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EVALUATION REPORT



**UDF-MYA-07-180 Deepening democratization processes through youth
leadership in Myanmar**

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Disclaimer

The views expressed in this report are those of the evaluators. They do not represent those of UNDEF nor of any of the institutions referred to in the report.

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I. Executive Summary

(i) *The project*

The project “*Deepening democratization processes through youth leadership*” set out to “foster a culture of youth leadership and debate to address the knowledge gaps by providing information and capacity to engage with local authorities around community entitlements, and to develop leadership potential.” It aimed to do this as an integral part of a broader initiative that had established a ‘youth fellowship’ of young men and women (average age 25 years). The UNDEF-supported component of this broader vision aimed to identify new youth fellows, train them in leadership and concepts of democracy and governance, and prepare them to lead development projects in their communities. This was done through both formal training and field ‘placements’ with local grassroots organizations.

The 130 trained youth fellows were supported through the fellowship network, including meetings at local and state levels, and by more than 400 youth volunteers identified during community ‘reflect circles’ that the fellows facilitated. Together, the fellows and volunteers led and established a large number of development projects within the communities, ranging from pig rearing to the building of early education centres.

An add-on research component aimed to provide new knowledge on areas of community concern. Planned training of journalists and the development of a website proved not to be possible in the political climate in Myanmar and were replaced by the production of a series of newsletters for the fellows and for broader dissemination.

During implementation of the project, two significant events prompted minor modifications of the planned activities: Cyclone Negriz hit Myanmar in May 2009 and rescue and reconstruction became priority activities for the youth fellows and communities in affected areas. The first multi-party election in November 2010 also, at least temporarily, opened up spaces for dialogue with various ministries at technical level but also meant rescheduling of partner meetings because mass gatherings were not allowed.

(ii) *Evaluation Findings*

The project was highly **relevant** in a country where young people, in particular, have been disenfranchised and disempowered in their own communities, and where tensions among different ethnic groups have constructed obstacles for young people’s cooperation and joint action.

The model chosen – creating a ‘fellowship’ of trained young people, supported by youth volunteers and ‘placed’ in communities where they will lead development projects and so position themselves as community leaders and representatives, is ideally suited to both produce the expected outcomes and also lay the groundwork for potential future representation at national level.

The project activities maintained a suitable balance between training and community activities, and gender considerations were integrated into the training from the outset. There could have been greater consideration of gender approaches to the research element of the project, however.

The project **far exceeded its own expectations**, reaching more than 100,000 people through project activities. All the indicators show this: there were more fellows, more meetings more research projects, more newsletters and more community groupings ('reflect circles') than anticipated. In part, this was a result of the intelligent and robust implementation structure put in place, with the grantee working closely with a number of reliable grassroots organizations in the regions where activities were undertaken. In hindsight the research component of the project might have been better planned, and plans to work with journalists were probably unworkable from the outset.

The newsletters that replaced the media training and proposed website were a reasonable use of funds. **The budget was well designed** not only to resource the community activities but also to reflect the strong partnership that was put in place.

The major impact of the project was the **successful 'fellowship' established**, with more than 100 youth fellows trained to become leaders and agents of change in their communities. The project trained 30 new fellows but also gave further training to some 100 existing fellows, establishing a 'phased' introduction of new fellows to eventually replace those who move on.

By using the services of the grassroots partners to identify and mentor/monitor the fellows, additionally, the project delivered **considerable capacity building to the grassroots organizations**. Some fellows were recruited from among the organizations' staff; six fellows subsequently were employed by the organizations.

The project has a **high likelihood of being sustained** because it is **part of a broader initiative based on a long-term vision and country plan**. Additionally, it fits into a wider undertaking of Action Aid International. The processes established in Myanmar have also attracted continuing donor interest and some elements are also being funded at the local level through fundraising. The majority of fellows are still active and are financing their own activities.

The challenge of moving leadership initiatives upstream, however, remains.

There is a **clear space for UNDEF** in a country where few organizations actively work in the areas of leadership, governance and democratic process.

(ii) Conclusions

This project is a good practice example in a number of areas: project design, structure and management of partnerships, allocation of resources, and project outreach. As a component of a broader strategy, it was able to achieve outputs that exceeded expectations and has a high likelihood of these outputs being sustained.

