

Metta's Report on COVID-19 Response

February 2020- 15th May 2020

Metta Development Foundation



COVID-19 Awareness session in Village mass meeting Nar Hit Taunggyi

21th May 2020

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Introduction and objective of this report

This report covers Metta's specific activities, related to prevention, preparedness and response to COVID-19 pandemic, from mid-February to 15th May 2020.

Its objective is to provide an early memory of all the works done, in the first three months of the response, in order to feed Metta's Knowledge Management and share it with other stakeholders including donors, involved in the response to this worldwide pandemic. Metta acknowledges that Knowledge Management and rapidness in the response, in all its phases, is crucial to combat effectively this pandemic. It is with this intension that Metta has produced this early report.

Context

In late 2019, someone at Huanan seafood market in Wuhan was infected with a virus from an animal. This virus originated the spreading of the so call Corona Virus Disease -19 (COVID-19)¹; expanding from that first cluster, in the capital of China's Hubei province, to a pandemic that has reached all the world, spreading extremely fast with a death rate above 8% in many areas and affecting all countries and peoples. COVID-19 is a highly contagious disease; many factors determine the speed of spreading² in each context, such as: density of population, demographic pyramid, hygiene practices, social distancing, mobility measures implementation, etc.

The alarming situation brought the attention of all governments around the world, and on 30th January 2020, the WHO declared the COVID- 19 outbreak as a "public health emergency of international concern", providing recommendations to all countries and the global community, on measures to control the outbreak. The WHO declared the pandemic on the 11th of March, when the diseased affected severely many countries in the world, and almost three months after it started in China. Since then, WHO alerted repeatedly on the importance to take preventive and contingency radical measures to contain the deathly spreading of the virus.

In Myanmar, the Ministry of Health and Sports (MoHS³) declared the first two cases on 23rd March 2020; since then some few cases have been reported. Myanmar Government took some measures, restricting movements, limiting public gatherings, and putting in place a medical contingency plan, as well as a plan on how to respond into the IDP camps.

Myanmar, being a neighbouring country with China and confronting a massive return of hundreds of thousands of migrants, coming back from neighbouring countries⁴ where people

¹ Technically named as SARS-CoV-2.

² The estimated spreading factor (R0), with no limiting measures, is about 2.68; meaning that one infected person will infect 2.68 people as an average.

³ MoHS stands for Ministry of Health and Sports.

⁴ Approximately 10% of Myanmar's population have migrated overseas for work. Closing down of factories and business closure in neighbouring countries especially in China and Thailand, forced Myanmar migrant workers returning to Myanmar massively. These

with virus had been identified earlier, is extremely exposed to the risk of spreading of the disease. In addition to this, the limited capacity and quality of quarantine facilities, complicates the control of the virus influx into the country. At the same time, conflict in Rakhine and Southern Chin states intensify under COVID-19 outbreak period and high number of displacement and civilian causality is occurring day by day. Internet shut down still continues in those conflict affected area and it has impacted on the access to information regards with health and COVID-19. Recently, the Tamadaw, Myanmar's military, has extended its unilateral ceasefire to August 31 without including western part of recent conflict area in the country. At the same time, Government reaches principle agreement with National wide Ceasefire (NCA) Signatory Ethnic Armed Organization on the potential collaboration on the COVID-19 response. On 13 May, Kachin State government representative also met with KIO Central COVID-19 Response Committee for possible collaboration on the COVID-19 response.

The impact that COVID-19 is having and will continue to have no precedent in the recent history of humankind; this impact has main four dimensions:

1. Life and health impact
2. Economic impact
3. Social impact
4. Political and democratic impact.

In this context, Metta took early actions to prevent the spreading of the virus, particularly among the most vulnerable communities, including the Internally Displaced Persons in conflict areas (Kachin, Northern Shan, Kayah and Rakhine States); as well as adapting and preparing Metta's capacity to respond in the most effective and efficient manner to this overwhelming humanitarian crisis. Based on the initial experiences, Metta has able to carry out broad based community mobilizing, risk communication, contingency planning and response under COVID-19 with the collaboration of Civil Society and respective government relevance department across the country within its current working areas.

Metta's approach to COVID-19

In order to address this pandemic, Metta realised in early February, that this required a full and fast adaptation of the organisation under a clear approach and principles. These principles are:

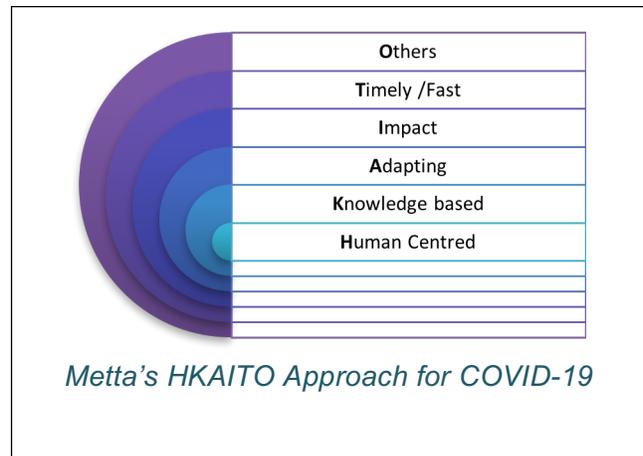
1. Focusing on the most vulnerable people and communities
2. Global perspective and contextual knowledge
3. Fast and timely decision making
4. Adjusting Metta's managerial timing to COVID-19 spreading timing
5. Strong leadership and staff engagement
6. Convening and coordinating with key stakeholders
7. Enhancing CSOs humanitarian capacities for COVID-19

return movements are therefore leading to the seeding of new clusters in areas of return following transmission among returnees during crowded buses and border crossings, as well as those held in collective settings for quarantine.

8. Speeding up the learning curve on COVID-19 and its management and setting up a good Knowledge Management
9. Building up on Metta's humanitarian knowledge, principles, policies, strategies and standards
10. Adaptation of all Metta's programmes to COVID-19 priority and context
11. Fast development of appropriate policies, strategies and tools
12. Massive mobilisation of flexible resources, involving donors in the early days
13. Reducing bureaucratic administrative workload as much as possible

In summary Metta's approach for COVID-19 response could be summarised under the following acronym: **HKAITO**: **H**uman centred, **K**nowledge based, **A**dapting management to achieve the maximum **I**mpact, **T**imely and fast, working with **O**thers, supporting them and getting support from them.

This approach and principles have been translated in concrete practices as presented below.



