

UNITING THROUGH THE POWER OF FOOTBALL IN MYANMAR

PROJECT INFORMATION

Locations

6

Kayin State, Mandalay Region, Mon State, Nay Pyi Taw, Shan State (South), Yangon Region

Implementation Period

12 months

May 2021-April 2022

Trainers

9

2 YABC trainers, 3 YABC peer educators and 4 Football Coaches from Myanmar Red Cross Society coached online on YABC & F4D sessions, tools & methodology

Facilitators

30

youth completed the YABC & F4D online Training of Facilitators

Participants

264

youth aged between 15 to 35 years old – Myanmar Red Cross Society youth leaders and volunteers, youth from vulnerable communities, including Internally Displaced Persons (IDP), orphans, rural and isolated communities – completed the YABC & F4D Hybrid Curriculum

Micro-Projects

21

youth-led & community-based Micro-Projects successfully implemented

People Reached

3,427

community members served and reached through the Micro-Projects



MYANMAR



As football takes the top spot as the most popular sport in Myanmar, communities have shown a long-standing passion and knowledge of the game. With the strategic and operational support of the Myanmar Red Cross Society (MRCS), the implementation of the *Uniting Through the Power of Football* pilot project transformed football into a gateway for young people in Myanmar to connect in a time of great uncertainty, develop self-awareness and self-confidence and therefore drive change in their communities.

Micro-Projects Thematic Areas



Country Overview

General Context

Myanmar is one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world. This **high vulnerability to natural hazards coupled with armed conflicts**¹ aggravate a fragile socio-economic context characterised by chronic poverty, gender disparities and erosion of social support networks.²

Young people are among the most fragile and marginalised groups in society. Many are migrating to the larger urban regions of Mandalay, Naypyidaw and Yangon in search of better academic and professional opportunities. The negative implications of this exodus to urban areas are **increasing unemployment rates and decreasing income levels**, derived from the high number of people competing over limited resources. As a result, young people face increased **psychological distress and mental health issues**. Moreover, young people in rural areas have been facing growing political instability with continuous armed clashes that have **forced many to flee their homes and communities**. In the Shan State, Kayin State and Mon State, the dismantling of essential services has continuously deprived children and their families of security, social and economic opportunities including safe access to quality education.³

These challenges have been exacerbated since February 2021, with civil unrest, creating an unstable political and economic situation, characterised by **a limited banking system, Covid-19 related movement restrictions and pervasive violence** across the whole country.⁴

The Covid-19 Pandemic and its Impact on the Project

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a major impact on the country. It has substantially increased the threat to livelihoods with debilitating socio-economic consequences and has considerably weakened an already fragile healthcare system. Since the beginning of the pandemic, **young people have been on the frontline of the response**, playing a central role in helping prevent, control and treat Covid-19.

The preventive measures for the containment of the Covid-19 Pandemic represented additional challenges for the project implementation. The Training of Facilitators, for instance, had to be further **adapted and digitalised**, and delivered online due to strict movement restrictions.

1 IFRC Country Plan for Myanmar in 2021, 2021, p.2. Link: https://www.ifrc.org/sites/default/files/2021-08/Myanmar_Plan_2021.pdf