There were few weaknesses, but the research component was not well integrated into the project (although the studies produced may be useful to the grantee for other purposes) and, although gender balance was taken into account in the training, gender was not taken into sufficient account in the research.

(iii) Recommendations

AAM might:

- **Consider bringing in a gender specialist at project design stage** to suggest ways in which a clear commitment to women's participation and gender sensitivity can be translated across the range of project actions and outputs. Although the project design aimed to maintain appropriate gender balance and to ensure that women participated fully in the project and there was appropriate attention to gender balance in the selection of fellows for training, for example, gender is not always integrated into all the project components (for example research).

- **Re-think the research component of the broader project**, and in particular consider how different types of research might be used to deliver different project outcomes. Where academic research is useful to initiate policy dialogue with the authorities, for example, action-research can provide the opportunity for capacity building of the fellows and can also be a useful tool in deciding, designing and promoting community initiatives.

- **Review documentation stages**, so that the documents produced do not under-sell the processes or outcomes of projects.

For UNDEF's consideration:

- **There is a clear 'space' for UNDEF in Myanmar**, a country where many agencies and organizations still find it difficult to work.

- This report might be read alongside the evaluation report of project UDF-THA-07-185, which had almost identical aims, similar activities but very different outcomes.

II. Introduction and development context

(i) The project and evaluation objective

This report contains an evaluation of the project entitled “*Deepening democratization processes through youth leadership.*” The project ran from 1 October 2008 to 31 December 2010, including a three-month extension, with a total budget of US\$440,441.98 (UNDEF support of US\$300,000). Additional funding was provided by the grantee, sourced from a number of donors including DFID and the British Council.

The project was designed and implemented by Action Aid International in Myanmar (AAM), with the aim to “upscale the learning of community development work through fellowships, and strengthen the foundations of civil society action by (i) building leadership among the youth of the community through their networks; (ii) strengthening civil society work including in the media and creating a discourse of democracy; and (iii) commissioning policy research and establishing policy dialogue and idea exchange between the ruling authority and civil society”.

(ii) Evaluation methodology

An international expert working with a national expert from Myanmar carried out the evaluation under the framework agreement between UNDEF and Transtec.

Planning of the evaluation was detailed in a *Launch Note* approved by UNDEF in May 2011. In preparing the *Launch Note*, the international expert reviewed the set of project documents provided by UNDEF (see list in Annex 2) and exchanged email messages with the implementing agency and the national expert.

The field mission originally planned for May 2011 was postponed to July when the requested visa for the international expert was not received, and was then finally cancelled when there were indications that the visa would not be issued. The field mission was therefore carried out by the local expert, although the international expert was able to interview AAM management in Bangkok by extending a non-related field mission to Thailand, and completed a series of interviews by Skype/email/phone.

Between approval of the *Launch Note* and the beginning of the field mission/Bangkok meeting/interviews, the experts developed a series of three questionnaires to be used to guide the interviews with project personnel, partners and beneficiaries. The experts held regular (at times daily) consultations throughout the evaluation process.

(iii) Development context

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar is South-East Asia’s second largest country by geographical area, bordered by China, Laos, Thailand, Bangladesh, India and the Bay of Bengal, with the Andaman Sea coast defining approximately one-third of its periphery. The country was known as Burma in post-colonial times, and this name is still used by those who reject the renaming of the country by the military government. The capital city is Naypyidaw, although the former capital, Yangon, is the largest city.

Myanmar is nominally a presidential bi-cameral republic which, since elections in 2010, has been ruled by a civilian government. In reality, however, Myanmar has been under

authoritarian regime for half a century, with a top-down political culture and processes that have resulted in public intimidation, a significant obstacle to people's struggle for peace and democracy and the achievement of fundamental human rights. This is particularly true for the younger generation. Civic education subjects are not taught in schools and social science subjects have been unknown at universities since the Ne Win (military regime leader from 1962 to 1988) era. Partly as a result of this, different youth groups do not share their concerns and have been distrustful of each other for a long time, resulting in "ethnic ghettos."

Ethnic tensions are high among the 135 distinct ethno-linguistic groups recognized in Myanmar. The Bamar form approximately 68 % of the population, with 10 % Shan, 7 % Kayin and 4 % Rakin minorities. Overseas Chinese represent some 3 % of the population and overseas Indians approximately 2 %. The remaining 6 % is made up of Mon, Kachin, Chin, Anglo-Indians, Anglo Burmese and others.

