



# 2020 RAKHINE YOUTH-LED ASSESSMENT REPORT





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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Myanmar has a large youth population with 55 percent under the age of 30 and one-quarter of the population between the ages of 15 to 29. These demographics are reflected in Rakhine State, with a youth bulge between 5 and 19 years old. This youthful population presents opportunity and challenges as youth transition into the economy seeking opportunities to support themselves and their families. In Rakhine, with the highest unemployment rates in the country of 10.4 percent, compared to the 4 percent national average, youth face additional barriers as they are usually the most affected by unemployment rates and economic transition. Unemployment is considerably higher, and undocumented, for the population living in camps. With the majority of young people living in rural conditions - where poverty rates are high - youth are struggling to access education and employment opportunities that are critical to their future development.

In this context, that youth are going through social, biological and developmental changes. Young people are redefining their roles in society and the community and seeking new opportunities for the future. All of this individual and social change is taking place alongside ongoing instability and insecurity. And yet, they are the population that will define the future of their communities, Rakhine State and even, the country. Because of the role that youth can and will play in the future this youth-led assessment aimed to elevate the voices and experiences of youth living in Rakhine to better understand the barriers that they face to employment and participation as well as to identify opportunities to support positive youth development. Over the course of the assessment, 563 young people, 78 parents and 300 business owners living in Sittwe and Maungdaw townships in Rakhine state gave their time to share their knowledge and experience with the aim to build a better and stronger future for young people.

# KEY FINDINGS

**Gender matters, a lot.** At every turn gender defines opportunities and expectations for young people. Jobs become more gendered when education levels are lower. Men work in manual labour and women work in flexible, safe, home-based settings. Across all locations surveyed there is a preference by families and young women and men, for opportunities that support these cultural gender divisions. There are, however, opportunities to create new pathways for both young men and women that build from these cultural foundations with focus on safety - promoting opportunities that better conditions for all youth.

**Economic resilience is important.** Motorbike repair and dressmaking - to take two common examples - while highly desired, have limited post-training economic development pathways. They may provide a set of skills and the tools for quick income but they are not stable nor sustainable. Additionally, given their popularity the market is becoming saturated, minimizing impact further. However, economic resilience is important and young people recognize the value of vocational offerings as a way to provide income, develop skills and create networks. These courses remain important and reflect the desires and aspirations of parents and the community - which enables youth access. However, youth need to understand the limited pathways available and actors should work to identify more stable economic pathways to facilitate skill development and market access. Additionally, training can serve as a gateway to build critical skills such as literacy and numeracy, knowledge of the market, soft skills and other cross-cutting themes that will support them in a changing economy.

**Training works when linked to next steps.** While training matters, what matters most is what youth are able to do with their learning. As a result, organisations and teams offering training would benefit from mapping backwards from available job placements, apprenticeship opportunities and private sector offerings and then identify the types of skills and training to deliver. Where there are limited opportunities, particularly in Rakhine state, actors need to focus on development of opportunities from new business start-ups, cooperative development and other development of other market-linkages.

**Access limits impact.** The majority of the country's poor are living in rural areas and most of them are youth. Whether this relates to youth living in camps or youth living in remote rural areas – this is particularly important for young women – they are seriously missing out on basic services. Mobile training models are critical to building these skills, but another part of the process is building local capacities to maintain and develop programming in remote areas. Trainers and structures need to be developed at the local level so they are sustainable and accessible to rural youth, as well as youth in camps. Local partnerships with civil society organisations and government are critical to this process and for sustainable, scale-able impact.

**Local context matters.** While a plethora of labour-market information exists at the national and state level to support sector identification and employment trends for young men and women, local realities are nuanced and require consideration particularly when identifying employment aspirations and opportunities. Ethnic, religious and geographic divisions are critical to understanding what types of opportunities will succeed at the local level, and conversely what types of opportunities will be more challenging. In summary, labour-market assessments can and should provide sector orientation but local level assessments are critical to understanding what will work at the community level and what barriers will need to be addressed.

**Youth need access and exposure to new opportunities and ideas.** People learn through experience and exposure to new things and ideas. Young people (15-24) by the very nature of their neurological and biological development, are learning and absorbing information at incredible speeds and are 'the most creative' at this phase in life than they ever were before and ever will be again. Now is the time to introduce new concepts, methods and ideas. Initiatives that connect youth are critical from physical and online exchange programs, hosting events and speakers, to youth-led campaigns at the community level. Regardless of the approach, opportunities for exposure and exchange should be integrated into all training models.



# BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Rakhine, with over 3 million people, is the second most densely populated state in Myanmar. Its population is also young, with 43 percent of Muslims<sup>1</sup> and 31 percent of Rakhine under the age of 15.<sup>i</sup> Young people in Rakhine are coming of age in a very challenging social, economic and political context that has been plagued by instability and underdevelopment.

Rakhine is a strategic corridor for Myanmar, with a 360-mile-long coastline and a wealth of natural resources. Recently it has become a tourist destination with access to pristine beaches and important archaeological sites. Even with these attributes Rakhine has the second highest incidence of poverty in Myanmar.<sup>ii</sup> Lack of fundamental infrastructure such as roads, transportation, communication and electricity are key contributing factors for underdevelopment.<sup>iii</sup> The state is also vulnerable to natural disasters such as storms and floods which can damage property and lead to ongoing challenges in infrastructure development. Socially the state lacks quality healthcare and education services.<sup>iv</sup> Additionally, Rakhine has been plagued by political and communal conflict that has led to decreased stability and mass displacement.<sup>v</sup>

Rakhine is diverse with ethnic Rakhine making up the majority alongside other ethnic groups.<sup>vi</sup> Historically, Rakhine has had the highest number and percentage of Muslims across Myanmar's states and regions.<sup>vii</sup> However, the operations and violence from 2012 to date, has led to an exodus of over 1 million people, mostly Muslims who self-identify as Rohingya. As a result, the Muslim population of Rakhine has declined considerably, with only an estimated 500,000-600,000 Muslims remaining in Rakhine State.<sup>viii</sup>

Politically, the population of Rakhine has expressed increasing discontent with the Union government due to concerns over lack of ethnic Rakhine

representation in political spheres, political persecution of ethnic Rakhine groups and frustration around the lack of development and job opportunities for the Rakhine population that had been promised by the government. These frustrations continue to mount and are further exacerbated by the Union government's engagement in the ongoing communal and ethnic conflict across Rakhine state.

Economically the conditions are also precarious as conflict and displacement within the state has led to decreased access to livelihoods for both ethnic Rakhine and Muslim populations.<sup>ix</sup> Young people are particularly susceptible to this instability. One of the most important determinants of youth employment is the strength of the economy measured in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and youth unemployment rates are considerably more sensitive to changes in GDP than adults.<sup>x</sup> This is likely because young people are competing in a fragile economic environment without the same skills and networks that adults have accrued over time. In Rakhine all young people are facing these challenges, however they are more acute for young Muslims who are barred from pursuing higher education and the opportunities for employment that are linked to educational advancement. Young people, Muslims in particular, find their employment options heavily constrained and end up in low-skilled jobs without prospects of career advancement, or unemployed.<sup>xi</sup>

It is in this context that we will listen to the voices and learn from the experiences of young people across Rakhine with the aim of building stronger and more responsive programming for youth.

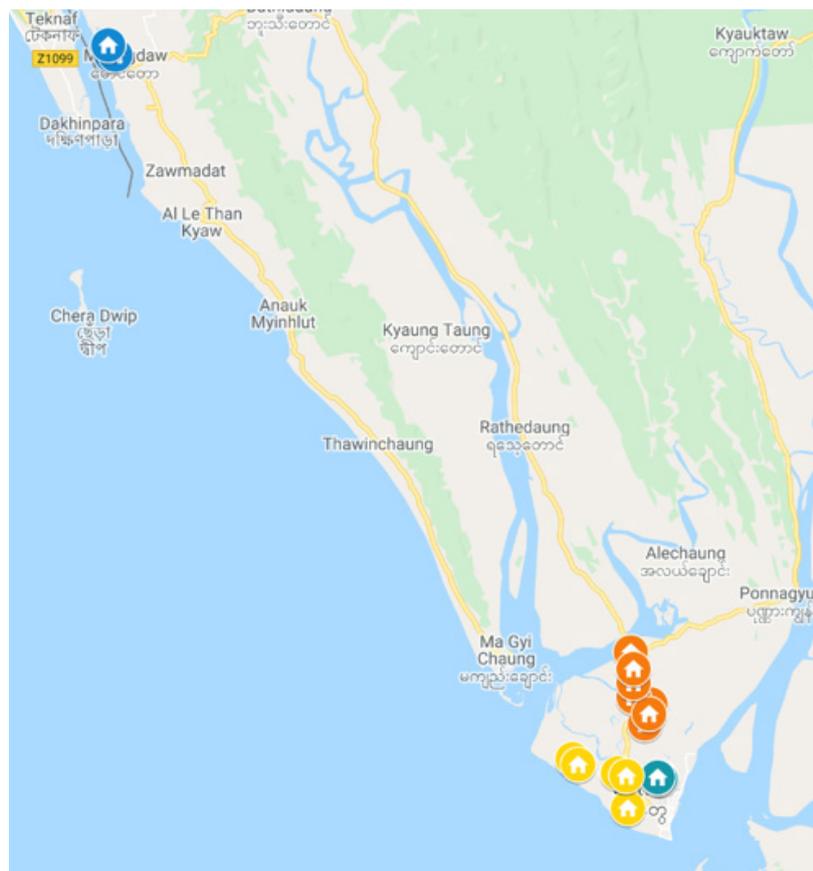
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1: The term Muslim is used throughout this document to represent the population that self-identifies as Rohingya Muslims.

