



**TOWARDS IMPROVED NUTRITION**  
ACCESS TO GOOD QUALITY BASIC SERVICES





A short step from improved WASH  
to healthier communities

People's Process



Dry Zone lies within Myanmar’s central plains, which are bounded by mountains to the east and west. Due to its geographical location, the region receives much less rain than in the rest of the country. This has wide-reaching impacts on the population of the region. Nearly less than half of the households have year-round access to safe water. Besides, lacking sanitation is considered as urgent issue as most of the households in Dry Zone do not have access to latrines, which means they practice open defecation. While this may not be frowned upon from a cultural standpoint, it is highly detrimental for the community’s health: the most common cause of water contamination is exposure to fecal matter of human origin. Contaminated water can be the cause of diseases such as diarrhoea, cholera, or the transmission of parasites – diseases that are especially dangerous when contracted by children, because in addition to damaging their health they can also harm their growth and development. The consequences are evident: two out of six children under five are underweight and have severe malnutrition in the Dry Zone. Malnutrition is a leading cause of death or disability and is an explanation for the high rates of under-five mortality in the region.

A short step from improved WASH to healthier communities aimed at providing communities with high-quality hygiene education focusing on zero open defecation (ZOD), improved sanitation and access to safe drinking water to provide communities with basis for healthy and productive life through continuous community mobilization and engagement. Project implementations took place in 221 villages across six townships of Dry Zone (Yesagyo, Pakokku, Myingyan, Natogyi, Mahlaing and Taungtha) whereof over 178,167 people benefitted. The project contributed to LIFT Strategy Outcome 3 “Improved nutrition of women, men and children”, and to the Dry Zone Programme Outcome 5 “Fewer children are stunted”.

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## IMPROVING NUTRITION THROUGH WATER AND SANITATION

In the Dry Zone, located in central Myanmar, it rains much less than in the rest of the country. Only around half of the households have year-round access to safe water. In fact, only 3% of communities have access to safe piped water in rural areas; the remaining communities can only access un-purified poor-quality water, and/or have disproportionately difficult means of obtaining water for their families.

Lack of sanitation is another urgent issue: most of the households in the Dry Zone do not have access to latrines, which means they practice open defecation. While this may not be frowned upon from a cultural standpoint, it is highly detrimental for the community's health: the most common cause of water contamination is exposure to fecal matter of human origin. Contaminated water can be the cause of diseases such as diarrhoea, cholera, or the transmission of parasites – diseases that are especially dangerous when contracted by children, because in addition to damaging their health, they can also harm their growth and development. The consequences are quite evident: two in six children under five are underweight and have severe malnutrition in the Dry Zone. Malnutrition is a leading cause of death or disability and is an explanation for the high rates of under-five mortality in the region: 46 per thousand, almost nine times the average rate in high-income countries.

UNPROTECTED WATER BOOSTS THE RISK OF PREVALENCE OF WATER BORNE DISEASES, WHICH CAN CAUSE MALNUTRITION PARTICULARLY AMONG CHILDREN











Looking for a way to prevent the rampant spread of diseases and curb the child mortality rate, UN-Habitat, together with LIFT devised a tailored community driven development project called “A short step from improved WASH to healthier communities”. Its aim was to provide safe drinking water, improved sanitation, and hygiene education, helping these communities to adopt new practices for a healthier way of life. From 2016 until 2019, the project brought clean water, sanitation, and improvement in health to 221 villages across six townships of Dry Zone, whereof over 178,000 people have benefited directly.

U San Myint from Nyaung Pin Thar Village in Natogyi Township is a one of the cheerful residents that was benefitted from the project. Before, he and the other members of his family had to get up early in the morning and queued for hours to simply get a couple of buckets of water, which would than be their only available amount for the day. Not uncommonly, the effort of the time-consuming routine resulted in health complaints for U San Myint’s family: the unprotected water source contaminated by germs boosted the prevalence of waterborne diseases and made the family members sick.

Today, U San Myint is able to just turn on the tap at his home and fill a glass with clean water, whenever he feels thirsty. He is not the only one to enjoy this recent improvement. There is a newfound quality of life in Nyaung Pin Thar: people are healthier and more relaxed.



## COMMUNITY MOBILISATION

In order to understand the importance of social organisation with regard to collective action as well as the project's aim, the project team assists the community with holding village meetings in a first step of the People's Process. There, the community members discuss about the most pressing issues the people are facing and elaborate potential actions to be

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