Human centred

Metta, following its mission and mandate, maintains its focus on serving the most vulnerable people and the most neglected communities. In this regard, Metta updated and developed three key instruments:

- ✓ Metta's new Strategy under COVID-19 (May 2020 to March 2023)
- ✓ Update of Metta Humanitarian Policy and Humanitarian Strategy plus Management and tools (2020-2022)
- ✓ Inclusion of COVID-19 Strategy Addendum to Metta's Humanitarian Strategy 2020 - 2022

These three key documents have reformulated the work of Metta for the following years, putting emphasis on peoples' needs in the new COVID-19 context. The context has been analysed from the impact on life and health, as well as the social and economic impact together with the impact on politics and people's rights.



The changes in the political environment and the role of different actors, Central Government, State Governments, the military, Ethnic Armed

Organisations, CSOs⁵, in a context of COVID-19 and elections at the end of 2020, impacts directly on the rights of ethnic groups, IDPs, refugees and migrant workers, farmer, factory workers, women, drug user and among others.

Equally, the economic impact is devastating for the most vulnerable communities; those living in poverty, IDPs depending on Humanitarian assistance and returnee migrant workers, small holder farmers, factory worker etc. This economic impact is increasing the social problems among these communities, already deeply hit by poverty, war and displacement over the last years. General population is growing fear, anxiety and over stress. Social Stigmatization is a growing trend among migrant worker returnees and strangers. Food insecurity become main issue across the communities and domestic and gender based violence trend is growing with on-going COVID-19 outbreak. People living with Disability are facing very different challenge compare to ordinarily people in this given context, so far, 3 people living with disability included within the confirmed cases and 'they feel always left behind'.

Myanmar health system is very vulnerable, potential breakdown if the positive cases dramatically increase. Lack of health services in rural and remote areas, makes a difference in the possibilities to be treated if affected by Coronavirus.

Metta's revision of its strategies, has taken into account all these realities, and reconfirmed its priority for the most vulnerable groups within the most neglected communities, in the context of COVID-19: women, children, adolescents, people with disabilities, people living with HIV, drug users, urban poor, migrant workers, indigenous populations, minorities, sexual and gender minorities and displaced people. All of them paid the highest price of the violent conflicts taking place in Myanmar, and are also most at risk of suffering the devastating consequences of COVID-19 pandemic.

Metta is particularly concerned for people living in IDP camps as well as recent conflict affected area, as these populations already suffer from many vulnerabilities: poor nutrition, especially of children; overcrowding and sub-standard accommodation; poor access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene; health systems around them are very weak and most households in the camps are dependent on external assistance to cover their basic needs.

Metta's new strategy sets the following strategic objectives:

1. Social Protection for Vulnerable Groups and Access to Essential Services
2. Humanitarian Response
3. Food Sovereignty and Livelihood
4. Supporting Civil Society
5. Institutional Strengthening

The new strategy states that, for at least the short-term phase (up to September 2021), Metta will prioritize COVID-19 response, as the main cross-cutting agenda for all programmes. With this given context, Metta is committed to its operation strategy under COVID-19 in line with the government and other stakeholder contingency plans to work together, with communities,

⁵ Civil Society Organisations.

CSOs, CBOs, faith based leaders, local leaders and multi-stakeholders across Myanmar in prevention, mitigation and response to the impact caused by COVID-19.

At the same time the updating of Metta Humanitarian Policy and Strategy with the inclusion of new elements related to the pandemic, has added the following strategic objective: *To protect lives and reduce the impact of COVID-19 in IDPs and the most vulnerable communities; ensuring human dignified life in the IDP camps.*

- *To contain the spreading of COVID-19 in IDP camps and vulnerable communities.*
- *Reduce COVID-19's health impact on the most vulnerable groups and most exposed communities.*
- *Increase Humanitarian Capacity of accountable CSOs and NGOs with humanitarian commitment to respond to COVID-19 across Myanmar; particularly in Rakhine State.*

These updated strategies and objectives are all centred on human needs and rights of the most vulnerable groups.

Moreover, the World Health Organisation encourages people participation in combating infectious disease prevention and mitigation. There are different approaches and tools to mobilise community participation. Among different tools and approaches, people led development (PLD) is an approach to ensure social change and sustainable development. PLD allows people leadership and makes a direction for their life and society. During COVID-19 crisis – PLD is effective and working well by seeing a faster response and action in some communities. For example – prevention and protection information (awareness and key message of COVID-19 prevention) reaching communities is very fast compared to other communities because farmer groups or CBOs have a strong connection and communication channel. Furthermore, farmers dare to contact the government department and Member of Parliament (MP) for asking COVID-19 related support and services.

As such, Metta has developed two documents in the middle of March; 1) Metta Covid-19 Framework on public mobilization and community engagement, 2) Major Activities and processes of COVID-19 Awareness Package Guidelines for Metta based on the experiences working with JST and technical assistances provided by World Health Organization (WHO). These documents are prepared to guide the implementation of COVID-19 preventive measures responses in Metta branch offices based regions; Ayarwaddy delta, Kayar, Southern Shan, Northern Shan and Kachin states. With these instruments, Metta branch offices have responded the COVID-19 preventive measures activities in the community by coordinating with CSOs partners within their respective regions. The experience working with the community and CSOs partners evolved the instruments into “Metta Community Engagement Manual” and “Metta CSO Engagement Framework”. The instruments were prepared based on the Metta’s ground experiences while working together with community and CSOs so that they are applicable and meet the actual needs of the community.

Knowledge based

Metta, is a knowledge based organisation. Acquiring appropriate knowledge and disseminating it, with the right methodologies, among the affected communities is at the core of Metta's participatory approaches and ways of working.

COVID-19, being a new phenomenon, (being a new virus and with a global impact), requires continuous and fast learning, while doing a good screening of reliable information from all the fake and inconsistent information invading social media and internet. In this regard, in early February 2020, Metta requested to the WHO in Myanmar, specific training on COVID-19, for all JST members (Local NGOs); this finally materialised on two trainings conducted on 21st February 2020 at Lashio for Northern Shan State JST members, and during 17th and 18th March in Myitkyina for 32 JST members in Kachin State, from Myitkyina, Bamaw, Laiza and Mai Ja Yang areas; health workers from KIO health department were also attending. These trainings included information on COVID-19 background, symptoms, epidemiology, clinical features, transmission and prevention, food safety, community surveillance, masks usage, hand washing, ways to prevent the spread of COVID-19 at workplace, Infection Prevention and Control (IPC), surveillance, etc.

