



Myanmar

# Communnovation

A people-centered approach to connect neighborhood actors with international support for disaster management

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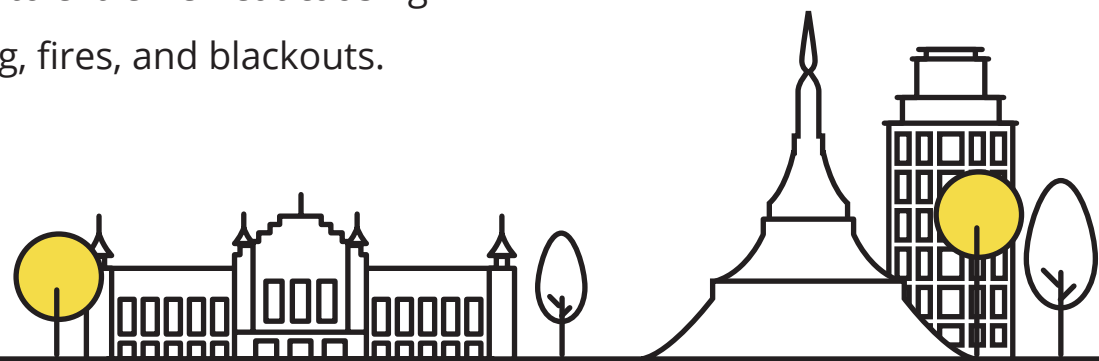




