker of the home, cleaning, the children and family hygiene. The most crucial problem faced in the resettlement is the lack of waste management facility. In previous villages, wastes were separated and managed in traditional ways.



Now, their waste are largely non-agricultural wastes, such as tyres, tubes, plastics bags, plastic bottles, plastic toys and cement bags from construction. Sometimes, these wastes are burnt in open areas in their backyards and the smoke remains in the air for three to five days. Women are concerned about the health risks due to the exposure to this air pollution.

WOMEN-LED ACTIONS

Through the Climate Justice FPAR process, CCERR created opportunities to talk to the community and the women, on issues of climate change and governance. They consulted the women to understand their issues and organised them to collectively advocate for change. The women from Hakha Thar interacted with media, local- and state-level governments, and aid agencies, and built solidarity with other organisations and groups. They talked about their experiences of resettlement after the cyclone Komen and put forward their demands for improving their living conditions.

They presented the FPAR story at the International Conference of Burma/Myanmar Studies in Mandalay. The conference is now available online. They also created a theatre performance on impact of climate change on adolescent girls and produced print and digital briefers on the landslide situation in Chin.

The community women highlighted their issues and proposed solutions to the chair of Chin State Parliament and Minister of Transport in a meeting.

Through the Climate Justice FPAR the women formed Hakha Thar Bu Nu - a community-based women's organisation with more than 400 members. They also collaborated with other marginalised ethnic groups in Chin state for solidarity and movement building.

FUTURE ADVOCACY POINTS

In the near future, CCERR along with the Hakha Thar women plan to share their research findings and recommendations with the larger public. They also plan to learn more about and engage with climate policies and strategies at the national level.

Their advocacy actions will focus on demanding basic facilities and improving their resettlement area. They will also work on building women's capacities and facilitating their participation in governance and decision making. The women also plan to take up more programmes and advocate for re-forestation in their area as well as the whole Chin state.

1. Retrieved from <https://policy.asiapacificenergy.org/sites/default/files/MCCSAP-Feb-Version.pdf>
2. Retrieved from <http://myanmarcalliance.org/en/climate-change-basics/impact-of-climate-change-and-the-case-of-myanmar/>
3. ibid.
4. Retrieved from <https://www.ccerr.org/publications/>
5. Brief: Context Analysis by Hakha Thar Nu Bu on 31 July 2018



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COMMUNITY CARE FOR EMERGENCY
RESPONSE AND REHABILITATION



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