

# VIOLENCE PREVENTION & RESPONSE

AS PART OF EMERGENCIES AND  
HEALTH PROGRAMMING IN MYANMAR



MYANMAR RED CROSS & CANADIAN RED CROSS



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Cover photo: Patrick Fuller, IFRC

A young woman affected by monsoon floods.

## Red Cross Red Crescent Movement Seven Fundamental Principles

### Humanity

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The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, endeavours, in its international and national capacity, to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being. It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, co-operation and lasting peace amongst all peoples.

### Impartiality

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It makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. It endeavours to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress.

### Neutrality

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In order to continue to enjoy the confidence of all, the Movement may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

### Independence

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The Movement is independent. The National Societies, while auxiliaries in the humanitarian services of their governments and subject to the laws of their respective countries, must always maintain their autonomy so that they may be able at all times to act in accordance with the principles of the Movement.

### Voluntary Service

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It is a voluntary relief movement not prompted in any manner by desire for gain.

### Unity

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There can only be one Red Cross or one Red Crescent Society in any one country. It must be open to all. It must carry on its humanitarian work throughout its territory.

### Universality

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The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, in which all Societies have equal status and share equal responsibilities and duties in helping each other, is world-wide.

## BACKGROUND

The Myanmar Red Cross Society (MRCS), in partnership with the Canadian Red Cross (CRC), from 2013-2016 supported ten villages to implement community health projects that focused on preventing and responding to violence, including gender-based violence against women, girls and boys.

### Efforts to support communities have included:

- Integration of violence prevention and response into community-based health programming.
- Youth led micro-projects to increase awareness on the risk of physical, sexual, psychological, and gender-based violence.
- Improving internal protection systems within the MRCS through the development of a Code of Conduct and Child Protection policy and related education to volunteers and staff.
- Developing partnerships with local government, religious organizations, UN agencies, and community leaders.

## THE PROBLEM

The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child's report on Myanmar in 2012 noted its concern about the "widespread violence and abuse of children, and... the lack of appropriate measures, mechanisms and resources to prevent and combat domestic violence, including physical and sexual abuse and the neglect of children; the limited access to services for abused children; and the lack of data."<sup>1</sup>



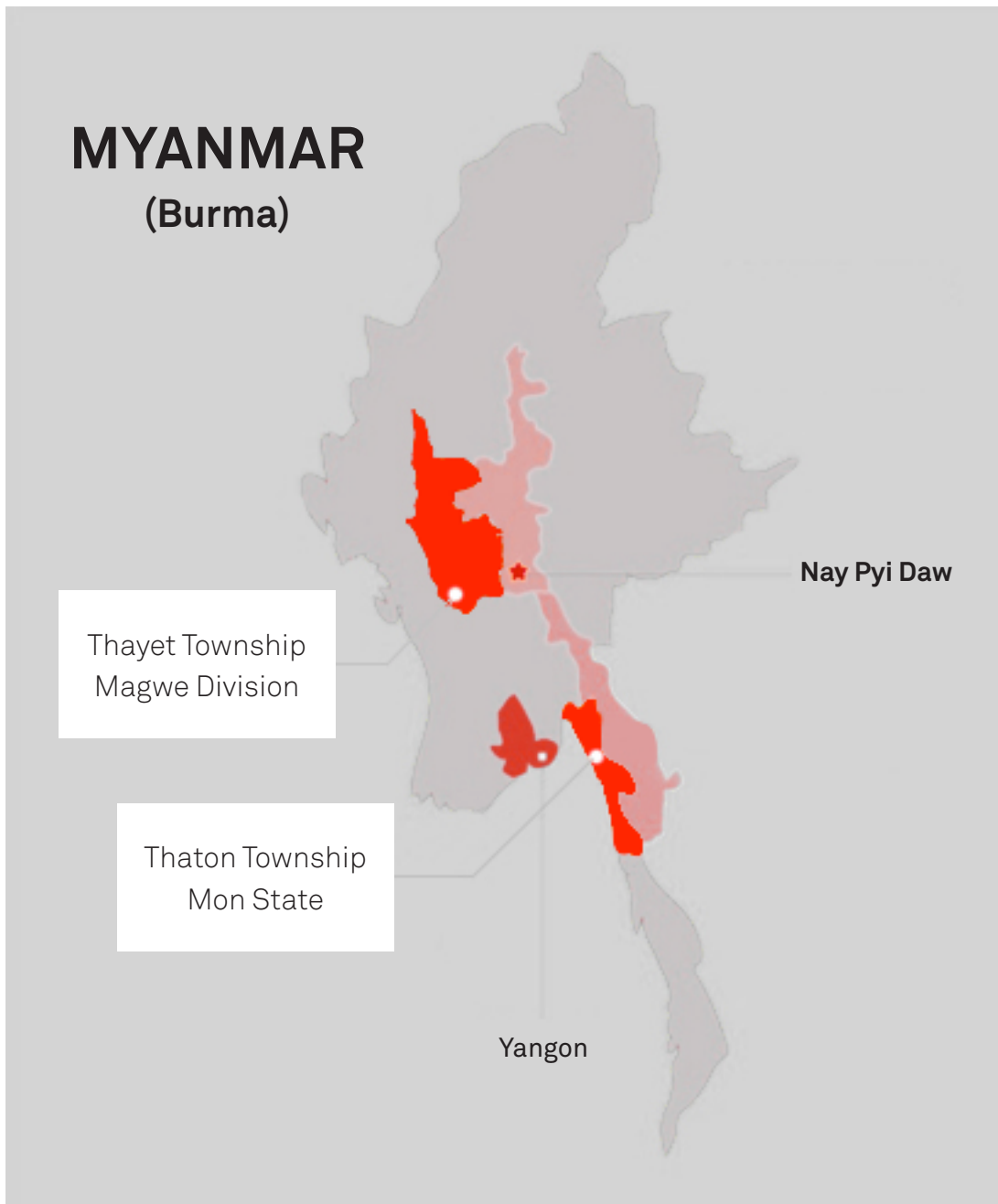
Image from Myanmar Red Cross educational material