At the same time, Metta follows closely all the WHO, MoHS and WASH cluster guidance, as well as other important international guidelines such as the recently launched ALNAP "*Responding to COVID-19: Guidance for humanitarian agencies*". Therefore, Metta has acquired a significant knowledge and expertise since the early days of the crises, and has invested significantly in providing awareness sessions in the IDP camps in Kachin and Northern Shan States, so that IDPs and communities are well informed on how to prevent and combat COVID-19, by knowing COVID-19 spreading factors, preventive measures and treatment.

"Metta Covid-19 Framework on public mobilization and community engagement framework" and "Major Activities and processes of COVID-19 Awareness Package Guidelines" which prepared based on JST experiences and WHO's technical supports are also the knowledge based instruments to start implementing COVID-19 preventive measures together with CSOs partners. The two instruments were explained and shared to all Metta Branch offices through the online meeting.

In addition to this, Metta received on-line technical assistance from CPI (Community Partners International)⁶; 54 Metta staff from different areas joined the three trainings provided by CPI.

Under Metta's requests, CPI also provided three on-line modules of training to Metta

⁶ <https://www.cpintl.org/about-us.html>



partners and CSOs. These trainings included among other topics: Prevention, screening, triage and referral, quarantine, community surveillance and contact tracing, infection prevention control; how to consider vulnerable population under COVID-19; how to consider gender related issues; mental well-being and psychosocial support for health care providers, etc. Metta followed these trainings through its Branch Offices, across the States, forming training teams to continue disseminating COVID-19 knowledge among staff and other CSOs.

Moreover, as Metta believes that the knowledge must reflect the need of community and able to support the empowerment, Metta upgraded “Metta Covid-19 Framework on public mobilization and community engagement framework” and “Major Activities and processes of COVID-19 Awareness Package Guidelines” into “Community Engagement Manual” and “CSOs Engagement Framework” in the middle of April 2020, based on the experiences working the field with the community and CSOs and the technical supports from CPI.

Community Engagement Manual introduction was organized two times for partner CSOs across Myanmar (Kachin, Shan, Kayah, Yangon, Bago, Rakine, Ayeyawaddy on 20th April and 23rd April 2020. About 90 representatives from CSOs participated in the first time and about 69 representatives presence in second time sharing meeting. Some CSOs show their interest and express to replicate in their communities. From sharing meeting, CSOs across Myanmar discuss the activities they could collaborate at respective Branch offices and sharing the experiences of COVID-19 responses, during the discussion. Some CSOs suggest joint collaboration for resource sharing.

Metta has introduced the “CSOs engagement framework” to CSOs on 28th April 2020 and around 98 participants from partner CSOs from Kachin, N.Shan, S.Shan, Kayah, Yangon and Ayeyawaddy, Bago and Metta staff have joined the online sharing session. Objectives of sharing meeting is to have 1) common understanding and contribute to CSOs collaboration, 2) contribute Organizational Preparation plan and 3) balancing of strategic and practical action of civil society organization. Advocacy and collaboration with government, food security and food production, children’s education and strategic coordination among CSOs were discussed during the sharing session.

Moreover, Metta has been a reference organisation for local and international actors working in Myanmar and has contributed with its knowledge to enhance the knowledge of other organisations, providing inputs, contextual information and innovative ideas. As an example of this Metta contributed with innovative ideas on how to deal with food security under COVID-19, such as boosting domestic gardens, reconverting NGOs’ training centres in rural and semi-urban areas in farming centres, opening food assistance humanitarian corridors, etc.

Organisational adaptation

In early March, Metta started a redesign of its structures and ways of working in order to adapt rapidly to the changing environment of COVID-19; this has supposed reorganising most of its structures and ways of working.

On the 3rd of March, Metta approved its COVID-19 Contingency Plan, which sets a COVID-19 Crisis Committee, led by Metta's Executive Director. The plan details specific measures and actions to take related to management, working priorities, communications, and staff security and safety. This contingency plan was updated and further developed on the 15th May 2020.

Metta pays special attention on strengthening the capacities of its teams to work effectively in new context of COVID-19 outbreak. All staffs were trained basic understanding of COVID-19 and necessary guidelines were introduced. Metta is also focusing on the capacity building around information technology and digital literacy, data security, finance and accounting systems, psychosocial support, coaching etc. to be able to cope with given changing context and situation and its operation. Metta also set up head office team to closely observe and monitor the latest situation and development of COVID-19 within and outside Myanmar. This group is informing the latest development update of COVID-19 into the organization.

The addendum to Metta's Humanitarian strategy, also incorporated and organisational strategic objective in order to *adapt and strengthen Metta's managerial capacity to reconvert Metta's Humanitarian and development regular programmes, and ways of working towards COVID-19 response and having Metta adequate and sufficient logistical capacity. Supporting effectively CSOs networks responding to COVID-19.* This was translated in three specific objectives:

- *Ensure massive flexible funding to implement COVID-19 response, under an agreed flexible accountability framework with donors.*
- *Adapt Metta's Human Resources to the needs emerging from COVID-19 response and ensure staff protection from COVID-19*
- *Develop Metta's logistical capacity to cope with the challenges brought by COVID-19 responses.*

On the occasion of COVID-19, Metta developed and approved its Logistic policy and plan, in order to enhance its logistical capacity substantially and connect it appropriately with other existing procedures related to procurement and humanitarian logistical work.

Several operating guidelines were elaborated from March to May, in order to equip the organization with adequate instruments and guide Metta's staff in the new ways of working. These documents reflected several areas of work; some of these documents are:

- Metta Development Foundation's response to COVID-19 (23rd March)⁷
- Metta Covid-19 Framework on public mobilization and community engagement (23rd March)⁸
- Major Activities and processes of COVID-19 Awareness Package Guidelines for Metta (23rd March)⁹
- Metta COVID-19 Framework on CSOs engagement (26th April 2020)¹⁰

⁷ <http://www.metta-myanmar.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Mettas-Response-on-COVID-19-23-March-2020.pdf>

⁸ <http://www.metta-myanmar.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Metta-Covid-19-Framework-on-public-mobilization-and-community-engagement-Buremese.pdf>

⁹ <http://www.metta-myanmar.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Major-Activities-and-process-of-COVID-19-Awareness-Package-Guideline-for-Metta-Buremese.pdf>

¹⁰ <http://www.metta-myanmar.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/CSOs-Engagement-Proposed-Framework-under-COVID-19-Revised-and-updated-version-Metta-on-26-April-2020pdf.pdf>

- Metta Community Engagement Manual (17th April 2020) and revised updated version on 15th May 2020¹¹ is available now in Myanmar language.
- Workplace Standard Operational Procedures under COVID-19 (8th May 2020)

The changes in the ways of working has been transformed into intensive tele-work, making most of the work and meetings on-line, to promote social distancing for all the positions in which this option was feasible.