2 IFRC Emergency Appeal from 10 May 2022, 2022. Link: <https://www.ifrc.org/emergency/myanmar-civil-unrest>

3 Ibid., 2021

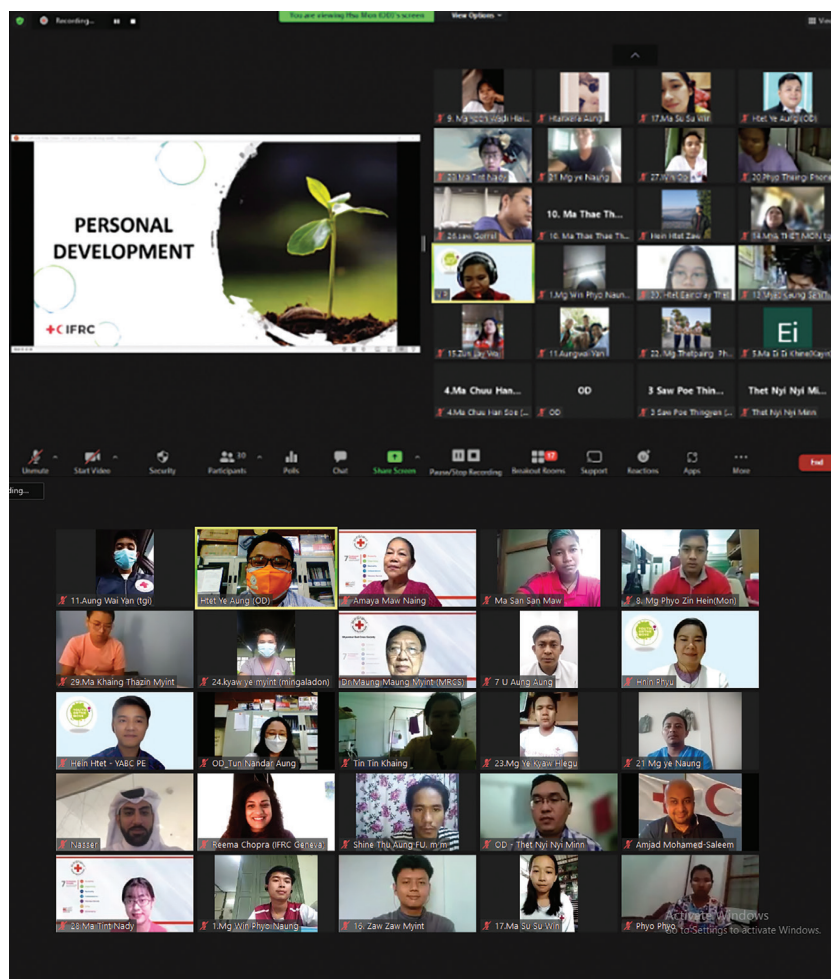
4 Ibid., 2022

Project Implementation Overview

Inception and Training of Facilitators (ToF)

MRCS adopted a strategic and long-term vision of the project’s sustainability and strongly focused on **National Society Development**: it promoted and **institutionalised ownership at local level** through the establishment of a project **Supervisory Committee** composed of several branch and State/Region representatives.

The ToF was delivered by a **national team of YABC trainers, with the support of YABC peer educators and Football Coaches** from the “Football United Myanmar” programme, which was previously implemented in collaboration with MRCS. The trainers’ team received online coaching by the IFRC and GA on F4D, newly developed digital YABC sessions, and on additional sessions and tools integrated related to Protection, Gender and Inclusion (with a specific focus on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression and Sexual Characteristics – SOGIESC); Child Safeguarding; Project Cycle Management and Psychosocial Support (PSS) and First Aid (PFA). The ToF took place **online over 12 days** with a total of 30 facilitators trained on the YABC & F4D activities and pedagogical approach. It kicked-off with a YABC experiential discovery workshop and included **professional external PSS expertise**.



Online implementation of the Training of Facilitators in October 2021.

Source: MRCS

Hybrid Curriculum Implementation



Between October-November 2021, a total of 264 youth in 6 locations participated in the YABC & F4D Hybrid Curriculum through regular meet-ups over a 2 to 4 week period depending on location. To ensure smooth delivery, MRCS organised coordination meetings with local branches and the facilitators, with particular focus on the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) tools and activities incorporated in the project. MRCS facilitators also received further coaching and support to deliver F4D activities.

Despite the inevitable challenge of transferring the knowledge acquired online on YABC & F4D activities to a face-to-face facilitation, **the result was highly rewarding**, with a participant enthusiastically sharing at the end of the Hybrid Curriculum

“*Now we have the courage and confidence to speak to our peers, families, communities, and society - to inspire change - now we don't feel alone any longer*”

as reported by Ms. Thae Thae Tone, YABC & F4D Facilitator from Mon State.

Through the project, there was a **+14% increase in participants' self-confidence, resilience and trust towards their peers**; they now see challenges as opportunities to learn and grow. **The number of youth feeling powerless and unable to ask for support/help in hardships was reduced by 50%.**



YABC & F4D Hybrid Curriculum implementation in Mandalay and Kayin State in November 2021.