A lack of job opportunities, few learning opportunities, racism and gender insensitivity in communities, ethnic grievances, drug problems, hierarchical peer pressures and media restrictions all contribute to preventing young people from participating in civil and political life. Culturally, young people and their capacities are ignored by the elders and traditional leadership. Not surprisingly, the self-esteem of young people is low and they have difficulty finding ways of engaging with other young people of different ethnic backgrounds. Additionally, there are few opportunities for them to voice their concerns in their communities, where decisions have traditionally been made by elders and village leaders.

III. Project objectives, strategy and implementation

(i) Logical framework

Project activities & interventions	Intended outcomes	Medium-Term Impacts	Long-Term Development Objective	
TRAINING AND YOUTH FORUMS				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training of 'youth fellows' in development, participatory methodologies and change processes, followed by placement of fellows in the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30 youth fellows trained and placed in communities 	<p>Leadership capacity of young people grows and they become active in communities</p>	<p>Young people – youth fellows, volunteers – are mobilized, equipped and supported by informed communities to promote democratic practices to strengthen community participation and support the preparation of political transition.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced leadership training for existing fellows • Leadership capacity-building of village leaders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100 youth fellows' capacity is upgraded to allow them to lead youth forums and take principal roles in youth leadership • Village leader networks are formed and functioning • Network meetings are held 	<p>Communities are mobilized around youth and village leader networks at different levels</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training for community volunteers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Village volunteer networks are formed and functioning; meetings held 			
FORUMS FOR DEMOCRATIC DIALOGUE				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50 forums of youth leaders are organized and networking is promoted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth forums facilitate decision-making and democratic practices • Forums collaborate and network 	<p>Greater cohesion among young people and among and within communities around an agenda for development and democracy</p>		
RESEARCH				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two studies on two different issues are commissioned • Policy, dialogue and advocacy with government are undertaken based on the research platform 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two studies are completed and published • Dialogue with authorities is undertaken 	<p>Enhanced dialogue with government</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inter-sectoral group dialogues ('reflect circles') are organized using the research process as a tool 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dialogues take place and a process is begun 	<p>Enhanced dialogue among differing groups reflect a process of change in inter-ethnic relations around shared concerns</p>		
MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaison with a media group to publish articles and newsletters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two newsletters and five articles are published and disseminated to youth groups 	<p>Visibility of the dialogue process, development issues and community concerns is improved</p>		

(ii) Project approach

The project was designed and implemented within a broader, ongoing AAM initiative to develop and support youth “fellows,” youth leaders and village leaders to drive change processes through development and dialogue. The establishment and facilitation of networks among these mobilized groups is further supported by ongoing training and the commissioning of research studies that are used to focus discussion within the communities and to underpin dialogue with national authorities.



Early Childhood Care centre built with community resources following collective discussions and decisions on how to allocate available resources in Saw Paw Kone village

This particular component of the ongoing initiative originally also included a media component, involving a known media group publishing approximately five articles based on the work/research, however during implementation this was replaced with the publication of a number of newsletters for dissemination among the youth participants. AAM was already working with a number of youth fellows when the UNDEF activities began, and the up-skilling of these existing fellows was an essential part of the project. Thirty candidates to enter youth fellow training were identified by local grassroots partners:

- The Shalom Foundation (Kachin and Kayah states),
- Ranmarwaddy Rural Development Service (RRDS) (Rakhine),
- Knowledge and Dedication for Nation building (KDN) (and its partner PMA) (Irrawady Delta).

Additionally, youth leaders were prepared to participate in “reflect circles” – community-based discussion forums facilitated by the fellows and focused on development issues of community concern. Commissioned research on identified issues was to be used to facilitate this dialogue, promote the issues more broadly through wider dissemination, and provide AAM with a lobbying tool for its advocacy work. The project targeted in particular areas where there are ethnic minorities marginalized in mainstream Burmese society.

(iii) Strategic aspects

The project’s principal objective was to “foster a culture of youth leadership and debate to address the knowledge gaps by providing information and capacity to engage with local authorities around community entitlements, and to develop leadership potential.”

The project design outlined five strategies to achieve this:

- The building of capacity within village “reflect circles.”
- The development of youth volunteers at the community level;
- The development of networks of young leaders;
- Development activities undertaken by communities, led by youth leaders;
- Community interaction and approaches to state and non-state actors to demand services.