# OVERVIEW OF DATA

## WHERE: LOCATIONS

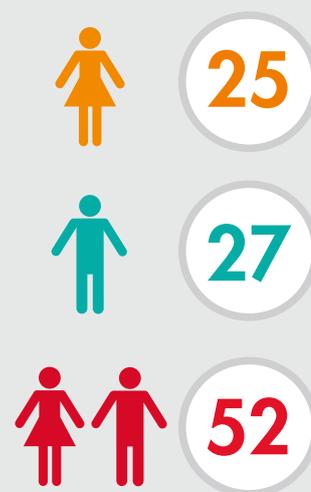
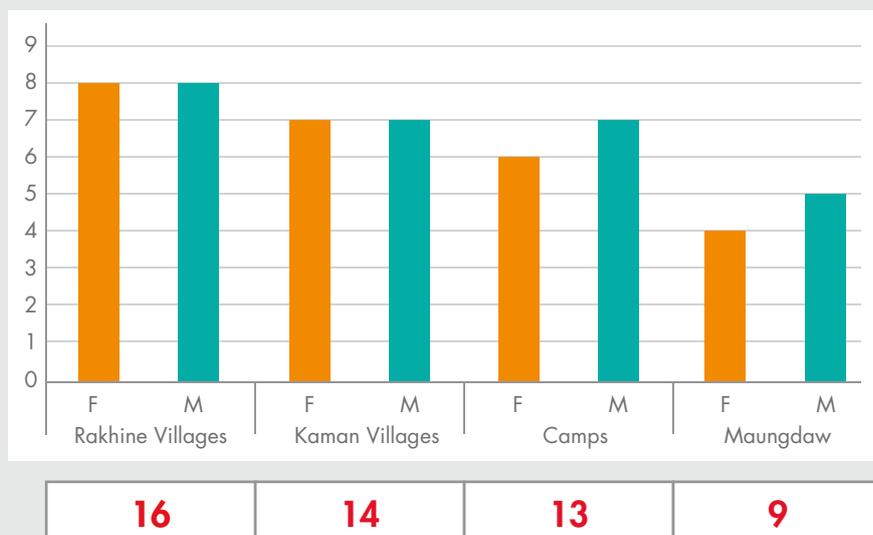
15 villages and 6 camps were included in the youth-led assessment, breakdown is as follows. This breakdown will be used as the framing analysis of the report.



- 🏠 Group1: Par Da Leik
- 🏠 Group1: Taw Kan
- 🏠 Group1: Thein Tan
- 🏠 Group1: Kyar Ma Thauk
- 🏠 Group1: Yar Tan
- 🏠 Group1: Kyauk Tan Gyi
- 🏠 Group1: Kyauk Tan Chay
- 🏠 Group2: Hla Ma Chay \*
- 🏠 Group2: Koe Saung 2
- 🏠 Group2: Thet Kay Pyin Ywar ...
- 🏠 Group2: Thin Ga Net
- 🏠 Group2: Koe Saung 1
- 🏠 Group3: Ohn Daw Gyi
- 🏠 Group3: Kaung Doke Kar
- 🏠 Group3: Thea Chaung
- 🏠 Group3: Thet Kay Pyin Camp
- 🏠 Group3: Maw Thea Nyar Camp
- 🏠 Group3: Sat Owe
- 🏠 Group4: Aungbala
- 🏠 Group4: Gone Nar
- 🏠 Group4: Pan Htein