Source: MRCS

Community-Based Micro-Projects

To accompany the youth teams in co-creating, planning and implementing their projects, MRCS organised a **2-day online workshop on Project Writing and Project Management Cycle** (PMC), covering all phases: from needs-assessment to M&E, with a focus on budgeting skills, financial management and sustainability. The youth teams were therefore able to identify and respond to the needs in their communities implementing 21 youth-led Micro-Projects from January to March 2022. Their actions focused on the following interconnected thematic issues:

- **Access to and Promotion of Quality Education & Psychosocial Support:** provision of teaching and learning materials and support to students, especially girls, facing financial difficulties while promoting inclusive access to education; organisation of non-formal education and psychosocial support activities for children in IDP camps.
- **Access to and Promotion of Sports, Art and Culture:** provision of sports equipment for inclusive sports tournaments with a focus on ethnic minority groups; provision of books and reading material to the renovated library and development of a self-sustained plan for children and their families to run the space.



Micro-Projects implementation, which included activities focusing on environmental protection, literacy, inclusive and safe access to schools, inter-religious dialogue, gender equality, water and sanitation in IDP camps.

Source: MRCS

- **Climate Action and Environmental Protection:** awareness-raising campaigns and education workshops on waste management and the reduction of plastic usage, as well as upcycling plastic waste into craft objects; clean-up activities to remove waste from the villages and surrounding areas such as ponds and forests.
- **First Aid, Hygiene and Healthy Lifestyles Promotion & Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Preparedness:** provision of Personal Hygiene and First Aid workshops and kits in schools, IDP camps and communities, including repairing the water purification system in one of the IDP camps; DRR and disaster management awareness in schools and the community.
- **Infrastructure – Construction and Refurbishment:** full renovation of a village library; construction of a fence around a primary school to enhance the safety of children and staff; renovation or improvement of football pitches.
- **Livelihoods Creation, Support and Diversification:** provision of IT and First Aid vocational courses for unemployed youth.
- **Gender Equality – Girls’ and Women’s Empowerment:** delivery of YABC & F4D activities focused on gender equality to high-school students; delivery of sexual and reproductive health education sessions and sharing information on prevention of sexual and gender-based violence towards girls and women living in IDP camps.
- **Non-Discrimination, Respect for Diversity and Social Inclusion & Violence Prevention, Conflict Resolution and Promotion of Peace:** joint education and sports activities, awareness-raising campaigns and use of creative platforms (such as theatre, dance, music and visual arts) to reduce and prevent tensions between and within communities, with a focus on the promotion of **interreligious and intercultural dialogue, non-discrimination and respect for (gender) diversity (LGBTQI+)**.
- **Promotion of RCRC Fundamental Principles, Humanitarian Values and Life Skills:** delivery of YABC & F4D activities to primary and middle-school children and youth — often in orphanages, IDP camps, areas populated by different ethnic or religious groups or to youth living in urban areas with high rates of violence — to develop their socio-emotional life skills, improve their well-being, and transform their mindsets and behaviours.

Project Monitoring and Evaluation

In addition to the constant follow-up with local branches, facilitators and youth teams through online meetings, MRCS also organised field visits to the 6 locations to provide technical support for the delivery of the Hybrid Curriculum and for monitoring and gathering evaluation and communications material during the design and implementation of the Micro-Projects. In April 2022, an **in-person final evaluation workshop** was organised with the Supervisory Committee members and YABC & F4D facilitators. MRCS’s use of traditional and creative M&E tools was outstanding, collecting for instance **over 400 pre & post self-assessment questionnaires** from the participants that showed the transformative journey of the youth through the project.

Highlights of the Project

“It has been a long time since we did not see the children and youth as happy as they are now. We are used to hearing gunshots from here, but these activities helped the children and youth to relieve their trauma and was also a source of support to the adults.”

Mrs. Daw Kyi San, Chairman of Camp Administrative Committee, Nar Baung IDP Camp, Myanmar



- **Branch, Youth and Volunteering Development:** the project strongly contributed to fostering the **collaboration and built additional trust between MRCS headquarters and branches, as well as expanding inter-branch collaboration.** MRCS local units were empowered with leading roles in the planning and implementation of the project as members of the Supervisory Committee. Local staff and volunteers dealt directly with the partners and community members. The capacity of the youth to lead and deliver on projects was enhanced, with facilitators being actively involved in all phases, from the

“preparation of logistics arrangements, to handling the challenges of withdrawing cash from the bank, the delivery of the activities, managing the M&E, dealing with project staff for all the data, records, reports and financial clearance.”