လူတိုင်းသည်ဘေးကင်းလုံခြုံမှုအခွင့်အရေးရှိသည်။



1 UN Committee on the CRC, 59th session. (16 January- 3 February 2012). *Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 44 of the Convention, Concluding observations: Union of Myanmar (CRC/C/MMR/CO/3-4)*

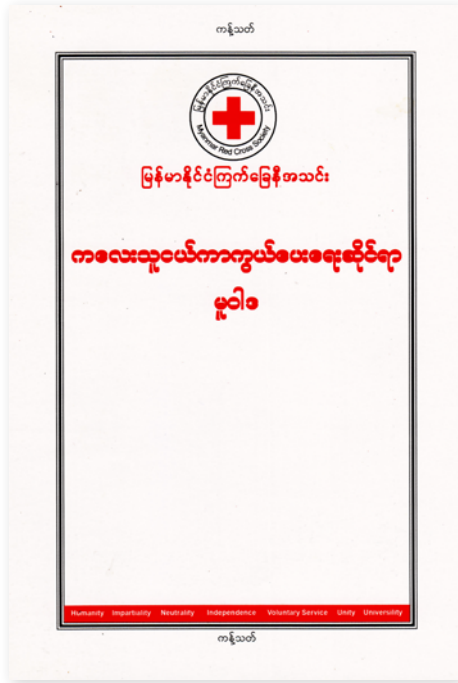
Map of Myanmar showing Thayet and Thaton Townships



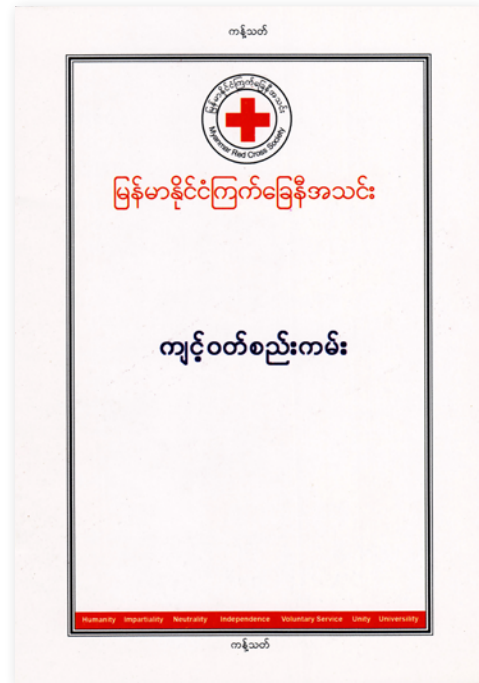
The project was implemented in ten villages in Thayet Township (indicated with a white circle) in Magwe Division (red) and Thaton Township (indicated with a white circle) in the Mon State (red).

# TOOLS

Child Protection Policy



Code of Conduct



IFRC Community-Based Health and First Aid Module lesson cards



ထိခိုက်နစ်နာစေမှုသည်တည်ဆဲဥပဒေများနှင့်အဖွဲ့အစည်းများ၏ အကူအညီဖြင့်တားမြစ်နိုင်သည်။

TOOLS cont.