Meetings have been reduced drastically, and only those unavoidable are conducted, following the protocol for running meetings “*Meeting protocol under COVID-19*” developed by Metta and approved together with JST on the 11th March 2020

Achieving maximum impact

In order to achieve the maximum impact, Metta has prioritised its work to combat COVID-19 in the areas where needs and vulnerabilities are greater. As well, in order to achieve maximum impact, Metta has adapted its development work in other States, to the response of COVID-19 with a humanitarian approach and keeping all essential activities of life-saving, focusing its work in the areas where Metta has more experience, knowledge, presence and access; that is: Kachin, Shan, Kayah, Northern part of Kayin, Delta and Yangon.

Metta has reached directly to the (646) villages in (35) townships of (5) states and (3) regions and (159) IDPs camps within Kachin and Northern Shan and conducted the following COVID-19 preventive measure responses:

- Awareness raising regarding COVID-19 and distribution pamphlets and poster
- Distributing hygiene materials and facilities such as soap, hand sanitizer, hand washing basins, water supply, etc.
- Distributing protective equipment such as face shield, thermometer, PPE, etc.
- Volunteer mobilizing
- Support Community Facility Quarantine centers and check points such as providing needed materials and food support.
- Develop communication channels among staff, CBOs and community quarantine groups in each village.
- Support information management such as collected updated data and information quarantine center, collected data for Vulnerable group
- Support community response plans

Not limited to that, Metta has worked with CSOs and reached more communities by the works of CSOs partners. Moreover, Metta also want to highlight a few keys important response under COVID-19 as follow:

Preventive measure responses in IDPs camps: In Kachin and Northern Shan states which is border with China, there are around 120,000 IDPs staying in 173 camps. Out of the total IDP

¹¹ http://www.metta-myanmar.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Community-Engagement-Manual_18-May-Final.pdf

population, 37,670 IDPs are staying in 17 camps within the KIO controlled areas (KCA) close to the China border. Metta, together with other JST and HST members, has been responding on the preventive measures such as providing awareness by distributing IEC materials and providing hygiene materials such as soap, hand sanitizers, hygiene facilities such as support for water supply and 216 hand washing basins, in 153 camps in Kachin and Northern Shan states. In KIO Controlled Area, Metta is cooperating with the KIO Central COVID-19 Prevention Committee and IRRC together with JST, supporting them in preventive measure responses, volunteers mobilizing, providing protective equipment, awareness and training to public and volunteers, and support on community engagement. The restrictions and preventive measures imposed in camps within Kachin and Northern Shan states, since the beginning of March, such as the check points at the entrance of camps, with fever scanning, investigation and hand washing, has been effective in controlling the pandemic.

Metta is also monitoring and defining supporting strategies for those IDPs doing spontaneous return under COVID-19, as some IDPs have moved near to their farms closed to their original villages to avoid the congested situation in camps, and getting some access to food. Most of these scattered spontaneous returnees are difficult to reach since there is not phone or internet accessible to them; therefore, most of them are not getting access to the COVID-19 preventive services provided to IDPs in camp and host communities.

Gender Based Violence (GBV): Metta has been doing regular coordination for GBV program with Department of Social Welfare, and international and local partners within Cluster. Metta has been operating 11 Women and Girls Centers across Kachin State, both government and KIO control areas partnering with Kachin Women Association (KWA) with the support of UNFPA and 2 Women and Girls Centers in Northern Shan with the support of USAID. During the context, Metta has distributed dignity kits in facility quarantine centers in Myitkyina, Waingmaw and Banmaw areas. Metta has been continuing its service of case management and safe space facilities through following the preventive measures procedures, as GBV cases are more frequent in this stressful context. Metta staff in Kachin has been receiving technical assistances from UNFPA for remote case management. GBV team is supporting to DSW for distribution of dignity kits in facility quarantine centers in Myitkyina, Waingmaw and Banmaw areas. With the collaboration with DSW, planning to distribute 15,000 dignity kits for women and girls in Metta's GBV programme targeted IDPs camps in Kachin State. In Northern Shan State, the preventive measures activities such as COVID-19 awareness raising activities focusing on women, together with Women, Peace and Security Network.

People living with Disability: People Living with Disability are included in the most vulnerable group under COVID-19 and Metta has paid attention to support their organization, network and platform at national as well as township levels. Metta and Shwe Min Tar disable organization have been long standing partnership on the field of disable, Metta continue supporting Shwe Min Tar and its network under COVID-19 with small grants funding. Shwe Min Tar is also working closely with Social Welfare Department for the policy advocacy on laws making as well as social welfare support for people living with Disability. Shwe Min Tar is focusing a lot on the IEC material as well as audio and video for the awareness raising under COVID-19 since they

also need different information apart from ordinary information around COVID-19. Metta is also providing support to the Northern Shan State Disable Network during this period.

Migrant workers: Metta have been working with IOM on Migration related country level research and other safe migration programme for Kachin and Northern Shan states during the last few years and when COVID-19 outbreak occurred, migrant returnees become one of the challenging issues. Metta engages with migrant returnees issue more active in Kachin, Northern Shan and Kayah states. The first phase of migrant worker returnees happened during in the month of February when COVID-19 start occurring and practice lockdown across China. Most of the migrant workers returned to Myanmar and there was not much arrangement provided for the migrant workers as well as limited quarantine services during that time. However, when the second batch of migrants worker returnees from China as well as prisoners returnees started again in mid-April and estimated 18,000 people would returned back through Kachin and Northern Shan States. Unfortunately, this was not properly arranged ahead of time and information is very limited. From mid-April, migrant's returnees start arriving to Loiye border crossing point in Kachin State from China and follow Kanpaiti border check points. Metta has worked with CSOs, respective township administrations and social welfare department for the migrant worker returnees issue in Kachin and Northern Shan State. Metta supported meal during transit and arriving time, information and data management as well as community quarantine centers related material and psychosocial first aid support. Since Metta is part of UN Core Group meeting on Migrant Returnees issue discussion, we provided day to day reality ground related information. A few IDPs from Kachin and Northern Shan States were included among migrants' worker returnees.