Mr. Myint Naing, Secretary of the Kayin State Supervising Committee.

This impressive involvement fostered a **positive attitude change at leadership level towards meaningful youth engagement and participation in the National Society’s decision making.**

- **Empowerment of women and LGBTQI+ persons:** MRCS ensured a **balanced representation of male and female facilitators and participants** in the project. The engagement of girls in a male-dominated sport such as football helped to **reduce gender stereotypes and harmful cultural norms**, which often sees girls and young women being excluded from educational activities and sport. The integration of additional sessions on SOGIESC helped facilitators in addressing gender taboos and **empowering members of the LGBTQI+ community**, providing a reference for self-understanding and acceptance, as well as a platform to engage in social activities.

“*As I am part of the LGBT community, I can tell you: my journey has been tough in my community. This YABC & F4D toolkit makes me believe in myself and encourages me to find ways to help other people in my environment.*”

San San Maw, YABC & F4D Facilitator from Yangon Region.

- **Promotion of Humanitarian Values, Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue:** MRCS Youth integrated a strong Humanitarian Education component in their Micro-Projects, delivering YABC & F4D sessions to children, adolescents and young adults in their communities. The youth teams operated in **multi-ethnic and multi-religious contexts** that suffered from decades of segregation and discrimination, with the aim to promote respect for diversity, mutual understanding, social inclusion and unity.
- **Focus on and integration of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS):** promoting MHPSS among everyone involved in the project was central to the success of the Myanmar pilot given the fragile context. **Specific MHPSS webinars and group counselling** delivered by external professionals were integrated in the ToF. In addition, **individual counselling sessions** were made available to all staff, volunteers and participants during all phases of the pilot project. The YABC & F4D project was described by the youth as a source of happiness, sense of belonging, hope, PSS support, and motivation amid very difficult times, representing

“*an oasis in the desert and light in the midst of darkness*”

Dr Lynn Lynn Thet, Director of Organisational Development of the MRCS.



Youth practicing Qi-Gong as part of the YABC 'Inner Peace' module.

Source: MRCS

VOICES FROM THE PITCH

“ The story that I want to share is not my story but the story of a 17-year-old boy who has become one of my best friends. When we first met, on the Micro-Project’s first day, he was really quiet, kept to himself and didn’t seem to have a lot of friends. I saw a change on the second day of activities as he seemed interested in the workshop about gender. The YABC activity called ‘Gender Box’ included role-playing and a lot of space for sharing, which seemed to attract his interest and get him actively engaged. The space for sharing and self-reflection made him open-up, and he told me about his struggles; how he felt different from the others and that he feared judgement and being bullied by his peers.

As I listened and as he went through the programme, we connected and through the shared reflections on topics like sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and gender characteristics, he was able to reflect on what he believed to be male and female roles and responsibilities, and slowly acknowledge and finally accept his own identity. It was amazing to see that by accepting himself, he felt like he fitted in more with other students, within the community, and with his friends, that have also been more open-minded and open to seeing diversity as an opportunity.

We still talk today, even after the project has ended. As for me, I have learned that other people’s assumptions, judgements and lack of acceptance leads to exclusion. By raising awareness and talking about ourselves with those around us, we can change each other’s perspectives and live more positively together. ”

Zaw Zaw Myint, YABC & F4D Facilitator from Mandalay.



*Zaw Zaw Myint,
YABC & F4D
Facilitator
from Mandalay.*

Source: MRCS



The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is the world's largest humanitarian network, with 192 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and around 14 million volunteers. Our volunteers are present in communities before, during and after a crisis or disaster. We work in the most hard to reach and complex settings in the world, saving lives and promoting human dignity. We support communities to become stronger and more resilient places where people can live safe and healthy lives, and have opportunities to thrive.



The Generation Amazing Foundation (GA) is a human and social legacy focused organisation that launched in 2010 during Qatar's successful bid for the 2022 FIFA World Cup™. GA operates its sport for development programmes in alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and Qatar's National Vision 2030, to promote sustainability, inclusion, and gender equality. GA's unique methodology utilises the power of football to impart crucial life skills including communication, leadership, teamwork and compassion to youth and communities in need across the globe. Since its launch, GA, in collaboration with key partners, has reached and positively impacted over 1 million lives in 35 countries and counting.