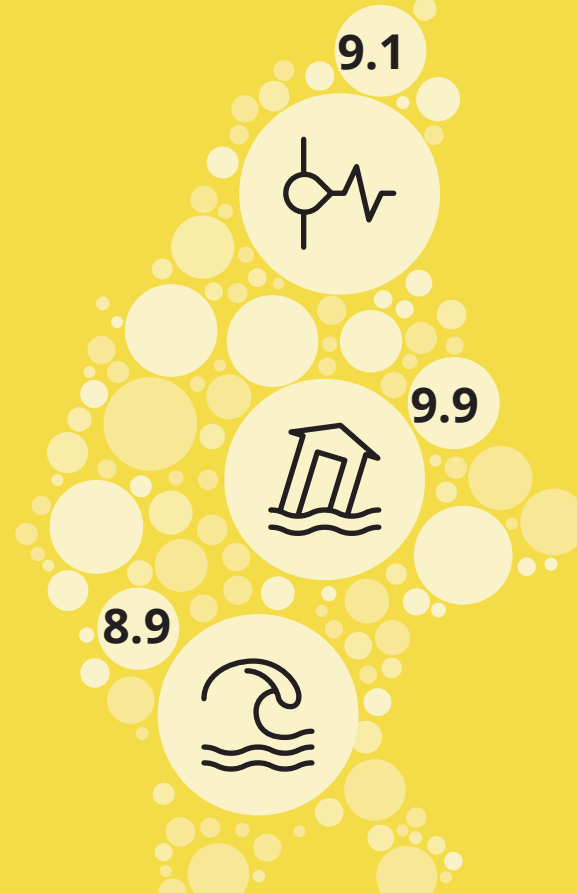
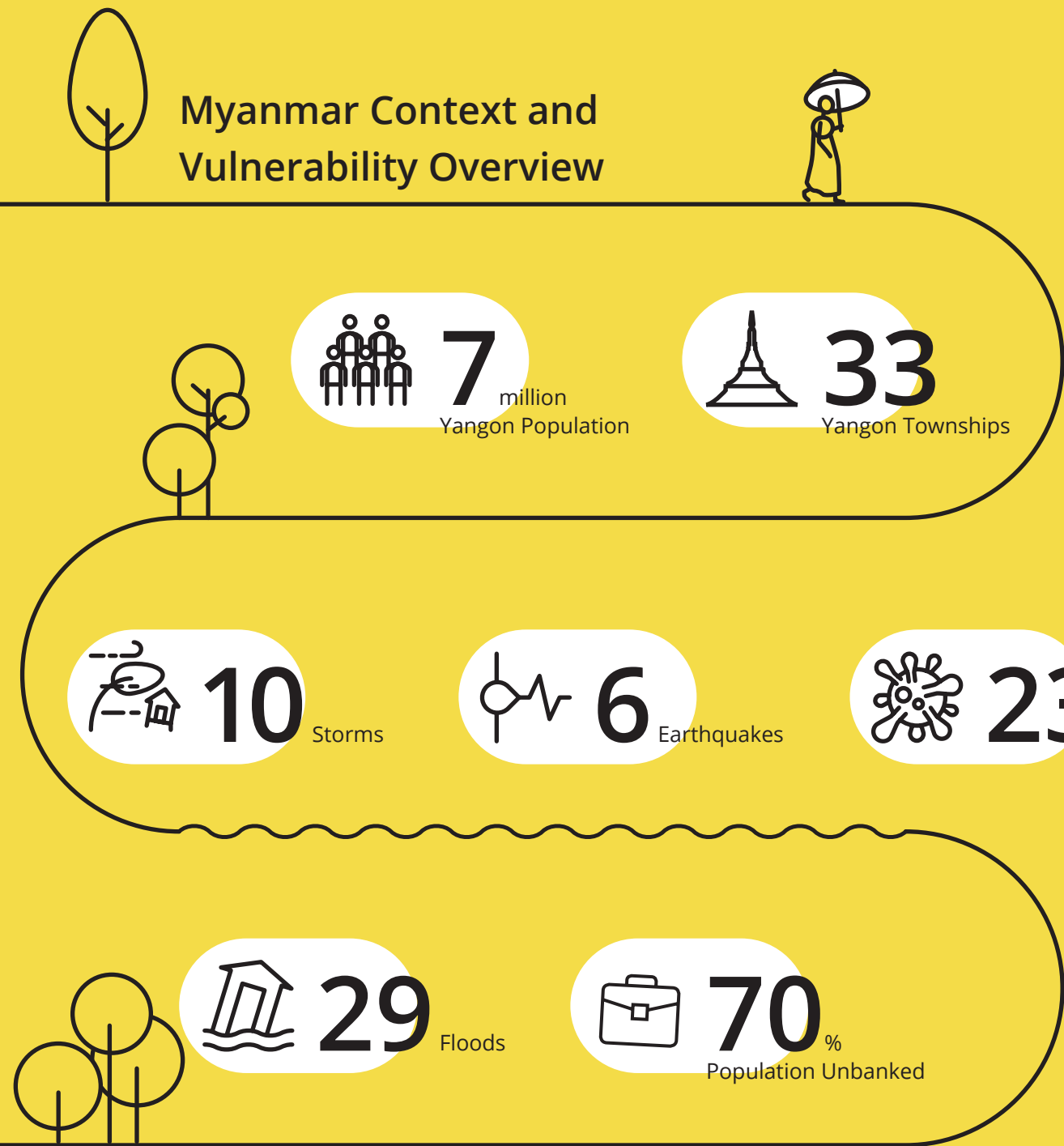
## Disasters & Impact

In 2020 the world was shaken by the COVID19 global pandemic, in 2021 Myanmar's experience of the crisis was compounded by the events of February 1st 2021, and subsequent banking and economic crisis. These crises were on top of already limited infrastructure and increasing climate disasters. Myanmar faces weather extremes from typhoons and monsoon season to extreme heat causing flooding, fires, and blackouts.

However, it wasn't just the crisis that initially led to this innovation but rather observing how community groups responded to such disruptive events. How they so quickly rallied resources, used social tech to communicate and transparently report their activities in a very positive and collective way.



## Myanmar Context and Vulnerability Overview



Myanmar has an overall risk index of 6.3. The country's most common disaster events of floods (9.9), earthquakes (9.1), and tsunamis (8.9).

## The APProach

The Asian Preparedness Partnership (APP) is a unique multi-stakeholder regional partnership established by its founding member countries which include Cambodia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Philippines, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. Formed in 2017 with technical and secretariat support from the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC) as well as assistance from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (the Foundation) and the United States Agency for International Development Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (USAID BHA), its goal is to achieve “safer and well-prepared communities through locally-led disaster risk management (DRM) actions, so that disaster impacts on at-risk communities of Asia will be reduced”.