Sittwe Township	Maungdaw Township
GROUP 1: Rakhine - 7 villages	GROUP 4: Maungdaw – 3 Villages Rakhine, Hindu, Muslim
GROUP 2: Kaman - 5 Villages 4 Kaman Villages, 1 Muslim Village	
GROUP 3: Muslim - 6 Camps	

## WHO: YOUTH FACILITATORS



## 1. GENERAL

Age: 18 to 24 years old

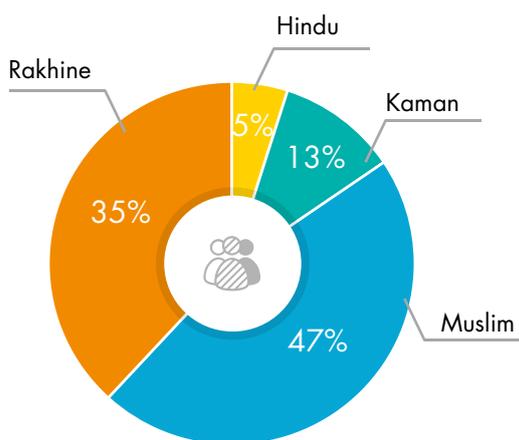
AVERAGE AGE	EDUCATION OBSERVATIONS	EMPLOYMENT OBSERVATIONS	MARITAL STATUS
Male: 21 years old  Female: 19 years old	Group 1 Rakhine Villages: Only group to have youth attending university.  Group 2: Kaman Villages: Only group to have youth that had no schooling (3 youth: 2 female and 1 male).	Group 2 Kaman Villages: Largest group of working youth at 69% includes both male and female youth.  Group 1 Rakhine Villages: No youth were reported to be working.  Group 3 Muslim Camps: 19% of youth were working, only males.  Group 4: Maungdaw (mixed ethnicity) 12% of youth were working, only females.	All married youth were 20 years old and above.  Group 4 Maungdaw: Highest percentage of married youth facilitators followed by Group 3: Kaman Villages.  Group 1 Rakhine Villages: None of the youth facilitators were married.

## 2. EDUCATION

Average Education Levels:

	Group 1: Rakhine	Group 2: Kaman	Group 3: Muslim	Group 4: Maungdaw
Male	10	7	8	7
Female	10	6	8	8

### 3. ETHNICITY



Overall ethnic breakdown across all 4 groups involved as youth facilitators.

Hindu representation is from G4: Maungdaw only.

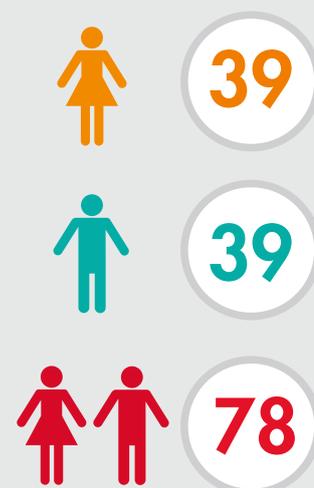
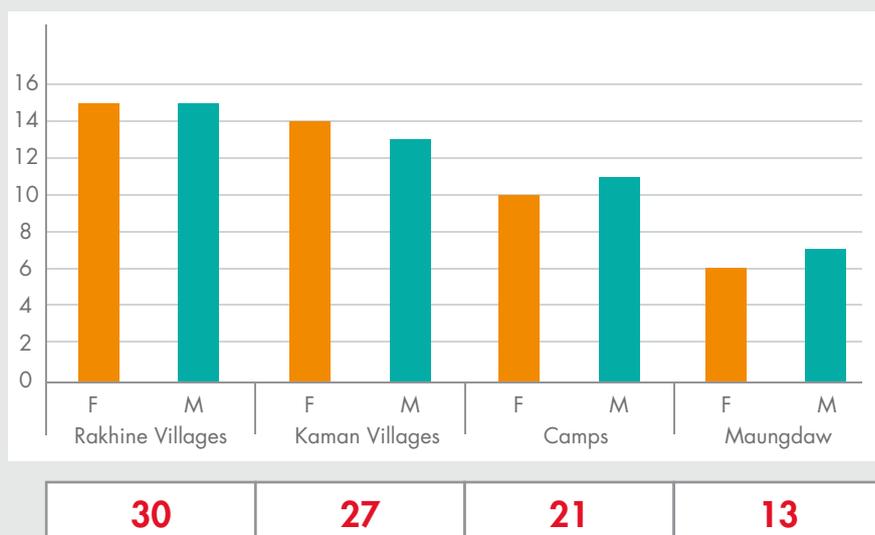
Group 2: Kaman Muslim and Muslim youth facilitators were mixed: 65% Kaman and 35% Muslim youth.

