



Dr. Win Myat Aye confers social pensions to elderly over 90 years of age.



Dr. Win Myat Aye confers donations on behalf of the Office of the State Counsellor to Kachin IDPs.

## Formulating a human society where fundamental rights, democracy norms and human dignity are ensured

By: Naing Lin Kyi  
PHOTO: MNA

Here is an interview with Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr Win Myat Aye to present the endeavours of the Ministry of SWRR during the second year of the incumbent government.

**Q: Please tell me about the reforms of your ministry during the second year of the present government.**

**A:** The Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement could adopt policies and introduced reforms that were new and appropriate during the period. Our main policy ensures fundamental rights for everyone and formulates a perfect human society that meets the democracy norms.

We need amended or new policies, laws and rules if we faithfully implement our new policies in a systematic way. We have coordinated with the parliament or the law-making body to realize this goal. We have also abolished the out-of-dated orders and directives in coordination with other ministries. These are the significant accomplishments of our ministry during the period.



Dr. Win Myat Aye donates cash to mothers and children in Ywar Gyi North Ward in Sittway.

**Q: What are your methods to hear the true voices of the people?**

**A:** We make direct contacts with the MPs to know their actual needs. We also open Call Centres which are listening to the public voices round the clock.

We also use mobile phones as a social welfare means to solve problems. We received phone calls for 359 cases including 82 child rape cases and also received 4270 disaster-related cas-

es for help. People ask help from us particularly in disaster-related cases, as we can render effective assistance. Here how much we can help the people is important.

The ministry also reaches agreements with local and foreign organizations as assistance-providers. Our ministry now has a specific advisory board that ensures public benefits in signing agreements. We also formed a project supervisory body to check whether the helpers in the agreement can do their actual job. The research centre is another important element of our ministry as it provides all necessary data and facts for the success of a project. It is one of the significant changes during the time of the government in office.

**Q: What is your method to know whether the people are actually enjoying the benefits of your public welfare services?**

**A:** We distribute publications such as newsletters and ask suggestions and responses from the people. First we increased our staff strength which was only over 2000 nation-wide in the past.

We are responsible for social protection, socio-economic progress and rehabilitation. But we are still weak in rehabilitation. So we opened a new department for this particular matter.

Now we have three departments – Social Welfare Department, Disaster Management Department and Rehabilitation Department. In the past we received 0.09 per cent of the Union budget. But beginning 2017 we are receiving 0.25 per cent annually.

The government is prioritizing the internal peace and national race affairs. We are providing humanitarian aids to ethnic majority states, displaced persons and victims of natural and man-made disasters.

This project is being imple-

mented through UEHRD. The amount of aids has been tripled in conducting vocational courses and providing capital to generate jobs for refugees to ensure a secure live for them when they arrive back home.

**Q: What is your social welfare programme?**

**A:** We are presenting rehabilitation aids effectively, ensuring fundamental rights for everyone and providing social protection for each and every one for the whole life.

**Q: What is your main action to ensure and protect child rights?**

Concerning this matter we launched a programme to reduce the number of abandoned children and to protect them. It is a significant achievement during the two-year period. The increase in the number of abandoned children is a challenge for us. So we are cooperating with welfare organizations and foundations. We want to amend the child law to be in conformity with the advancing era.

We have the programme to nurture children, and we are going to extend it. In our initial programme we conduct medical check on children to give them preventive medicine and cure their disease in its early stage. The government has increased its budget on child nurseries and pre-primary schools. The ministry is nurturing children as a way of shaping the future as it relies on posterity. The government in office has been successfully implementing the nation's first-ever youth policy in regions and states.

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**Q: What are your plans for children, women and the aged as they are in the vulnerable category?**

**A:** The nation has drafted a law on protecting multi-violence against women. It was a difficult job. CSOs and activists on women affairs earnestly took part in the job. We just need to pass the bill. One Stop Women Support Center is now helping women who are victims of violence. Our social covers the work of providing better alternative jobs for former sex workers to earn their living in proper way. We are launching anti-human trafficking programmes and providing financial assistance for the victims. The SWRR Ministry has reformed the Myanmar National Committee for Women's Affairs with the involvement of social organizations, foundations actively taking part in the women affairs apart from Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation

the public in time. We now have the DAN Mobile Application. Disaster Alert Notification or DAN application will no doubt contribute significantly to our efforts on disaster risk reduction in Myanmar. It enables the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement to communicate risks to the general public through use of mobile technology. We are also using the Myanmar Mobile Application. But we have some weaknesses in using the application. We are inviting public participation in the disaster management as it is of vital importance. Public must be strong and quick in responding the disaster. So we are imparting safety means during disasters of any kind for people of all walks of life. The important thing is to conduct disaster drills so that people will have knowledge on the safety means. In addition we are distributing pamphlets in Bamar and other ethnic languages. There were 103 multiple-use disaster-resistant buildings. We have built



