

## UN-HABITAT COVID-19 RESPONSE MYANMAR

**BRIEF NO. 1**  
24 June 2020

### EMERGENCY RESPONSE TO COMBAT COVID-19 IN INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS

Informal settlements in Yangon house an estimated 400,000 people, approximately 8 per cent of the city's total population. Due to the nature of informal settlements with high density, lack of access to water, sanitation, hygiene practices and inadequate housing, the risk of mass COVID-19 transmission within Yangon's informal settlements is high. The vast majority of these settlements do not have access to municipal infrastructure such as piped water or sanitation and have poor drainage systems. UN-Habitat's rapid assessment survey conducted last May found that 81 per cent of the households in informal settlements have at least one member who lost their job and 94 per cent experienced a fall in income due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Furthermore, UN-Habitat's study from 2016 had warned that a combination of factors in informal settlements has resulted in "a serious public health emergency in informal settlements in Yangon, although it is one which is largely not recognized by government agencies or international aid agencies." Therefore, it is imperative that governments and international agencies recognize and support the informal settlements with immediate responses to COVID-19.

UN-Habitat's emergency response aims at 1) Enhancing public preparedness to combat COVID-19 among communities living in informal settlements by expanding access to water, hygiene awareness and practice, and prevention kits; 2) Improving community and public knowledge about COVID-19 by providing reliable and accurate information; 3) Provision of direct support to combat loss of income to a network of community mobilizers and volunteers; and 4) Expanding capacity of COBs and local governments to respond to COVID-19 in informal settlements by addressing gaps in data.

"I feel that we did not just distribute things, we were able to organize ourselves in a collaborative way to accomplish this"

**Peace, Community Organizer**  
Bedar Social Development Group



A community volunteer explains the contents of the IEC pamphlets to a community member in Hlaing Thar Yar. 14 June 2020, Myanmar, Yangon. [Bedar Social Development Group]

## SNAPSHOT OF UN-HABITAT ACTIVITIES IMPLEMENTED



### Discussion Paper

Housing at the forefront of the response to COVID-19



### Rapid Assessment

Targeted 100 households in informal settlements



### IEC Materials

Disseminated to 13,240 households



### Masks

Distributed to 102,000 households



### Hand Washing Stations

Installed in 95 locations in Yangon and Sittwe



### PPE packages

Provided to 3 health centres in Yangon



### Urban Stakeholders Forum

Held on 12<sup>th</sup> May with 66+ participants



### Livelihoods support

Mobilized 131 community volunteers



### Social Mapping

on nearest designated health facility/other risks

## PROJECT SUMMARY

Lack of access to accurate and reliable information, truncated access to water, health care services, and the risk of income loss compound the inability of the urban poor living in informal settlements in Yangon to effectively tackle the COVID-19 pandemic. In Rakhine state, the early onset of the annual summer drought has exacerbated the problem. In addition, serious gaps in data on informal settlements (health access and access to WASH facilities) impairs the Government's ability to respond to the pandemic.

The project has partnered with existing UN-Habitat Community Development Committees (CDC) established in four informal settlements (Shwe Pyi Thar, Dala, South Dagon and Dagon Seikkan), Urban Poor Network and Bedar Social Development Group in Hlaing Thar Yar to implement project activities.

The project is designed to buttress the joint UN effort to combat COVID-19 at the national level. Access to reliable information, hygiene awareness, enough water and essential support kits have been identified as key elements of the Country Preparedness and Response Plan (CPRP).



A man washing his hands at the hand washing station in Shwe Pyi Thar. 12 June 2020, Myanmar, Yangon. [UN-Habitat]





A UN-Habitat staff member with the representative doctor at the Shwe Pyi Thar fever clinic. 8 June 2020, Myanmar, Yangon. [UN-Habitat]

## COVID-19 RESPONSE PUBLICATIONS

- ✔ UN-Habitat COVID-19 Discussion Paper on Policy Options
- ✔ Rapid assessment of informal settlements of Yangon: COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on residents of informal settlement (survey report)
- ✔ Awareness and preparedness materials
- ✔ Housing the urban poor is vital to combat COVID-19 (Myanmar Times)
- ✔ Informal settlements at the heart of United Nations response to COVID-19 in Myanmar (story by UN-Habitat)
- ✔ Community support is key to successful hand-washing stations to combat COVID-19 in Myanmar
- ✔ Public hand-washing stations to combat COVID-19 in Sittwe, Myanmar gaining popularity

“The establishment and continuance of fever clinics mainly depends on the volunteers and the funding, donation and contribution from the community groups and individuals”

Hlaing Thar Yar fever clinic

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## IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



Bedar Social Development Group  
Urban Poor Network  
Emergency Response Committee to COVID-19  
Community Development Committee  
Township Development Committee

## SUPPORTED BY

**UN HABITAT**  
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE



UN-Habitat COVID-19 Emergency Response