Youth fellows were chosen by partner organizations at grassroots level. They identified local organizations to nominate candidates for youth fellowships from their networks. Each partner

organization used different criteria to identify and select the youth fellows, however, common criteria that all partners set were:

- University graduate (to allow use of English), although this was sometimes given lower priority in cases where the person was highly involved in community development activities;
- Commitment to work in rural development for at least two years;
- Likelihood that the person would be respected by the communities;
- Good communication and social skills to allow penetration into the communities;
- Ability to establish pro-active relationships with the authorities;
- Ability to establish respectful relationships with faith leaders of all religions and provide potential support back to the partner organizations.

The youth fellows received an initial six weeks of training in leadership and community development before being allocated a two-month field placement under the supervision of the local organization and project management team. Follow-up training lasted four weeks and focused on lessons learned during the placements, rights and power, technical skills and work planning. The fellows then returned to their communities to begin work with “reflect circles.” The community assignments lasted an indefinite period, depending on the availability of the fellow. Most fellows stayed in the communities for a year, although some stayed longer.

During implementation of the project, a number of significant events prompted necessary responses in line with the planned strategy: Cyclone Negriz hit Myanmar in May 2009 and dealing with its aftermath became a priority rescue and then development activity for the youth fellows and communities based in affected areas. The announcement and then holding of the first multi-party election in November 2010 also, at least temporarily, opened up spaces for dialogue with various ministries at technical level but also meant that large meetings of partners and fellows had to be scaled down. It also allowed AAM to introduce notions of voters’ rights into the training.

IV. Evaluation Question Answers and Findings

(i) *Relevance*

▪ **Appropriate, timely actions**

In a country where for more than half a century people – especially young people – have been disenfranchised and disempowered, this was an appropriate action, carefully planned to work within remaining restrictions and designed not to create conflict or controversy but legitimate grassroots-level processes that further the attainment of people’s rights without putting them at unnecessary risk. Its design as part of a broader, longer-term undertaking means that it is embedded in processes that already have legitimacy among both communities and authorities. The UNDEF-supported component of this larger undertaking was particularly timely, also, because it coincided with the calling of multi-party elections for the first time in five decades and provided a forum for vital education on voters’ rights and participatory processes.

“We could not easily talk of “‘democracy’ but focused on leadership and decision making at community levels, and on participation. The fellows were encouraged, though, to aspire to representation beyond their communities. Possibilities may open up. Most of them had never seen an election in their lifetime; they were excited to see what a constitution and democratic ideas could mean”. **Project Manager, AAM**

▪ **Intelligent balance between training and community activities**

The project’s relevance is well demonstrated in the balance between training and networking of the youth fellows and the actions these young people orchestrated in the communities in which they were placed. The large number of community initiatives developed and brought to fruition made the project relevant not only to the aims of promoting democracy but also to the large numbers of people involved in the activities in a very tangible way. The “buy-in” from community members was crucial to the ability of the fellows to achieve penetration into the communities, to take up leadership roles and gradually to change perceptions of the role of young people in their society. This is in turn crucial if young people are to develop future representation roles and lead their communities.

Large numbers of community initiatives were established; there were 292 self-help/savings and loan groups set up, for example, in 198 villages.

Initiatives included:

- Savings and loan groups
- Pig, goat, chicken and buffalo rearing
- Building of rice banks
- Digging of fish ponds
- Local self-help markets
- Oil crop planting
- Establishment of community forests
- Perennial crop planting



Village rice bank reconstruction organized by fellows in Kayah state

- Cultivated land development
- Road renovation
- Bridge construction and renovation
- Hydropower construction
- Construction of electric power lines
- Village youth libraries
- Gravity water flow projects
- Water pond construction and renovation
- Primary and nursery school construction
- Child night study groups
- Early childhood care programmes
- Adult literacy projects
- Building of sanitary facilities.

- **Good integration of gender**

From the outset, the project design aimed to maintain appropriate gender balance and to ensure that women participated fully in the project. This is especially important in grassroots actions where women as leaders are not the norm in some parts of Myanmar.

Of the 130 youth fellows involved in the project, 64 were women. Importantly, images of women leading workshops, taking the microphone in forums and participating equally in the project's actions were included in newsletters and other publications. One newsletter was formally devoted to discussion of women's rights.