APP strives to improve stakeholder coordination and dialogue between governments, local humanitarian organization networks, and the private sector to enhance capacities through partnerships, knowledge resources, training, and networking opportunities. The APP serves as a network of networks connecting these key local actors who are working on emergency response and disaster risk management at the national and sub-national levels for a more coordinated and effective response at the time of disaster. It promotes locally-led disaster preparedness, response, and recovery actions through improved coordination mechanisms, strengthened humanitarian leadership, training, and capacity development, systems transformation, innovation, South-South learning and knowledge exchange, and regional cooperation.

The APP “Social Innovation Grand Challenge” was launched by ADPC in May 2021 to identify innovations derived from local actors in APP countries for addressing pertinent DRM-related challenges. The Challenge aimed to identify, curate, nurture, and promote innovations derived from governments, academia, private entrepreneurs, and civil society. Following a comprehensive selection process the winners were selected for undertaking Innovation ‘Nurturing & Development’ of their solutions through receipt of Award Grant Funding. Doh Eain were selected as a winner to develop and roll out their proposed innovation related to the Yangon Neighborhood Network (YNN) in Myanmar.

APP strives to foster innovation for DRM in Asia. It advocates key enablers for innovation:



### Building partnerships

Partnerships with relevant local organizations already engaged in innovation-related work partnerships in APP countries



### Developing expertise and capacities

Enhance the capability of local organizations to identify and foster innovative solutions in the field of disaster risk management



### Facilitating access to funding

Mechanisms to provide resources and guidance for identifying, nurturing, and disseminating innovative solutions



### Promoting innovation champions

Showcasing promising practices and effective examples of innovators and the impact of their solutions

## Disconnect Between International Aid and Local Community Groups

### Yangon has thousands of active community groups

These local actors, a diverse mix of community groups, local business, social enterprises and more, are the backbone of their communities' and cities' resilience. They have the resourcefulness, relationships and intuition to act immediately at the onset of a crisis and deliver meaningful impact. They are usually the first to respond and continue to be involved long after the initial shocks.

Despite the many hurdles in carrying out humanitarian assistance and development activities, these networks are continuously working across Yangon to support their communities. They are often the first to grasp the challenges and come up with solutions but often their actions go unrecognised and their voices are not heard. **However they are typically under-resourced and disconnected from the more formal support and funding mechanisms in place.**



**What motivated me to build this product is to find ways to support those many small, informal actors, so crucial in any crisis response yet so disconnected from formal humanitarian and aid systems.**

-Emilie Roell, founder of Yangon-based participatory design practice, Doh Eain.

One of the key reasons these groups are often excluded from formal support and programming is that they fail to meet the organization requirements of larger donors and funders. They often lack official registration, suitable banking infrastructure and the capacity to track and report the level of data that is needed for larger scale programs.

Even if the local actors had the time and resources to navigate the process of meeting these requirements, this wouldn't necessarily provide the best long term solution. Too much formalization can also mean taking measures, such as full-time staffing, that diminish their ability to respond with agility and in some cases to sustain themselves once the crisis has tapered off.



**Many of the current ways of engaging these local actors are too rigid and don't allow for this transformational aspect of the crisis. The reality is that during crises small shop owners suddenly become procurement specialists for the materials needed in their community, small sports clubs become fundraisers, and individuals from temporary groups to support the need for manpower around a given response activity.**

-Anna Livia Coleman, Director of Community Engagement, Research & Education, Doh Eain



*Doh Eain is a participatory design practice founded in 2017 in Yangon, dedicated to making cities better. It specializes in preserving heritage, creating and improving public spaces, and organising events, campaigns and workshops that connect people to places while empowering them to take part in shaping their city.*

**Doh Eain's experience in placemaking and design was the key to unlocking innovation around DRM.**

## Meeting Local Actors Where They Already Are

In 2020, Doh Eain started the Yangon Neighborhood Network (YNN), a unique platform dedicated to supporting these very local neighbourhoods groups and businesses.