Farmers – are major stakeholders and work closely with Metta across branch offices. Metta COVID-19 response activities such awareness raising, community-response plan formulation, prevention materials distribution, hand washing basins and other supports has reached to most of project villages. Beyond, public health awareness, sustainable food production, livelihood including farmer concerns and farming preparation activities are also discussed with farmers during COVID-19 crisis and post COVID-19 period. Metta continues to engage with farmers for strengthening farmer-led farming development, advocating a national food sufficiency and ensuring farmers' right to access and control over resources.

Harm reduction and drug user: Metta continues to provide its service to the drug users under harm reduction programme through 6 dropping centre in four townships in Kachin state and Kutkai township in Northern Shan state that include needles and syringe exchange activities, referral assistance and ensuring Methadone and ART services in Metta working areas with the collaboration with Township Medical official. Metta is able to advocate for providing methadone package for two weeks and ART for 3 to 6 months under COVID-19 circumstance. Drug users are facing extreme challenges under this restricted situation under COVID-19.

The specific achievement under Metta branch offices are:

In Northern Shan State, Metta in collaboration with the HST has been doing COVID-19 awareness and IEC sharing in more than in 18 townships. 60 hand washing basin had been

installed in the IDP camps and hosting communities, plus providing medical equipment and distributing basic food to IDPs and quarantine centres, among other activities.

In Southern Shan State, Metta has set up its response team, doing staff capacity building on COVID-19, doing awareness to the communities and providing protection materials, such as masks, infrared thermometers, hand sanitizers, etc. All activities are done in coordination with the Township Health Department and State Health Department

In Kayah State, Metta has been conducting COVID-19 awareness raising, (in coordination with health workers in those villages having clinics); forming villages response committees and assisting in the preparation on village response plans, including community surveillance, awareness raising, etc. In addition to this, Metta is distributing hygiene materials, supporting food in quarantine centres, providing IEC materials and health and hygiene materials such as thermometers, soap and face shields at the check points.



Community Awareness Raising activities (Kayah)

In Ayeyarwady Division, Metta targeted 85 villages under 45 village tracts in 6 townships; doing awareness raising, forming community quarantine committees, distributing materials of health protection for COVID-19; supporting community facility quarantine centres; developing communication channels among staff, CBOs and community quarantine groups in each village, and identifying vulnerable groups within the communities, to target them appropriately. Metta also collaborates and coordinates with the Administration Department, Health Department, Department of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, Parliament (Regional and Township), having introduced Metta's Guidelines and plan of COVID-19; sharing with them Metta experiences and relevant data.

Moreover, Metta cooperates with Health Department, providing updates and consultation for COVID-19 response, and coordinating for the referral system in Kachin and Kayah States. There is a close collaboration with township administrators in Loikaw and Demoso, coordinating on field implementation of COVID-19 preventive response and advocating them to conduct preventive measures in the markets. At the same time, Metta has been engaging actively with EAOs in Kachin and Kayah states, and as a result, some EAO have started organizing community quarantine centres in Pharuso Township Sibuh and Kyay Kataw areas of Kayah state. In Kachin State, the engagements with EAOs for the COVID-19 preventives measures responses are done cooperating with JST members.

Achievement of collaboration with CSOs: Metta has been conducting COVID-19 response in collaboration with 127 of CSOs across Metta's working areas. Metta initiated the collaboration for COVID-19 preventive responses more extensively, by sharing "Community Engagement Manual" and "CSO Engagement Framework". Based on the initiative, the respective Branch office works closely with CSOs partner in their working areas as followed:

- Regular and ad hoc online meeting with CSOs for coordination (situation update, CSOs strategy, implementation report, activity plan, discussion implementation process, other stakeholder engagement such as State Gov: UN & INGOs, EAOs, etc.)
- Capacity building and Organizational Contingency plans for some needed CSOs partners.
- Proposal development and fund raising
- Resource mobilizing such as the protective materials
- Engagement with relevant stakeholders including the government sectors (health department, social welfare relief and resettlement department, township and village administration department, religious leaders, village leaders, etc)
- Collaboration in implementation such as awareness, campaign, collaboration with Government's activities, etc.
- Strengthen the strategic coordination by preparing short, medium and long term strategies.

Moreover, Metta has been engaging in several networks to reach out IDPs community, the most affected and vulnerable communities in Kachin, Northern Shan, Kayah and Rakhine States:

- JST in Kachin State
- HST in Northern Shan State
- KnRRRWG in Kayah State
- AHCT in Rakhine State

In order to support COVID-19 and all Humanitarian works in Rakhine state, Metta facilitated a three day workshop with Arakan CSOs, under the Arakan Humanitarian Coordination Team (AHCT), where basic training on COVID-19 took place and an initial strategy was developed by the AHCT. Metta is facilitating on the process of the funding for COVID-19 related activities in Rakhine state, working with and through CSOs, for a total volume of US\$ 2,000,000.

At the same time, Metta has co-organised the CSOs leaders across Myanmar in National Level in order to have clear strategic direction in the context of COVID-19 outbreak and for the coordination and cooperation among CSOs. During the challenging context of global COVID-19 outbreak, the meeting is the first CSOs leaders meeting that the leaders of more than 20 CSO organizations. The meeting was conducted in 29th April 2020 and planned to conduct the next meeting on 19th May 2020. The meeting has intended to 1) analyses the situation under COVID-19 outbreak; 2) build common understanding and 2) have strategic collaboration. Moreover, it is aimed to have common understanding and collaboration on the social economic justice and resilience for the society within this COVID-19 context by focusing community based, and effectively response by collaboration with all the relevant stakeholders. During the meeting, the scenario and trend of health, economic, politics, ecological and economic development, under COVID-19 outbreak context were discussed. Moreover, the CSOs on their response activities and strategic direction, and how to cooperate strategically based on the following issues that they are intervened: 1) Women and gender, 2) People living with disability, 3) IDPs and conflict affected people and EAOs areas, 4) Migrant workers, 5) Factory workers and labours, 6)

Extracted industry and investment, 7) Information, social media, media and journalist, 8) Research.

Engagement with Multi-stakeholder and Advcoacy:

Beyond the direct work that Metta is conducting in all these areas, Metta has launched several advocacy messages together with Myanmar Civil Society, advocating for ensuring basic food security, ensuring humanitarian access, unblocking transportation barriers to transport basic food; urging for protection, safety and security of the Internally Displaced Persons and the civilians against COVID-19 outbreak, and requesting continuous and flexible financial, technical and material support from all stakeholders.