One possible omission was in the selection of research topics, where a gendered analysis of community concerns might have thrown up alternative ideas for topics of study.



A female youth 'fellow' addresses a youth meeting (from the Fellowship Newsletter produced as part of the project)

(ii) Effectiveness

- **Strong project implementation structure**

One of the strengths of the project was the well structured and managed partnerships involved. Although AAM kept oversight of all elements of the project, implementation – including decision making and prioritization – was fully devolved to grassroots partners. Although the frequency of partner consultations was adversely affected by the calling of national elections (when large-group meetings were potentially risky), there was regular consultation between AAM and the implementing partners.

Resources to the partners' activities and staffing were appropriate, although one partner interviewed did believe that it had been under-resourced and not provided with adequate equipment. Overall, however, the partners' ongoing commitment to the broader fellowship project is testimony to their satisfaction with the way the partnerships were managed.

- **Significant participation and outreach**

The project document set out realistic targets for both participation and outreach, but in all cases these were exceeded, in some cases substantially:

- Target = 100 fellows trained or re-trained; Actual = 130 fellows (64F, 66M)
- Target = at least 50 youth forums; Actual = 138 youth forums
- Target = 2 research projects; Actual = 3 research reports completed

- Target = unspecified; Actual = 75 state-level forums
- Target = 2 newsletters; Actual = 6 newsletters
- Target = unspecified; Actual = 390 village 'reflect circle' meetings
- Target = unspecified; Actual = 404 youth volunteers identified and trained
- Target = 11,000 people reached by project; Actual = 106,385 people reached.

- **Research strategy not clear**

Three pieces of research were completed during the UNDEF-supported component of the fellowship programme. The intention of these was to provide AAM, partners and fellows with information on a number of priority areas where knowledge needed to be consolidated for further use, however within the parameters of this particular project, the research was not clearly used for this purpose. Additionally, the research was published in English, limiting its use within the project.

One member of AAM management interviewed suggested that there was a feeling of missed opportunity in the research component of the project and that, in hindsight, the exercise might have been better focused on training some of the fellows to undertake action-research and conduct research within the communities (see comment on need for a gendered approach to this, above). This interviewee was “not convinced that the research was necessarily a valid component of this project.”



Focus group consultation to feed into the research project on climate change

There may, in fact, be an argument for including both commissioned research and community-focused action-research by trained fellows in the project. Reliable research by a recognized researcher is more likely to be usable in policy dialogue with the authorities; action-research facilitated by trained fellows is more likely to be valid for informing community-level actions and discussion. There simply needs to be a clearer distinction between the two, and better strategizing/positioning of the research within the project design.

- **The role of the media**

The original project design foresaw training of journalists and the placement of a number of articles in the media, but this was not done. The political realities of Myanmar, at a time of heightened political sensitivity around election, made working with the media – especially within a project clearly labelled “deepening democratization processes” – impossible.

This should have been anticipated when the project was designed. One possibility might have been to contact the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), which has a watching brief on media and democracy across the globe, and ask their advice on possible ways in which media actions might have been undertaken (or not). The IFJ, for example, might have advised how approaching the media through a “development lens” might have been possible.

As it is, the project was not significantly diminished because the media activity did not take place, since the focus of the project was clearly the fellows and their role in the community.

(iii) Efficiency

▪ Appropriate balance in structure and budget

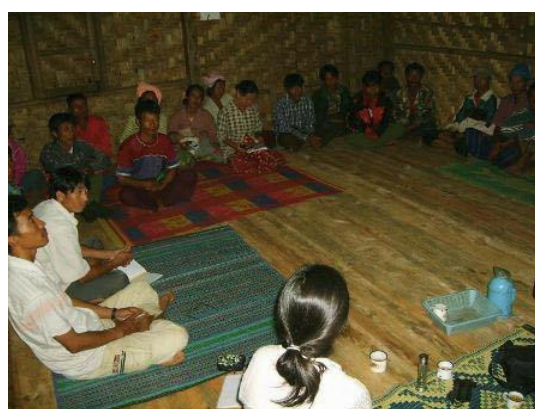
(See above on implementation structure). There was an appropriate balance between the activities undertaken at central (AAM) level and actions at community level, and the budget was both designed and managed to facilitate this.

