

# Religions for Peace – Myanmar

## 2017 NATIONAL CHAPTER REPORT

1 January to 31 December 2017

### 1. OVERVIEW

*Religions for Peace-Myanmar (R/P-M)*, which is composed of main religious traditions including Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and Islam, is the country's first full-fledged representative and action-oriented interreligious body for reconciliation, peace and development. It presents a policy for religious leaders on joint advocacy, coordinated program response and training, mobilization of local communities around issues of public unrest and resources channeling through local congregations and other faith groups. With the encouragement of *R/P-International*, *R/P-Myanmar* is committed to discharge collaboration and coordination among faith groups and to expand their capacity to raise the overall impact and contribute to the enhancement of social cohesion amidst the challenges Myanmar is facing.

With support from GHR Foundation, Religions for Peace International (henceforth, RfP-I) and Religions for Peace Myanmar (henceforth, RfP-M) have undertaken three projects to deliver important services through *Strengthening Interreligious Collaboration in Myanmar (SIRCM)*, *Multi-Religious Networks Promoting Religious Diversity and Tolerance (MPRDT)* and *Mobilizing Interreligious Networks to Confront Climate Change in Myanmar*. In this process, the capacity of *R/P-M* to harness resources from multiple faith groups and to organize interreligious cooperation for a common goal grows, and inter-communal harmony and social cohesion can progress.

### 2. Project Activities and Progress of Implementation

*Religions for Peace – Myanmar (R/P-M)* implemented multi activities in 5 areas Myitkyina, Kachin State; Meiktila, Mandalay Region; Kyaukphyu, Rakhine State; Patheingyi, Ayeyarwaddy Region and Pyaw, Bago Region. Within the project period of 12 months in 2017, *R/P-M* achieved the following activities –

70% of Core Group members meeting have been conducted in Yangon through the meeting able to revised Finance and HR policy as standardize. Establishment of key tools for *R/P-M* is very essential for inter religious cooperation in Myanmar for the current and as well as for the future development. Conducting regular Core Group members' meeting is getting regularly support from the team and recognizing of the team work and find out more effective ways of approaching to local community and authorities. *R/P-M* collected religious institutions database and interfaith activities such as Hindu, Buddhist, Catholic, MCC (Myanmar Council of Churches) and Islam in order to have closed interfaith networking activities and effectiveness of the project implementation in Myanmar. The tasks have been achieved through closed cooperation with Women of Faith Network (WoFN) and Interfaith Youth Network (IYN).

*R/P-M* conducted preliminary meeting on Pre-celebration of International Peace Day Event inviting to both WoFN Members and IYN and exhorted to both sides for the efficacious coordination to bring out the successful results. On the other hand, this is one of the strengthening the linkage activities of WoFN and IYN initiative.

R/P-M conducted ( 30) interfaith dialogue session as achievement more diverse communities participate in the project implementation and share core value of each religion and build understanding and respect among the interfaith communities. Tree plantation, cleaning campaign has conducted as Welcoming the Other (WtO) activities. Cross visit program has been conducted in two places Meiktila and Myitkyina. Kyaukphyu team visited to Myitkyina and Myitkyina team visited to Meiktila to see and learn the tasks which has been implemented in each area. Through the cross visit, build relationship and find more effective way for future collaboration activities. Conducting survey base on the knowledge of implementing activities and the situation of respective region has been conducted before and after cross visit. Participants who involved in cross visit improved 60% of their knowledge sharing and perspective, after visiting to different places.