Group 1 Rakhine: Entirely Rakhine youth and Group 3 Muslim: Only Muslim youth from camps

Graph 1.1. Ethnicity

### WHO: PARENTS

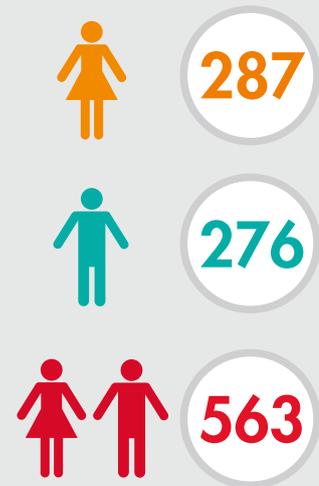
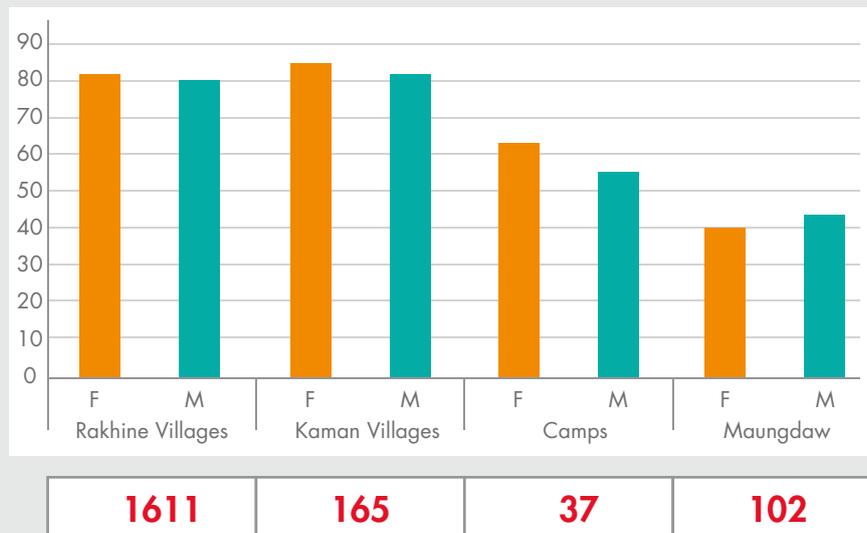
### Who did we talk to?



AVERAGE AGE	EDUCATION OBSERVATIONS	EMPLOYMENT OBSERVATIONS	MARITAL STATUS
Male: 49 years old  Female: 41 years old	G1 Rakhine: 5 G2 Kaman: 8 G3 Muslim: 8.5 G4 Maungdaw: 7	Average education level: - Females (all groups): Primary, Grade 4 - Males (all groups) Middle, Grade 6  32% of parents had no education – highest in Kaman and Muslim groups.  No parents reported a university education.	Only 3 men we not working (different groups).  The majority of fathers are working as 1) Daily Worker 2) Agriculture 3) Shopkeeper.  The majority of mothers (42%) were not working followed by 1) Sewing/ Weaving or Shopkeeper (14%)  The most ethnically diverse sector was fisheries, for men (Muslim, Kaman, Rakhine and Hindu).

