

Skills for Employment in the Northern Shan (SENS)

Context

In Northern Shan, a large part of the population is composed of diverse ethnic groups. While the majority are Shan, other ethnic groups such as Kachin, Palaung, Kokang, Lahu, Danu, Pao Hmong, Lisu and Wa live in this region of Myanmar. Ongoing violent conflicts between Tatmadaw (Myanmar military) and Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs) as well as among the various ethnic groups have contributed to protracted displacement and creating new (re-)displacements across Northern Shan. According to UN OCHA, a population of around 200.000 has been displaced in the Northern Shan State since the conflict escalated in late 2023 and thousands of people have been forced to relocate to the bordering regions due to ongoing fighting. The IDPs don't just have to leave their homesteads, but often also their main income generating activities such as agriculture or animal husbandry. With the loss of their livelihoods, they depend on support from various international and local organisations, providing food emergency aid. Due to a lack of employment and income perspectives, many young people also migrate to neighbouring countries, in particular China and Thailand.

The coup and the intense conflicts have significantly affected the lives and livelihoods of both IDPs and host communities displacing them in nearby cities such as Taunggyi in Southern Shan State. Failure of market, business and banking sector, increased food and commodity prices, disruption of transportation, education and health services as well as the increased security risk put additional stress on all conflict affected communities, compromising the living and income perspectives in particular of the youth, young people and women.

Objective

In the framework of the BMZ Special Initiative "Displaced Persons and Host Countries", the project's objective is to improve the living and income perspectives of youth, young people and women who have been affected by the conflict and displacement.

Project name	Skills for Employment in the Northern Shan (SENS)
Commissioned by	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Project region	Northern Shan State (NSS) Southern Shan State (SSS) since November 2024
Project partner	National and international NGOs
Project duration	01.01.2019 – 31.08.2025
Project budget	10.700.000 EUR

Approach

The project – Skills for Employment in Northern Shan (SENS) – focuses on providing skills to people affected by the conflict and displacement, with a special focus on youth, young people and women. The approach and activities are adapted to the particular context of Northern Shan as well as Southern Shan and are intended to meet the demands of the private sector, through strong market linkages, aiming at strengthening and improving the livelihoods of the target group. In doing so, the project is following a balanced approach that addresses both people affected by displacement as well as host communities.

In the implementation of the project, SENS is working with several national and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as well as the private sector in both Northern Shan and Southern Shan. Where required, capacities of local cooperation partners (NGOs) in the provision of skills training and support are systematically strengthened in order to further increase impact and sustainability in the long-term.



Key Activities

The project comprises four interlinked areas of activity:

- 1) Improving the **capacities of non-governmental organizations** in offering services that aim to improve the living, income and working situation of the target group
- 2) Improving the **access to market-oriented training and employment-related services** for young people and women
- 3) Cooperation of women groups and women-centred organizations for improvement of **social and economic participation** in their communities
- 4) Cooperation of communities/groups affected by displacement and conflict for improvement of their **social and life perspectives**

1) Capacities of non-governmental organizations

The project's first area of activity focuses on improving the capacities of non-governmental organizations in offering services that aim to improve the living, income and working situation of the youth, young people and women affected by displacement and conflict. Activities include the support of local non-governmental partners in the development and implementation of specific training and employment placement measures, which are based on labour market requirements on the one hand and the specific needs of the target groups on the other hand. Furthermore, the project works on strengthening the cooperation between the private sector and civil society organizations to improve the variety of services that are aimed at the living, working and income situation of the target groups.

2) Access to market-oriented training and employment-related services

Based on labour market assessments, a variety of training opportunities (including mobile, online and on-site) are provided to young people and women to improve their technical, business, and life skills. The project also supports the development of business and supply relationships between the target group and the private sector. In addition, material support (e.g., equipment, materials, etc) is provided for selected income-generating activities.

3) Social and economic participation of women

To improve the social and economic participation of women in their communities, the project provides capacity building to civil

society organisations and women groups to initiate social and economic activities. The project also further supports the initiation of women's groups as well as peer learning among these groups.

4) Social and life perspectives

With the aim of having conflict affected communities work together to improve their social and life perspectives, the project trains dedicated facilitators for strengthening the cooperation between ethnic groups and/or IDPs and host communities. Furthermore, the project supports the implementation of economic and socio-cultural activities to strengthen social cohesion between different actors and communities.

Based on the specific needs and situation of the IDPs and host communities, all activities are planned and implemented in a flexible manner, following a conflict sensitive approach considering the highly volatile context in Northern Shan and the dynamics of Southern Shan.



Highlights of Achievement so far

- 4895 individuals (out of which 4066 are women) have been supported
- 20 local partner organizations have been strengthened their capacities
- 54 local trainers' capacities have been enhanced
- 952 women participated in the promotion of women's groups and networks
- 643 youth, young adults and women have improved their social aspect

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