Resources intended to cover media training and website development were diverted (with UNDEF approval) to the publication of six “Fellowship Newsletters” covering: Fellows and the fellowship programme; Environment and climate change; Youth volunteerism; Disaster risk reduction; Women’s rights; and Youth volunteerism in emergency response. This was an appropriate use of the funds.

(iv) Impact

▪ Change agents active on the ground

The major impact of this (and the broader) AAM project is the success of the “fellowship,” which has seen more than 100 trained youth fellows become real agents for change in their communities. The fact that they have been able to attract the support of more than 400 youth volunteers, and that “reflect circle” processes and other forums for consultation have been established around them means that their personal commitment has a broader support base and is more likely both to have a positive impact and also be sustainable.



Reflect circle organized by fellows in Kachin state

▪ Phased identification and training of fellows

This project involved both the training of a new contingent of fellows and the more advanced training of fellows already active. This progressive introduction of new fellows to the fellowship bodes well both for impact (by extending the pool of fellows and so the outreach) and also sustainability, since some fellows will inevitably move on to further education, work, family life etc. As a result of this phasing, the ages of the fellows involved in the UNDEF-supported work ranged from early 20s to late 30s (with one fellow in the 40s); although they were not all, therefore, officially “youth” fellows, this age range is an inevitable (and not negative) result of the fellowship process.

▪ Reinforcing the capacity of grassroots partner organizations

One of the by-products of the way the project was designed and implemented was the positive impact it had on partner organizations working at grassroots level. Although the partners were chosen on the basis of their strengths and were treated within the project as equal partners, it was recognized that they did not necessarily have staff who were trained and experienced. The project therefore encouraged younger members of staff to sign up as fellows, and facilitated some fellows later joining as staff (six fellows joined AAM or partners as staff in 2009/10). This resulted in positive capacity-building outcomes for the grassroots organizations.

(v) Sustainability

- **An ongoing process established and flourishing**

The UNDEF-supported project was, *ab initio*, conceived as part of a broader undertaking which continues with donor support (SIDA has provided funding since the UNDEF grant ended). Moreover, Action Aid International is continuing the fellowship model in other countries, and a global youth forum hub has been relocated from Nepal to Myanmar.

Within this project, the community groups were also brought together at state level with a view to initiating a state-level process that would endure beyond the end of project activity and involve both local development practitioners and government functionaries.

- **Fellows still active and self-financing**

The continuing commitment of those who have become fellows is demonstrated by the fact that a national conference in 2011 attracted 104 fellows. AAM estimates that 80 % of the fellows remain active within their communities. Many of the youth fellows are now self-financing, undertaking their own fundraising to support the activities they are leading in their communities. Fellows in the Delta region, for example, have formed a network called T-Day (Traditional Development of Ayeyarwaddy Youth network) with the purpose of preserving culture and literature. They raise funds through the sale of traditional products and will use the proceeds to support education and a library.

- **The challenge of moving democratic processes upstream**

The challenge remains, for any organization working in the area of leadership and representation in Myanmar, of finding a window that will allow for democratic dialogue to move upstream and involve the governing authorities, not necessarily at national level in the first instance but at least at state or local level. AAM has a good working relationship with the authorities at ministerial level and seems to be sensitive to what is possible and what is not; it is well placed to identify this window if it should appear.

(vi) **UNDEF value-added**

- **A unique role for UNDEF**

Those interviewed were not aware of any other organization or agency focusing directly on democracy, governance and leadership in Myanmar. Clearly there is a space for UNDEF to continue to take on this mandated role in a country which is a UN Member State. There does seem to be donor support for actions like those that AAM is implementing, and UNDEF seems uniquely placed to work with donors in furthering such work.

- **From fellow to ‘human rights defender’**

Twenty-five of the UNDEF-funded fellows have become master trainers of young “human rights defenders” in Myanmar. This broadens the impact of UNDEF’s contribution in Myanmar and is a real indicator of value-added for the Fund. SIDA has funded two rounds of training in 2011.

- **UNDEF’s modus operandi seen as flexible and supportive**

A member of AAM management said “UNDEF never tied us down. We were able to be flexible and fit in better with evolving needs because of the good, open communication and the fact that changes were allowed if they were justified”. UNDEF’s approach to project support is consequently seen as allowing grantees to succeed where restrictive approaches would hinder them.