One of the key innovations of the YNN is its decentralized and neighbourhood approach to disaster risk management. The network empowers local communities to take an active role in disaster risk reduction and response, rather than relying solely on government or external agencies whilst also improving the connections between informal and formal disaster responses and management. This approach allows for a more effective and efficient response, as communities are better equipped to understand and address the specific needs and vulnerabilities of their own neighborhoods.

## The Yangon Neighborhood Network (YNN) Supports by:



### **Enabling easier connections**

between donors and these community groups by supporting with planning, finance management, and data management.



### **Capacity building**

through workshops, lectures, facilitation, mentorships and an online platform to ensure that members complete activities safely and efficiently.



### **Developing and delivering programs**

on behalf of clients and donors in partnership with the community group members.



### **Facilitating peer-learning**

and providing a safe place for community group members to share resources.

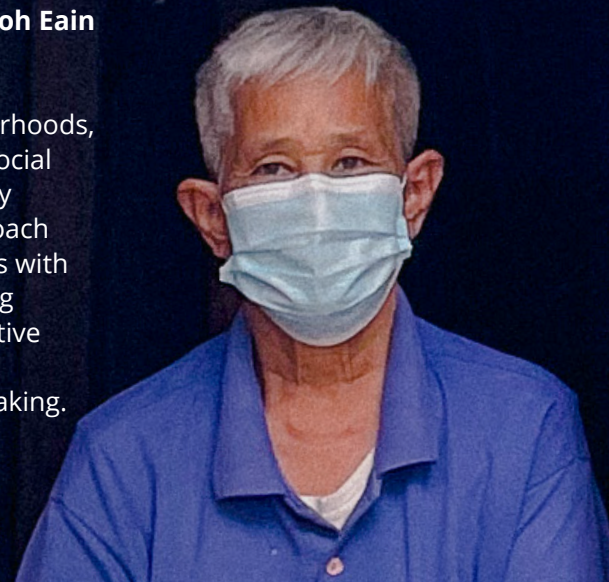
## A Place-making Approach



We wanted to take a place-based approach, finding actors where they are (physically but also in other ways) and supporting them where they are already active.

--Emilie Roelle, Founder, Doh Eain

By being deeply embedded in Yangon's neighborhoods, Doh Eain was able to navigate physical places, social networks and nurture locally existing community leadership and initiative. This place-based approach provides community members and stakeholders with a clear framework for identifying and responding to local needs, while user-centered and co-creative methodologies ensure meaningful engagement, tailored solutions and decentralized decision-making.



## Scalability and Sustainability

Because the innovation was designed by a participatory design and placemaking team, from its inception it was conceptualized and developed in a way that supports crisis responses that are very participatory and contextualized...sometimes down to the square kilometer. Using a spatial unit as the basis for the innovation means it can easily be scaled to new locations while still being very easily localized.

-Anna Livia Coleman, Director of Community Engagement, Research & Education, Doh Eain

The potential of scalability of the YNN is very aligned with participatory design practice, which promotes understanding communities and involves communities during all phases of implementation. This means it is constantly evolving. It is an innovation to address communities needs, and empower them.

## APP's Support for Innovation

As Doh Eain was exploring the challenges around disaster risk management in Yangon and developing the innovation, it found that there wasn't a lot of support for innovation. With the high stakes of getting relief to the people in need quickly, efficiently and safely, often the institutions responsible for this were afraid to take the risk or trust that innovation was of value. The APP helped Doh Eain to develop the YNN ways:

### Technical Assistance

including trainings, guidance, and support to Doh Eain in the development of its programs and activities.

### Networking Opportunities

with other organizations and individuals working in the field of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation.

### Funding and Resourcing

to support the development of the YNN and other initiatives, including providing access to funding opportunities, grant-writing support, and other resources that have helped Doh Eain to scale up its work.

### Awareness Raising

to help increase support and recognition for the organization and its initiatives, and to build momentum for the continued growth and development of the YNN.