## WHO: YOUTH SURVEYED

## Who did we talk to?

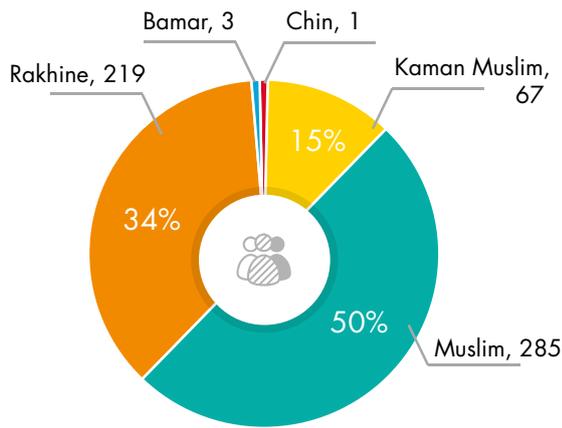


## 1. GENERAL

Age: 15 to 24 years old

AVERAGE AGE	EDUCATION OBSERVATIONS	EMPLOYMENT OBSERVATIONS	MARITAL STATUS
<p>19 years old Male: 19.2 Female: 19.4</p> <p>Majority of youth surveyed were 17 – 19 years old</p>	<p>71% of all youth reported living in the same village throughout their lifetime.</p> <p>There was a slight difference between male and female youth:</p> <p>74% of males and 68% of females reported being from the same village.</p>	<p>Overall 65% of youth said they did not have sufficient family income.</p> <p>77% of Group 3: Muslim youth reported that the family did not have sufficient income, followed by Group 4: Maungdaw at 68%.</p> <p>G2: Kaman 64%</p> <p>G1: Rakhine 55%</p>	<p>Overall 75% of youth were single/unmarried</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Female: 67% single</li> <li>- Male: 83% single</li> </ul> <p>G1: Rakhine had largest single group at 92%, no significant difference between sexes.</p> <p>G2: Kaman had the highest marriage rates (39%) significantly different:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Female: 56% married, 39% single</li> <li>- Male: 21% married, 78% single</li> </ul> <p>G3: Muslims and G4: Maungaw were similar at 74% single and not significantly different for males and females.</p>

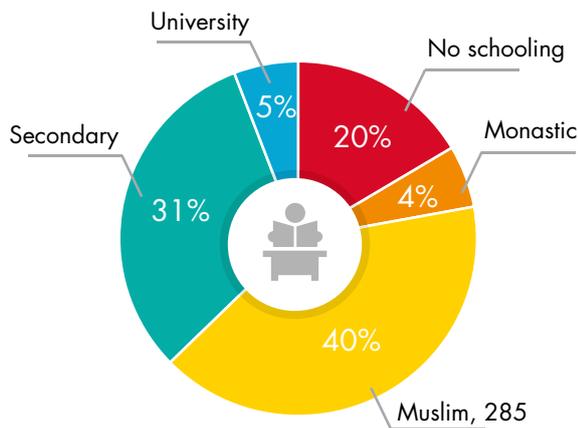
## 2. ETHNICITY



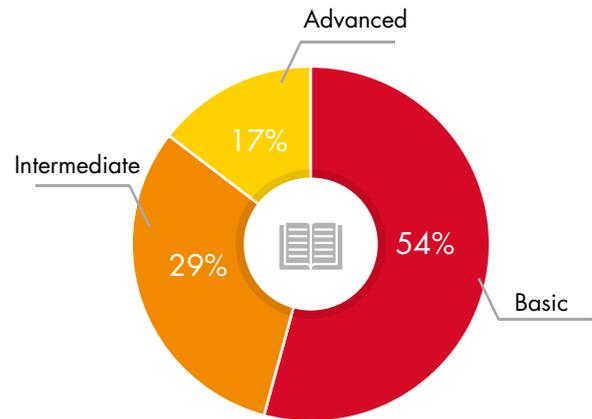
Graph 1.2. Ethnicity

## 3. EDUCATION

The majority (64%) of young people surveyed (male and female) had a primary school or lower education level.