In this regards, several statements and advocacy papers have been launched together with other CSOs, such as the public statement done together with KHCC and JST “KHCC - JST position on COVID-19” launched in Myitkyina on the 12th March 2020; where the importance of involvement of Civil Society Organizations together with medical institutions to stop the spread of COVID-19 was underlined; requesting to prioritise the most vulnerable areas particularly IDPs near China border; as well as reviewing all Return and Resettlement programs under the COVID-19 context, to avoid chaotic movements of people spreading the disease across the country.

Other advocacy documents are: “*The time to prove our values*” of 26th March, appealing all donors and stakeholders to focus on saving lives and protecting human dignity and aligning their procedures to respond rapidly, professionally and avoiding unnecessary admin-bureaucratic workloads and seeking for impact-accountable and flexible support. As well as the letters sent to all donors on 15th and 30th March, updating on Metta’s COVID-19 actions and asking for appropriate and fast support.

Meeting with Union Level Ministry: Metta together with JST met with Union Minister of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement as well as Director General of Health and Sport Ministry and particular request has been made for the IDPs i) possible corporation on the current Government contingency plan implementation and JST is willing to work with respective ministries and relevance department on the COVID-19 response, ii) need guidance and support for COVID-19 related material support such as Personal Protected Equipment (PPE) iii) need guidance and support for IDPs those who are refuge in EAOS control area particularly in time of COVID-19 outbreak.

Meeting with Sub-national COVID-19 response committee: During this reporting period, Metta together with Kachin and Kayah States Civil Society organisation were able to meet with Sub-national level COVID-19 committee respectively which is led by Chief Minister. During their meeting, they were able to discuss on possible collaboration under COVID-19 as well as advocate for medium and long-term strategizing for COVID-19 response that government should be lead for multi-stakeholder engagement including local CSOs, private sectors, government and international community etc.

Member of parliaments role are important and they are taking very active role individual capacity responding COVID-19 related incident in their respective area, even though

institutionally, there is not much progress on the parliament. Ayerwaddy Metta team were able to organise meeting with respective Regional Parliaments members with their constituencies during COVID-19 response. Loikaw Metta office also took part with Speaker of the Kayah State Parliament for facilities Quarantine centre monitoring as well as maintaining CSOs engagement with Parliament under COVID-19 response collaboration.

Engagement with Kayan New Land Party (KNLP) one of the Ethnic Armed Organisation, Loikaw Metta office and CSOs from Kayah state were able to facilitate the initial meeting with KNLP central committee for formation of its COVID-19 response committee. KNLP has able to come up with their contingency and strategic plan under COVID-19 response for their area which is the border area of Kayah, Shan and Karen States. Community engagement and capacity building have been done with their senior staff who will also engage for this response activities. Community Quarantine centres have been established in their control area.

Meeting with UN Resident Coordinator and Team together with JST representative: During this meeting, JST has raised their concern for the IDPs those who are under KIO control are under this COVID-19 outbreak scenario since they are most vulnerable than other in this given context. Further collaboration with UN agencies on the COVID-19 response was able to discussed that include necessary materials and equipment, technical and financial support.

National level CSOs and network leaders' common analysis of current COVID-19 outcome and sharing with Humanitarian Country Team (HCT): Recently, several CSOs and network leader with diverse background met the first time under COVID-19 outbreak situation for common analysis, strategizing and further stakeholder engagement. Based on the first meeting result, the common analysis of multi-sectorial situation and social, economy, health and political trends has been share with HCT.

Metta is part of national and regional CSOs advocacy platform on the following important events:

March 28, the position and critical analysis of Myanmar Civil Society organization on COVID-19 Crisis: The world we live in has tremendously changed in a short time. The uncertainty and the impending dangers caused great worry for the citizen. A real sense of security would not be obtained if the solution neglected the needs of the citizen from the conflict ridden areas who faced internet closure and no access to timely information, citizen living under the squalid and precarious situation in IDP camps, citizen who are imprisoned due to their activism on civil and human rights, citizen who fled from the neighbouring countries to avoid lock down who are also the sole bread winner of their family, citizen who lost their jobs due to the impacts of the pandemic, workers from different walk of lives, health care professionals who will battle without proper protection, woman who will face decreased income and increased domestic violence, children, and old pensioners. In facing the upcoming disaster, consideration should be prioritized based on the values of human dignity, human rights, justice and democracy. We, the civil society organizations, will join by cultivating social solidarity in holding the values of rights, dignity, democracy, and justice to overcome the COVID-19 disaster.

April 2, ASEAN urged to heed UN Sec-Gen call for ceasefire, ensure human rights amid COVID19: We, the undersigned civil society organisations and individuals, strongly urge the Member-States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to heed the call of the UN Secretary-General António Guterres for immediate global ceasefire in active armed conflicts in all parts of the world, in order to focus on the fight against the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic. We likewise call on States to place human security and conflict sensitivity as core principles in their emergency responses, ensuring that measures are proportionate, necessary and non-discriminatory aligned with international human rights law and standards, and are sensitive to the disproportionate vulnerability to pandemics of conflict-affected communities, refugees, asylum-seekers, stateless, internally-displaced persons (IDPs), people with disabilities, women, children and elderly.

April 23, Urgent Statement by Myanmar Civil Society Organisations, the condemn the military targeted attack to the United National (UN) vehicle which delivering the health service to the civilians in time of global pandemic which is the violation of the International Humanitarian Law. Demand the independent investigation for fire justice for the incident. And ask for respect the UN Sec-Gen call for ceasefire.

April 24, Stop the Corporate Hijack of the 2021 World Food Systems Summit!

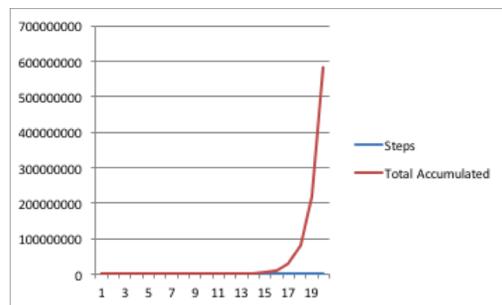
We, civil society organizations, grassroots groups and advocates for the welfare of marginalized sectors, call for the revocation of the 2019 Strategic Partnership between the United Nations (UN) and the World Economic Forum (WEF) and its implications for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Timely and fast

As already indicated, one of the most distinctive features of Metta’s response to COVID-19 has been the fast and timely response; this is part of Metta’s humanitarian mandate which is: *“to protect the dignity and fulfil the rights of people and communities affected by natural or man-made disasters, by responding effectively and efficiently in a **timely manner** to humanitarian crises in all their phases and circumstances, through promoting and enhancing local capacity, community resilience and adhering to international humanitarian principles and standards.”*

Almost a month before WHO declared the pandemic, Metta, was already in touch with WHO, asking for specific trainings, as presented above.