အခြားသူများအားရိုက်နှက်ခြင်းသည်အန္တရာယ်ဖြစ်စေပြီးလိုအပ်မှုလည်းမရှိပါ။



လူတစ်ယောက်၏ကိုယ့်ကိုယ့်ကြည်မှုအားတိုက်ခိုက်ခြင်းသည် ပျက်စီးစေခြင်းနှင့်စိတ်ခံစားမှုကိုပါထိခိုက်စေနိုင်သည်။



## TOOLS cont.

### Micro-projects



Children leading a micro-project activity with a local community

## REACH

### People reached

- Over **10,000** people were reached through violence prevention and response messages
- More than **50%** of the adult population of the ten target villages participated in the project

### People reached by target locations

NAME OF VILLAGE	TOTAL ADULT POPULATION (approx.)	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL	COVERAGE
<b>THAYET TOWNSHIP (MAGWE DIVISION)</b>					
Thang yone	420	182	467	649	154.52
Bang khone	500	122	735	857	171.40
Mintae	800	167	485	652	81.50
Sanaie	500	99	619	718	143.60
Thayphyu	400	123	428	551	137.75
Total	2620	693	2734	3427	130.80
<b>THATON TOWNSHIP (MON STATE)</b>					
Myothit	1644	168	685	853	51.89
In ni	503	141	371	512	101.79
Duyinsate	798	253	575	828	103.76
Naungkalar	6865	403	1036	1439	20.96
Winpa	1712	208	478	686	40.07
Total	11522	1173	3145	4318	37.48
<b>Thayet+Thaton Total</b>	<b>14142</b>	<b>1866</b>	<b>5879</b>	<b>7745</b>	<b>54.77</b>



## EVALUATION RESULTS

Evaluator: Myanmar Survey Research (MSR).

**Title of evaluation:** Final Review of Violence Prevention Project in Myanmar

**Methodology:** The evaluation used a qualitative approach triangulating information from ten focus group discussions, key informant interviews, and a literature review. The evaluation assessed the relevance, effectiveness and sustainability.

**Number of participants in evaluation:** 79

### Key findings

The evaluation found that the project contributed to:

- Perceived reductions of gender-based violence among women, men and especially children in the communities.
- Community participants believe that corporal punishment against girls and boys has been reduced in particular.
- Women are perceived to be safer in their homes from physical harm from their husbands.
- There has been increased knowledge of where and how to report concerns of violence and access local support.

The evaluation also found that the project would have benefitted from more male engagement, although there were a number of community barriers that prevented this. In addition, sustainability of the project was uncertain. Communities were concerned that the achievements of the project would be hard to sustain without a longer duration of the project activities.

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*“In the past we used to think that the quarrel between the husband and the wife is none of our business. We just thought that they will be in good terms again soon and so we shouldn’t be doing anything. Now, our mindsets have changed. Now we try to solve the problem by talking to the people concerned and we intervene. We try to put an end to the arguments.”*

– Adult participant

*“Through the sessions, people have come to realize that there can be psychological impact on the children if they are hit often or when their parents quarrel. They tend to hit their children less now.”*

– Youth participant

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## CASE STUDY 1: USING COMMUNITY HEALTH TO REACH COMMUNITIES



*“These days, men no longer hit their children even when they are drunk. Few parents now hit their children to discipline them.”*

Myanmar has recently undergone dramatic political transitions. While many positive developments are underway, the risk of natural disasters and public health emergencies remains common. Some public health problems will take long-term and focused efforts to address. This includes physical, sexual, psychological, and gender-based violence in families, schools and communities. For instance, a community leader explains, *“Often men don’t understand women. Their lack of understanding often leads to quarrels. Men often lose their control, especially after they drink, and do things they don’t normally do to hurt others.”* Another community member notes, *“In the past, women hit or shouted at their children if they didn’t do the things they were asked to do.”* In response to the problem, MRCS implemented a violence prevention and response project using the IFRC global Community-Based Health and First Aid toolkit that supports communities in hard-to-access and

disaster-prone places to find local solutions. Key messages have focused on identifying local protection systems; understanding the risk of different forms of violence especially against women and children; brainstorming local solutions; and knowing how to access help and support if violence does occur, including in emergencies.

The project activities involved community conversations, youth-led theatre, and developing action plans to improve safety in local villages. These were delivered through partnerships with local government agencies, school, and religious leaders.