The State Counsellor visits the nursery opened in the Department for Social Welfare.

cooperation of other ministries and the entire country. So we have formed the UEHRD which is also the Union project. The main goal is to accept the returnees, provide humanitarian assistance, rebuild and redevelop the whole Rakhine State. At the same time we are working for long-term peace with public involvement. In addition to the people in the country, overseas Myanmar are also taking part in implementing the Union project. There are investigation teams to find out the root cause of the conflicts in Rakhine State which has many challenges. The team led by Vice-President one presented a 48-point suggestions and the team led by Kofi Annan an 88-point suggestions. The implementation committee is led by me, and we are trying to find the best means to solve the problem depending on the prevailing situation. Our committee has the international experts and advisers. Effective implementation of the task will ensure progress and a constant conflict-free zone.

People who are legally entitled will become citizens and who are not cannot become citizens, but they will have their rights. In this way the region will see more harmony. Peace can be built more quickly if everybody has their own rights. So we are giving priority to it in implementing the recommendations on Rakhine State.

**is also in the international spotlight.**

**A:** Repatriation is an important challenge. Although we are ready to accept the people who fled to the other country since 23 January, no one come back yet. We have every arrangement for the returnees. We have the Myanmar-Bangladesh Agreement, and the bilateral cooperation committee. Moreover, we have the bilateral agreement and the action committees. There is cooperation among our ministries and there are two reception centres and a transit centre. We have to work to clear the fire-ravaged areas and rebuild villages.

We are ensuring security as they will dare come back only if there is security. They must have the proper documents to freely travel. Any people living in our country must have the documents certifying that he/she can legally live in the country, and that is the National Verification Card. If he/she has the documents he/she can work and travel freely. He/she also has access to education and health. National Verification Card holders can apply for citizenship.

If he/she is legally entitled he/she can become a citizen. But if he/she is not legally entitled he/she cannot. The NVC can provide much opportunity. As they do not understand this they are refusing to hold it. We are launching educative programmes for this matter.

**Q: Please elaborate on the repatriation programme in Rakhine State which**

*(Translated by TMT)*

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and Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association. The government has implemented the law on the elderly persons. Rule-drafting is now under way. First the government presented social pension to nonagenarians. But the aged limited will be fixed at 85. The age limited will be further reduced depending on the State budget.

**Q: What are your plans for natural disasters?**

**A:** We have a rehabilitation plan that ensures a better life for the victims and we are implementing it with the cooperation of the public, local and foreign organizations, civil organization through transparent means. Thanks to the plans we are closer to the public than ever and can apply more transparent actions. It is a success within the two years. The ministry has formed the central management bureau which works together with other countries for gaining greater success in work. Our experience taught us that prevention or taking preventive measures is important in disaster management. So we are disseminating public knowledge on the disasters, safety means and risk reduction, while doing our best to inform

16 new ones and there will be 87 more in 2018. We are making sure that the village roads and dams are in good condition as they are also vital facilities.

**Q: What are your services for Rakhine State?**

**A:** The government is working for progress and the rule of law. So the ministry is also striving for peace and progress in the whole nation particularly in Rakhien State in addition to its normal functions.

Because of the age-old and complicated programmes, the state lagged behind in development and has weakness in security. Both communities are filled with misunderstandings, mistrust, doubts and fear. The terrorists are exploiting this situation to penetrate, especially in Maungdaw region. Terrorism has caused a lot of damages. Natives dared not live in their villages anymore. The Muslim community is also leaving their homes. We are responsible for resettlement of the returnees. We are still facing the challenges of terrorist attacks on 25 August 2017 that had repercussions in the whole country and that damaged the country's image. We are working to accept the returnees. But we need the



An official from the Social Welfare Department gives cash donation to a child in Maungdaw.