Metta’s contingency plan for COVID-19, approved on the 3rd March 2020, (and shared with JST organisations. This has had the benefit of influencing other actors to speed up by having Metta’s reference; and of course advance much of the work done by Metta, which no doubt, has had a tremendous impact



“Spreading of COVID-19. Each day matters”
Simulation with $R_0=2.68$

in saving lives, as it is known that every day has an exponential impact in terms of number of people infected by the virus. In this regards Metta also produced an illustrative document called “*Spreading of COVID-19. Each day matters*” to prove the impact of any delay in terms of life-saving. This document has been used successfully with several donors and stakeholders to speed up their responses.

Working with Others

As already covered in several parts of this report, Metta has made a central pillar of its response to COVID-19, the work and coordination with others actors; supporting them and getting support from them.

The relationship with other actors has taking place at three levels:



Relation with Key Stakeholders

From the early days of the pandemic, in February 2020, Metta has been in close coordination and support with the authorities in each area.

Metta has been coordinating with Government Departments; Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Ministry, and Ministry of Health and Sports at National level and coordinating with Health sectors in State and Township levels. Metta is also part of National Health Cluster meeting currently Co-lead by Ministry of Health and Sport and World Health Organisation. At sub-national level (State and Regional level), Metta engages mainly with State government, Health Department and Social Welfare department in Kachin, Shan, Kayah States and Ayarwaddy and Yangon Regions. State and Region level engagement is very much based on the issue based such as IDPs, migrants’ worker, quarantine Centre support etc. According to the government contingency plan, the operational level will be done mainly by township level committee. Currently, Metta engages with (35) townships including township level administer, health officer, municipal officer and Quarantine centres in charge etc. for the operational coordination and collaboration. Government encourage reaching out the CSOs more on Risk communication and community engagement under COVID-19. Apart from township level, Metta also engages with ward or village track administrator on the practical level on the ground. On the practical level, there are very challenging situation to coordinate with respective government departments at State/Region and township level. Metta is always exploring with government relevance department for possible potential collaboration.

In Government Controlled Area of Kachin and Northern Shan States, since the mid-February, Metta has been focusing in the IDPs camps in coordination with the State Health Department in Kachin and Northern Shan; as well as doing prevention campaigns to the general public.

In KIO Controlled Areas (KCA), Metta is coordinating KIO Central COVID-19 Prevention Committee (KIO COVID-19 committee), created in February 2020, which is the main body responsible for the COVID-19 prevention and response activities, providing guidance for implementation, and coordinating with KIO Health Department and other relevant departments, including IRRC (IDPs Refugee Relief Committee) which is the Humanitarian body in KCA.



Awareness raising with Township Health Department

Moreover, engagement with UN coordination mechanisms in National and State levels has been continuous for the response activities, through different agencies, particularly WHO, WFP, OCHA, IOM, UNFPA, Unicef as well as with the Humanitarian Country Team and related clusters, especially the WASH cluster. Metta is part of UN Humanitarian Country Core group task team for COVID-19 and meet twice a week for special update among each member. Metta also member of IOM lead Migrant Returnees Core Group meeting and met once a week. Metta has set effectiveness-coordination criteria, in order to ensure that coordination produces tangible results and avoiding the proliferation of unproductive virtual meetings that COVID-19 situation is generating.

Through this various multi-stakeholder engagement platform, Metta called for supporting all the strategic initiatives that are locally led to protect the lives of IDPs and vulnerable communities preserve their dignity and rights in the short term, by combating co-ordinately the COVID-19 spreading; provide significant amount of rapid, pooled and flexible financial, and technical support to combat COVID-19 effectively in the short term; reduce all bureaucratic burdens that distract the energy and work of the committed staff; and review, whenever the acute COVID-19 crises is overcome.

Enhancing collective capacity of CSOs

Engagement with CSOs, and enhancing their humanitarian capacity to respond to COVID-19 across Myanmar, is a key component of Metta's strategy to combat COVID-19. Metta has a good and long lasting experience working with CSOs platforms in different parts of Myanmar, and based on this, has expanded its work through other platforms in different States across Myanmar; sharing Metta's experiences knowledge and tools with them.

As an example, Metta works with 28 CSOs across Kachin State for the response on COVID-19, and in Kayah State, with 20 CSOs under the newly formed Karenni CSO COVID-19 core group.

On the 20th April and 23rd April 2020, Metta organised on-line sessions to introduce the *Community Engagement Manual* to partner CSOs across Myanmar, in Kachin, Shan, Kayah, Yangon, Bago, Rakine, Ayeyawaddy areas. A total of 159 participants from CSOs attended these sessions.

Equally, on 28th April 2020, Metta introduced the *CSOs Engagement Framework* to 98 participants from partner CSOs from all States where Metta works. This facilitated the common understanding and contribution of CSOs on COVID-19 response and helped to develop CSOs own Organizational Preparation Plans.

On the 29th April 2020, Metta convened CSOs leaders across Myanmar at national level in order to have a clear strategic direction and include social economic justice in the context of COVID-19 response, and promoting coordination and cooperation among CSOs.

Challenges and lessons learned

Challenges

During these three months (mid-February 2020 to mid-May 2020), Metta's work has been full of challenges that Metta has overcome with leadership, collective effort, fast reaction and adaptation.

Some of the challenges that have been identified are:

Internal Challenges

- Limitation of enough knowledge about Coronavirus and pandemics in general.
- Dealing with the programme response and the internal organisational adaptation at the same time.
- Re-strategizing the full organisation and its work.
- Expanding Metta's work beyond its traditional programmatic areas.
- Redesigning and adapting development and humanitarian programmes.
- Restructuring staff roles.
- Keeping safety of staff at the highest standards.
- Developing rapidly robust logistical capacity.
- Expanding the networking and support to CSOs in different states.
- Adapting financial mechanisms to e-accounting and e-banking.
- Massive fundraising in a context of limited resources.
- Dealing with donors who have not shifted their methodologies of work to adapt to the urgency of the situation.
- Moving from a very interactive face to face ways of working (workshops, meetings, etc.) to a virtual management, where conditions for tele-work were not always perfect.