An evaluation of the project found that the volunteer-led conversations within communities have resulted in some crucial changes towards nonviolence. For example, a female from the Township of Thaton says, *“People have come to realize that a problem can’t be solved by hitting someone. Through Red Cross awareness sessions, people now understand that hitting itself is a problem.”*

In the same way, men have also observed changes among other men: *“In the past we used to think that the quarrel between the husband and the wife is none of our business. We just thought that they will be in good terms again soon and so we shouldn’t be doing anything. Now, our mindsets have changed. Now we try to solve the problem by talking to the people concerned and we intervene. We try to put an end to the arguments.”*

The changes toward safer behaviour have been most noticeable in how parents treat their children. Like in most parts of the world, hitting and yelling at children have been common ways to discipline children; although research from around the world shows that nonviolent methods are the safest and most effective ways to discipline. *“Through the sessions, people have come to realize that there can be psychological impact on the children if they are hit often or when their parents quarrel; they do not want their children to run away from home. They tend to hit their children less now,”* says a mother from the Thayet Township. Another participant adds, *“These days, men no longer hit their children even when they are drunk. Few parents now hit their children to discipline them.”*

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*I believe all the Red Cross messages are relevant. Some participants feel that some topics are a bit sensitive to Myanmar culture. However, I think all of us should be aware of those things so that they can be avoided. Only then those undesirable things can be prevented.*

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A MRCS volunteer reflects, “In the past, women hit or shouted at their children if they didn’t do the things they were asked to do; after they attended awareness sessions, they exercised restraints in disciplining their children. Other women also followed suit. Those who attended the awareness sessions are taken as role models by other women.”

Although the sessions have reached several thousand people and have been successful in contributing to safer behaviours, challenges do persist. In particular there remain gender-based power relations and cultural sensitivities around some forms of violence. A female youth from the Thaton Township stresses, *“I believe all the Red Cross messages are relevant. Some participants feel that some topics are a bit sensitive to Myanmar culture. However, I think all of us should be aware of those things so that they can be avoided. Only then those undesirable things can be prevented.”*

## CASE STUDY 2: YOUTH MICRO PROJECTS



*“The micro projects are an effective means to raise awareness on various types of violence. The community has gained a lot of benefits thanks to the youth-led micro projects”*

A significant portion of Myanmar’s population is young people, under the age of 18 years. This is also an age group that is at highest risk of physical, sexual, psychological and gender-based violence. As part of the violence prevention and response project in the Townships of Thaton and Thayet, MRCS has supported youth to take leadership to educate other youth and adults in their community to find local solutions.

The MRCS recognizes that girls and boys are not only among the most vulnerable to gender-based violence, but they also have an essential role in finding solutions. Youth-led activities were designed after adults and youth participated in community conversations about local protection systems, the risk of various forms of violence, ideas for local action, and referral and support options if violence does occur. Based on these sessions, youth then developed plans of action to increase knowledge on violence.

Working with Red Cross volunteers and with support from local artists, school teachers, religious leaders and village leadership, youth organized events for the whole community to attend during festivals such as the Lighting (Tazaungdaing) Festival. The events included theatre, humorous skits, dance, art, and songs to communicate messages of preventing violence against children and youth.

A male youth in Thaton notes, *“Local authorities have been very cooperative. They organize villagers to attend the community events and coordinate with Red Cross volunteers for holding the events.”* A female youth from Thayet explains, *“At the events, people can better understand the messages. They are explained clearly for people no matter their age or their education level.”*

For the youth who have spent hours and days preparing for the community events, and have taken great care to practice their routines and have built new friendships, the results have been rewarding. *“Everybody laughed when they watched the play we developed on nonviolence. I believe these awareness sessions are effective because we can give detailed explanations.”* Another youth from the same community reinforces the point, *“The nonviolence messages are spread to a greater number of people because villagers from neighboring communities come and watch the play when we do it in the evening and invite everyone. People are more interested to learn about hard issues when they watch through a play.”*

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An evaluation of the Red Cross violence prevention and response project found that parents reported decreasing use of hitting, yelling at, and insulting children. For instance, one interviewee was quoted to say that *“I have been enlightened from an awareness session given by the Red Cross that it isn’t necessary for me to hit my child to behave herself. Since then, she listens to when I ask her not to do something.”*

The decrease in violence was reported in all of the project sites, by male and female community members, Red Cross volunteers, and by young people themselves. The Red Cross has since had requests for more community events, and volunteers explain, *“The community had a great motivation to be part of the micro project and even provided advices on how to make them a success. The micro projects are an effective means to raise awareness on various types of violence. I believe the community has gained a lot of benefits thanks to the micro project.”*

VIOLENCE IS PREVENTABLE!

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