



Newly constructed houses in Shwe Pyi Thar Ward (Bhamo). Photo by Stephen Naw Din/CRS

Community Based Settlement Pilot Project – Myanmar

Background

Shelter and settlement are central to CRS strategy in Myanmar and the agency globally. With the Government of Myanmar eager to support its newly released Camp Closure Strategy, there is an incredible need to ensure this can be done in a dignified and organized way. In September 2018, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) facilitated a shelter and settlement capacity building strategy workshop with Myanmar's local CARITAS member Karuna Mission Social Solidarity (KMSS) program and management staff. This was an opportunity to reflect on previous and ongoing programming to identify areas for development and growth to meet KMSS shelter and settlement aspirations. KMSS has been consistently recognized by the communities it serves and other humanitarian stakeholders, as a leading organization, expert in Shelter and Settlements, with the ability to deliver quality community based and integrated programs at scale (KMSS Shelter & Settlement Goal–2018).

The capacity strategy workshop's specific objectives included

To identify shelter and settlement capacity needed to support crisis affected households so that they live in a safe and healthy environment

To determine skill and knowledge gaps to expand upon and improve the quality of shelter and settlements programming

To produce a draft strategy and Implementation plan for capacity building -“Learning by doing” capacity building principles were highlighted as the most appropriate methodology to support KMSS program staff to achieve these objectives.

Project Objectives

The current settlement pilot project is proving an ideal opportunity for KMSS to learn about and explore Community-based Approaches. Through research and documentation, KMSS intends:

- To meet their own learning objectives
- To raise their reputation and profile, and
- To influence and support resettlement policy and practice.
- To demonstrate the benefits of this approach



The approach respects the dignity of each household, with each family choosing their preferred design that meets their needs.

Photo by Stephen Naw Din/CRS

CRS Strategy/Approach

The Building Research Establishment (BRE) is providing funding and technical support to the project and their sustainability framework and assessment tool, Quantifying Sustainability in the Aftermath of Natural Disaster (QSAND) has been used to assist the project design to support sustainability benchmarking.

The QSAND tool includes cross-cutting issues that align with the CRS Integral Human Development Framework and SDGs. Additionally, the project is guided by the Core Humanitarian Standards and Protection Mainstreaming principles.

While this pilot project pre-dates the inception of CRS' 'Safe and Dignified Homes and Communities'

strategy initiative, it has many of the quality and scale objectives in common and similar workstreams that support the influencing agenda. It is hoped that the project may provide learnings and evidence that contribute to CRS 2030 strategy and goals.

Project Progress

Activities started with an orientation and planning workshop in November 2019 for KMSS and CRS staff. In 2020, the project supported the resettlement of 46 households in Bhamo, Moemauk, Shwegu and Mansi Townships of Kachin State. The 46 households

(HHs) are grouped into three categories:

A. Group resettlement on beneficiary purchased land (11 HHs)

B. Resettlement on individual plots (7 HHs)

C. Group resettlement on government allocated land (28 HHs)

Group A was selected to develop and test the tools, systems and capacities to facilitate a community based sustainable resettlement process. The integrated assistance is structured into social, technical and financial assistance and support activities following the three core pillars of sustainability: Social, Financial and Technical.



These new home owners participated in the design and construction of their new house in Shwe Pyi Thar Ward (Bhamo). Photo by Stephen Naw Din/CRS

Initially both KMSS staff and community members had concerns about the approach but gained confidence during designing, planning, and implementing. The project has realized a range of successes including:

- The benefit of cooperative action in terms of ownership and social cohesion
- Developing skills in transparent and equitable decision-making processes
- Settlement planning and house design that meet community and household cultural, financial and social preferences
- Community and household control of the construction activities and schedule
- Cost savings and efficiencies by capitalizing on community and household labor and cost savings by avoiding main contractor profit margins

SOCIAL

- Community governance
- Land rights (legal)
- Social/Cultural design and planning
- Access to information, protection and services (education & health)
- Social cohesion & integration (host community)

FINANCIAL

- Budgeting
- Financial service provider (banks, mobile money)
- Procurement (credit and agreements)
- Livelihoods opportunities (agriculture & livestock)
- Community savings

TECHNICAL

- Site design/planning
- House design
- Construction monitoring
- Procurement (materials and labor)
- Environmental assessment
- Access to physical infrastructures (WASH & electricity)
- Maintenance & DRR



Community members participate in the process to communicate the feedback and accountability mechanism for the project. Photo by Stephen Naw Din/CRS



Feedback and Accountability mechanism training. Photo by La Seng for CRS



Community members take ownership and participate in installing the new water system. Photo by La Seng for CRS



Remaining timber used for latrine construction. Photo by Stephen Naw Din/CRS

Other benefits that have emerged during the process have included:

- Community led financial management, where funding is deposited in a community bank account and used for direct purchases and distribution to households for the construction
- Group procurement of materials and contracted specialist labor, providing further costs saving and efficiency
- Opportunities for households to add their own funds to increase living area, upgrade the quality of construction and include cultural preferences
- The community has been able to plan the work schedule to align with their livelihood activities and timed the completion and moving dates to the academic calendar to avoid disruption to children's education
- The project has attracted additional support from other Caritas member organizations (CIMO), for WASH facilities, separate structures for household kitchens, and support to establish kitchen gardens and landscaping
- Indicators to support the approach have included the interest and request from other Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) to join the program
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Bhamo has requested that KMSS share information about the approach
- The project has provided further opportunities for CIMOs collaboration with plans to develop an integrated community-based proposal to support the resettlement of a further 500 households.

Next Actions:

- The project is documenting the process and completed activities with results and will produce guidelines for KMSS, other resettlement actors, including communities themselves, to share the learning and offer guidance on the approach. This will include representation through the Shelter and Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) cluster and other forums and events.
- The pilot project has proven that with additional resources KMSS and CRS could enhance the quality of reporting, documentation and dissemination, as well as provide training on the approach to other KMSS staff, government and other resettlement actors. In addition, as there are a greater number of families hoping to resettle, the community based settlement project has shown that scale up is possible.