V. Conclusions

(i) ***This project might reasonably be cited as a “good practice” example in project design, structure and management of partnerships, allocation of resources, and project outreach.*** Its greatest strength is the fact that, although the design responds to a call for discreet projects and is self-contained, it is ***conceived as part of a broader initiative and thus a much bigger picture.*** It is not surprising, therefore, that its achievements exceeded those anticipated in the project document.

(ii) The project had few weaknesses, but ***more could have potentially been achieved if the research element of the work had been more strategically designed.*** While there was a feeling that the somewhat academic research exercise might more usefully have been replaced by action-research led by fellows trained to do that, in fact both would have been possible and valid.

(iii) The project had a clear gender element from design stage, however ***“gender” goes beyond the number of girls/women participating in a project*** and should also inform, for example, the scope and nature of community initiatives and the topics of the research.

(iv) ***The likelihood that the project will be sustainable is high, with the organizational commitment of Action Aid International to youth mobilization,*** the interest of donors to funding work in Myanmar in particular, and the structure of the fellowship process all contributing to this. AAM may wish to consider, in this regard, how it can appropriately document both the processes of the project and its outcomes for sharing with a wider audience, both within Action Aid and beyond. Although the research studies produced as part of the product were edited for publication, the project reporting sent to UNDEF does not clearly illustrate the actions or the outcomes of the project; these reports needed to be reviewed by a native English speaking editor.

VI. Recommendations

(i) For AAM:

- **Consider bringing in a gender specialist at project design stage** to suggest ways in which a clear commitment to women's participation and gender sensitivity can be translated across the range of project actions and outputs. Although the project design aimed to maintain appropriate gender balance and to ensure that women participated fully in the project and there was appropriate attention to gender balance in the selection of fellows for training, for example, gender is not always integrated into all the project components (for example research).

- **Re-think the research component of the broader project**, and in particular consider how different types of research might be used to deliver different project outcomes. Where academic research is useful to initiate policy dialogue with the authorities, for example, action-research can provide the opportunity for capacity building of the fellows and can also be a useful tool in deciding, designing and promoting community initiatives.

- **Make sure that documentation does not under-sell the processes** or outcomes of projects. Apart from the obvious advantage of documenting all that has happened for internal use, clearly identifying outputs, outcomes and also lessons-learned is useful for attracting ongoing donor support and for underpinning future project design and implementation.

(ii) For UNDEF:

- There is a **clear space for UNDEF in Myanmar**, a country where many agencies and organizations still find it difficult to work. The key is articulating UNDEF's mandate and activities in terms that will allow project activity, and this of course requires careful selection of implementing partners in-country. AAM has manoeuvred sensitivities well and might be a reliable future partner.

- This report might be read alongside the evaluation report of project UDF-THA-07-185, which had almost identical aims, similar activities but very different outcomes.

VII. Overall assessment and closing thoughts

The project "*Deepening democratization processes through youth leadership*" is an example of what can be achieved when projects are designed and implemented by an implementing organization that has a longer-term vision and a clear country strategy.

This project could not have achieved what it set out to do had it been an isolated, 24-month activity, for a number of reasons ranging from the need to have a strong partnership structure to the imperative of identifying and phasing in youth fellows and placing them in communities where the real "proof" of leadership needs to be demonstrated in concrete actions and outputs.

The outcomes of the project, in particular the "fellowship" of youth leaders and volunteers, and the grassroots processes they have initiated, had significant impact and are likely to be sustainable. They will continue to be tested, however, while they remain limited in scope because higher-level leadership and representation are stifled.