Child protection activities and trainings have been conducted in Pyay and Pathein respectively collaboration with national WoFN, IYN and regional WoFN, IYN and IC (Interfaith Committee). IEC materials have been provided to the children during child edutainment activities and trainings such as polo shirts and umbrellas. By doing Child Protection activity, coordination and collaboration among the WoFN, IYN and IC and learned from each other and build more relationship among religious leaders and youth. Total (414) male and (594) female involved in the activities among them (63) are Hindu, (644) Buddhist, (168) Christian and (133) Islam. Welcoming the Other activities such as prayer meeting in four religious places, tree plantation, visitation to hospital and meeting with patients (cancer, HIV, Autism) from four religions, rice and cooking oil donation to home aged centers and Youth development centers of Buddhist, Islam, Christian, and cross community meeting has been held in Yangon with WoFN and IYN. Networking with NGOs, INGOs and CSO also conducted inclusively in Yangon. Total 39 WtO activity have been conducted at the place such as HIV center, home age, religious places etc.. Active participation and social cohesion has increased through WtO activities. Intra dialogue has conducted within IDP (Internally Displace People) camp.

Date	Location	Activity	Participant				
			WoFN	IYN	IC	CG	community
20 <sup>th</sup> May 2017	Islamic Center of Myanmar	Prayer meeting	15	20	2	-	33
24 <sup>th</sup> May 2017	Spasher Mosque	Interfaith meeting with Youth from Sittwe, Rakhine	1	15	-	-	50 (youth from Rakhine)
25 <sup>th</sup> May 2017	Bhutnuths Hindu temple	Prayer meeting	12	18	-	-	24
3 <sup>rd</sup> June 2017	Orchid Hotel, Yangon	Networking joint meeting	14	25	4	-	37
10 <sup>th</sup> June 2017	Ywar Thargyi, Yangon	Tree plantation	17	15	1	-	48
10 <sup>th</sup> June 2017	Good Shepherd	Visit to HIV patients and made donation	17	15	1	-	9
11 <sup>th</sup> June 2017	Yangon Children Hospital	Visit to Cancer patients	1	25	-	-	100 (cancer patients children)
17 <sup>th</sup> June 2017	Panpyulett, Bago	Meditation and tree plantation	13	8	1	-	58
18 <sup>th</sup> June 2017	Thukha Yeikmyone, Yangon	Visit to HIV Youth center	-	20	-	-	130
18 <sup>th</sup> June 2017	Islamic Orphanage center	Visitation to the children and support, dancing	-	20	-	-	40
24 <sup>th</sup> June 2017	Kyiek Inn	Visit and support	2	20	-	-	45

	Hindu youth center	stationary (school books, pens)					
24 <sup>th</sup> June 2017	Tharwa Thaya Yeikthar, Thanlin	Visit to the people (old women, men, monks, laymen, HIV patients, autism etc..) who stay in tharwa thaya yeikthar and made donation mmk200000 and 15 sack of rice.	2	20	-	-	200 + (who we met during visit) there are more than 3000 people are residing in the center.

R/P-M support water supply at Thiri Mingalar and Chan Aye Wards in Meiktila, Mandalay Region. From water supply, 75% of Islam and 25% of Buddhist are benefiting. By water supply project, local community has more relationship and active cooperation in the project implementation with local authority and among diverse communities. Regular monthly meetings and WtO activities made local people to understand more on R/P-M and reduce hate speech and tension among religious leaders and followers.

The activities that implemented by R/P-M are being link with the Strategic Action Plan of Religions for Peace. R/P-M involve projecting the earth through cleaning campaign and tree plantation in different areas.

#### Challenges:

- Linkage between national and regional interfaith communities
- Limited funding opportunity and interest of funding agencies in area
- Less participation of Interfaith Youth Network in the process of the project implementation
- Diverse communities request livelihood program and education for young generation, however R/P-M could not respond their needs

#### Comments:

In current situation in Myanmar - Focusing on peace activity alone is not much effective in field implementation. Peace and development should go together in order to reach sustainable development goal. Interfaith Exchange study program will make more understanding of diverse communities and can build relationship in globally. Invite field implementers for international cross visit in order to gain knowledge of building relationship and learn diverse culture and living style. RfP should also focus on prevention of the conflict instead of implementing project in conflict area such as Rakhine. Most funding agencies has less interest in less conflict zone. Interfaith Dialogue session lead to Social Cohesion and stronger relationship.