External Challenges:

- Bringing together and working with different CSOs, with different backgrounds in a short period of time.

- Engagement with Government with no clear role for CSOs acknowledged by authorities.
- Insufficient basic facilities, like soap, hand gel, water basins, latrines, basic nutrition and food, etc.
- Lack of internet access in remote areas, as well as limited IT skills of some CSOs, Communities and IDPs.
- Tensions among villagers and IDPs due to the imposed lock downs.
- Limited health education of the population.
- Inefficient external coordination mechanisms: meetings overlapping, etc.
- Limited official information/data of quarantine centres in many areas.
- Intervention gaps in rural areas, as most of the activities conducted by the Government are implemented in urban areas.
- Government's activities are focusing on medical interventions to stop the pandemic, while there are many uncovered needs such as: psychosocial support, basic food, social-related issues, etc.

Lessons learned

Although Metta will devote appropriate time, once the pick of the crisis is over, to evaluate its COVID-19 response holistically and get comprehensive lessons that could help Metta to improve its strategies and ways of working; many preliminary lessons have been learned already; some of these preliminary lessons are:

- ✓ Strong leadership and clear institutional mandate have been a driving force in the response.
- ✓ Speeding up the learning curve and appropriate knowledge management is essential for the success of the response.
- ✓ Flexibility, adaptation, resilience concepts, worked out over the last years and absorbed by Metta, have paid off good results in this critical moment, where all these concepts have been implemented in practical terms.
- ✓ Having an early contingency plan and strategic direction has been essential to respond on time.
- ✓ Psychological care of staff must be put as a priority, in order to keep personal and organisational resilience.
- ✓ Working with others and supporting others to expand the response is a must, in this huge global crisis.
- ✓ Donors who have adapted to the fast response mood required by the emergency, have been a successful factor for the response.

Ways forward

Metta, will continue responding to this crises, based on the **HKAITO**: approach, (*Human centred, Knowledge based, Adapting management to achieve the maximum Impact, Timely and fast, working with Others*); nurturing the organisational resilience and reinforcing partnership with CSOs, donors and relevant stakeholders.

Metta will not lose attention on the key challenges that the most vulnerable populations of Myanmar are confronting; particularly those displaced by the numerous conflicts affecting the country; and will bring back its work to the most acute humanitarian situations as well as to the development works, which are fundamental to get out of poverty and protect the rights of millions of people in Myanmar, as soon as possible.

As Metta has come up with its new operational strategy under COVID-19 context, we will pay attention to social protection for vulnerable groups, food sovereignty and livelihood aspect and Metta will work as much as possible through Civil Society Organisation on COVID-19 related response, mitigation and recovery.

Metta will ensure rights to health and essential services for vulnerable groups and continue to provide a spectrum of social protection and essential services including access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), cash transfer programmes, basic healthcare services specially to drug users, response packages for quarantines, and basic facilities and materials for communities own response to COVID-19. These services will be led and managed by the communities themselves.

One of the Metta strengths is agro-ecological farming through a Farmer Field School approach and Metta will increase its focus on this area and pay even more attention to small holder farmers. All the work in the rural areas remains important in responding to the COVID crisis including sustainable agriculture, the rights to land and natural resource governance, addressing food insecurity in the community. Metta's role of advocacy for small holder farmer at the sub-national, national and regional levels will also be critical to ensure that government policy during and after this COVID-19 crisis directly considers effects on farmers, their lands and natural resource as well as on their social organization and democratic processes.

Metta will establish a national Resource-Hub for civil society on financial, technical and material resources. By the end of 2020, The Hub will be providing strategic support including financial, material and technical resources to local civil society actors, groups and networks to assist in the response, mitigation and recovery from this crisis. Beyond 2020, the Hub will be providing similar resources for local civic actors to develop and accompany the development visions of the communities of their constituents.

Donors' support

Metta has been proactively seeking for massive resources to support COVID-19 responses, not only to support its own programmes, but also supporting other CSO's and facilitating them to access donors' funding.

Several donors have contributed to Metta's COVID-19 response, with additional funding or reallocating already approved funds for development and humanitarian projects, to the new urgent priorities emerged from COVID-19 response.

The total amount allocated up to 15th May 2020, is **1,167,868 USD**

These are the donors supporting Metta's COVID-19 response.

- Access to Health
 - Comité Catholique Contre la Faim et pour le Développement – Terre Solidaire - CCFD
 - Community Partnership Initiative (CPI)
 - Fin Church Aid
 - HARP-F (UK aid)
 - Hope International Development Agency (HIDA)
 - International Organization for Migration (IOM)
 - Livelihood and Food Security Trust Fund - LIFT
 - Myanmar Humanitarian Fund (MHF) - United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA)
 - Misereor
 - Open Society Myanmar
 - Oxfam
 - Partner Asia
 - Swissaid
 - Welt Hunger Hilfe (WHH)
 - United Nations Children’s Fund (Unicef)
 - United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)
 - United States Agency for International Development (USAID)
- Metta also want to acknowledge the following institution and organisation for their support during this COVID-19 response. DFID, EU/ECHO, GAC-Canada, BMZ/AA-Germany and other Humanitarian Donors, UNOPS, WHO and UN Resident Coordinator.

Annex 1. List of acronyms

AHCT	Arakan Humanitarian Coordination Team
CPI	Community Partner International
EAO	Ethnic Armed Organisation
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GCA	Government Controlled Area
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HST	Humanitarian Strategy Team
HVI	Highly Vulnerable Individuals
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IEC	Information Education Communication
ILO	International Labour Organisation
INGO	International NGO
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
IPC	Infection Prevention and Control
IRRC	IDPs Refugees Relief Committee
JST	Joint Strategy Team
KCA	KIO Controlled Area
KHCC	Kachin Humanitarian Concern Committee
KIO	Kachin Independence Organization
KnRRRWG	Karenni Refugee Repatriation and Reconstruction Working Group
LNGO	Local NGO
MoHS	Ministry of Health and Sports
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NSS	Northern Shan State
R&R	Return and Resettlement
UN	United Nations
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WHO	World Health organisation
WFP	World Food Programme

Annex 2. Metta's COVID-19 response Map