VIII. Annexes

IX. Annex 1: Evaluation questions

DAC criterion	Evaluation Question	Related sub-questions
Relevance	To what extent was the project, as designed and implemented, suited to context and needs at the beneficiary, local, and national levels?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Were the objectives of the project in line with the needs and priorities for democratic development, given the context? ▪ Should another project strategy have been preferred rather than the one implemented to better reflect those needs, priorities, and context? Why? ▪ Were risks appropriately identified by the projects? How appropriate are/were the strategies developed to deal with identified risks? Was the project overly risk-averse?
Effectiveness	To what extent was the project, as implemented, able to achieve objectives and goals?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To what extent have the project's objectives been reached? ▪ To what extent was the project implemented as envisaged by the project document? If not, why not? ▪ Were the project activities adequate to make progress towards the project objectives? ▪ What has the project achieved? Where it failed to meet the outputs identified in the project document, why was this?
Efficiency	To what extent was there a reasonable relationship between resources expended and project impacts?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Was there a reasonable relationship between project inputs and project outputs? ▪ Did institutional arrangements promote cost-effectiveness and accountability? ▪ Was the budget designed, and then implemented, in a way that enabled the project to meet its objectives?
Impact	To what extent has the project put in place processes and procedures supporting the role of civil society in contributing to democratization, or to direct promotion of democracy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To what extent has/have the realization of the project objective(s) and project outcomes had an impact on the specific problem the project aimed to address? ▪ Have the targeted beneficiaries experienced tangible impacts? Which were positive; which were negative? ▪ To what extent has the project caused changes and effects, positive and negative, foreseen and unforeseen, on democratization? ▪ Is the project likely to have a catalytic effect? How? Why? Examples?
Sustainability	To what extent has the project, as designed and implemented, created what is likely to be a continuing impetus towards democratic development?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To what extent has the project established processes and systems that are likely to support continued impact? ▪ Are the involved parties willing and able to continue the project activities on their own (where applicable)?
UNDEF value added	To what extent was UNDEF able to take advantage of its unique position and comparative advantage to achieve results that could not have been achieved had support come from other donors?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What was UNDEF able to accomplish, through the project, that could not as well have been achieved by alternative projects, other donors, or other stakeholders (Government, NGOs, etc). ▪ Did project design and implementing modalities exploit UNDEF's comparative advantage in the form of an explicit mandate to focus on democratization issues?

X. Annex 2: Documents reviewed

Project document UDF-MYA-07-180

Mid-term/Annual Progress Report

Final project narrative report

Project-specific evaluation note, UNDEF

Research study: Critical Stories of Change

Research study: Climate Change -- The tide is turning

Research study: Understanding land ownership in Myanmar with specific focus on Ayeyarwaddy Delta

Report on Fellows and civil society

Report on National youth forum and Activista

Newsletter: Fellows and fellowship programme

Newsletter: Environment and climate change

Newsletter: Youth and volunteerism

Newsletter: Disaster risk reduction

News letter: Women's rights

Newsletter: Youth volunteerism in emergencies

XI. Annex 3: People interviewed

Project personnel	
Shihab Uddin Ahamad	Country Director, AAM/Curriculum developer
Moira O'Leary	Head of Programmes, AAM/Trainer
Swe Set	Research Coordinator, AAM
Saw Linn Htet	Trainer, AAM
Mee Mee Oo	Project Officer, AAM
Aung Kyaw Thein	Former Project Manager AAM/Project designer
Partner organizations	
Su Su Wai	Programme Manager, Shalom Foundation
July Send Hkawn	Project Manager, Shalom Foundation
Lum ra	Project Officer, Shalom Foundation
Dau Lim	Trainer, Shalom Foundation
Rev. Saw Matthew Aye	Partner representative, KDN
U Alan Saw U	Partner representative/Trainer, KDN
Naw Paw Paw Htoo	Project Manager, PMA
Rev. Erville Porwy	General Secretary, Pathein Myaung Mya Sgaw Kayin Baptist Association
Youth fellows	
Tharzin Oo	Fellow (now AAM)
Saw La Set	Fellow, Sar Paw Kone village
Saw Lay Tar Du	Fellow, Pathein region
Thet Thet Win	Fellow, Pathein region
Saw El Zora	Fellow, Pathein region
Saw Naing Gyi	Fellow, Pathein region
Naw Olive Jury	Fellow, Pathein region
Saw La Set	Fellow, Pathein region
Saw Donald Ree	Fellow, Pathein region
Naw Mirian Htun	Fellow, Pathein region
Naw Paw Paw Htoo	Fellow, Pathein region
Naw Sar Mu Lah	Fellow, Po Laung village
Other	
Village Reflect Circle members	Group interview, Sar Paw Kone village
Two ECCD volunteers	Joint interview, Sar Paw Kone village
Village Committee members	Group interview, Po Laung village

XII. Annex 4: Acronyms

AAI	Action Aid International
AAM	Action Aid International in Myanmar
DFID	(UK) Department for International Development
IFJ	International Federation of Journalists
KDN	Knowledge and Dedication for Nation building
RRDS	Ranmarwaddy Rural Development Service
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
UN	United Nations
UNDEF	United Nations Democracy Fund