**As we navigated the compounding crisis and limited support but still wanting to use our participatory design skills to innovate, APP was a huge help. In addition to flexible funding, it was also fantastic to have a group of people within ADPC and APP that really believed in the need for innovation. More specifically, that innovation focusing on the social fabric was important...that it didn't need to be all about tech. The innovation of YNN is powerful but subtle. I really felt APP and ADPC understood that, which had a big impact on our motivation.**

**-Anna Livia Coleman, Director of Community Engagement, Research & Education, Doh Eain**

**As the YNN continued to grow, support from APP and other funders has allowed Doh Eain to:**

- Expand the YNN membership
- Continue to support YNN members with crisis response, humanitarian relief and community development activities
- Launch a dedicated online platform for neighborhood community groups and businesses
- Maintain a monthly newsletter and dedicated social media channels
- Create over 20 online classes for YNN members, including reporting, community engagement and digital literacy models



**The regional APP team has been very active and helpful especially given the limitation that operating in Myanmar currently has.**

**-Emilie Roelle, Founder, Doh Eain**



**139**  
member neighborhood  
organisations

**36%**  
increase in number of member  
organisations from 2021

**918,000** value of  
aid disbursed to vulnerable people

**1.2million** meals  
donated

**51,000** households  
impacted

**167,000** individuals  
impacted

**14** projects  
completed





**Isca Teixeira**  
Senior Architect  
YNN Product Lead at Doh Eain

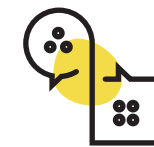
Isca loves working with local communities because they make an immediate difference on the ground, and can be assisted to access more support and strengthen their connections with other groups. This new approach aims to help the most vulnerable and excluded people in society, while ensuring communication and project documents were safe and had minimal risk.

The innovation focuses on changes at the local level, and its successes include:

- Reducing overlap and wasted effort by local communities and donors, by mapping and communicating what everyone is doing
- Supporting community groups to remain active, and to work safely and efficiently, despite the double crisis of pandemic and the events of February 1st, 2021.
- Amplified impact by supporting teamwork and collaboration by local actors, achieving more together than if those actors all worked in isolation from each other.

Support from international donors, partners and networks such as the APP is a gamechanger for local innovation solutions because there is a lack of funding for innovative platforms. That makes it harder to try new innovative ideas.

**“I wanted to work with people and for people. When the double crisis hit Yangon, we had the platform to help through innovation and technology, and it has improved aid work by increasing impact and working more efficiently. I believe YNN can be a valuable example to community-led resilience programs that empower communities to mitigate disasters and adapt to climate change.”**



## Ei So YNN Facilitator

**“To build disaster resilience, we need more information, data, research, ideas, insights and thoughts. The YNN is a wide network involving different types of organisations and communities that likely have different experiences during disasters and great ideas and thoughts on how to build disaster resilience. International platforms and partnerships like APP are necessary to support local communities by supporting ideas, giving feedback, financial support and planning to get better innovations and solutions.”**



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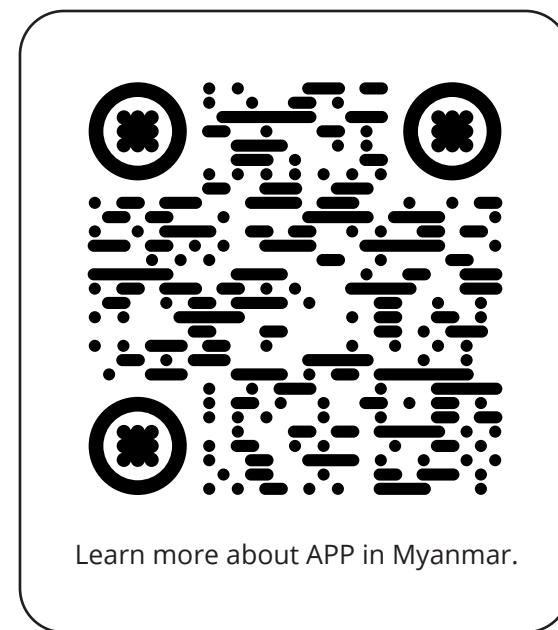
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