Graph 1.3. Education

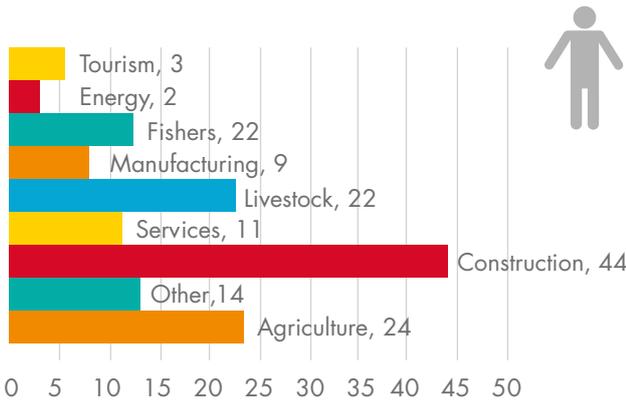


Graph 1.4. Numeracy/Literacy Level

GENDER	ETHNICITY
<p>Overall - combined data from across all locations - considerably more females (28%) reported no schooling than males (12%). Across all groups females reported lower literacy and lower education levels than their male peers.</p> <p>Rakhine females had lower education levels than their male peers. 46% of females had only primary school education compared to 20% of their male peers.</p> <p>The highest 'no schooling' rates for young women were in G2: Kaman villages. 41% of females had no schooling and only 12% of males reported to have no schooling.</p> <p>In G3: Muslim camps 86% of females reported basic literacy/ numeracy (males 58%). 46% of young women reported to have no schooling compared to 26% of their male peers.</p> <p>Overall the lowest education and skill levels were among Kaman and Muslim female youth.</p>	<p>The most educated group were G1: Rakhine youth.</p> <p>All Rakhine youth had some form of education, 33% reported primary education and 53% reported secondary education.</p> <p>Rakhine youth were the largest group to report university education at 14%.</p> <p>The highest rates of 'no schooling' were found in Group 3: Muslim youth at 36% followed closely by Group 2: Kaman youth at 27%.</p> <p>Over 70% of youth from Group 2: Kaman and Group 3: Muslim reported having only basic literacy and numeracy skills.</p>

## 4. EMPLOYMENT

GENDER	ETHNICITY
<p>When working young men were more likely to be working more than one job than women. Only in G1: Rakhine did women report working 3 jobs at a time – more than their male peers. The majority of men (67%) reported that they were doing daily labour or part-time work. This was highest in G4: Maungdaw at 63%.</p> <p>The largest group to report full-time work opportunities were Rakhine young women, of whom the majority reported working in dressmaking (labeled manufacturing) and livestock in descending order.</p>	<p>The overwhelming majority of unemployed young people were from Group3: Muslim with 87% of youth not working – 94% of females and 78% of males. Young men across all locations reported working in construction, agriculture, fisheries, livestock and small business with variation of numbers across groups. G2: Kaman young men reported the lowest number of youth working in fisheries across all locations with only 3 people working in this sector.</p>



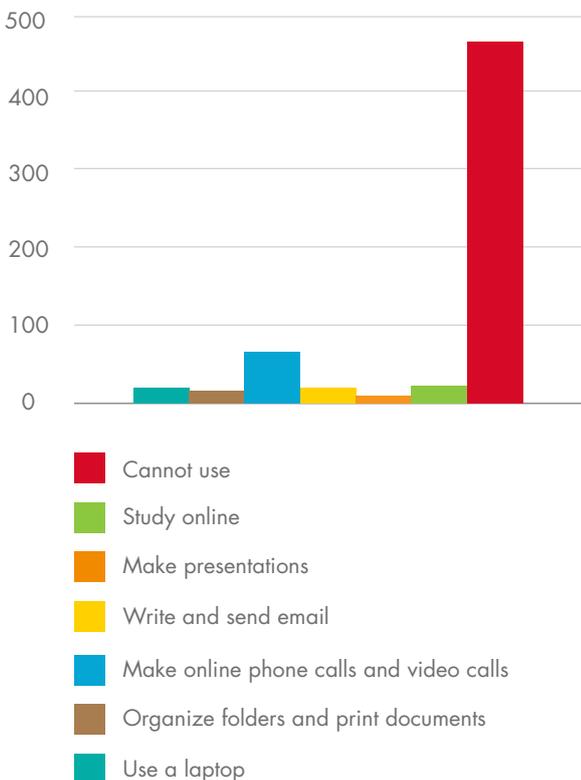
Graph 1.5. Sector of work: Male



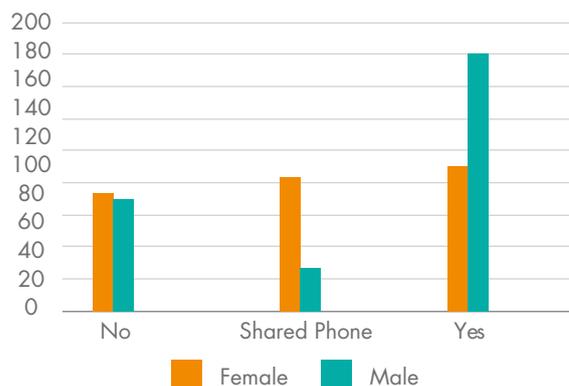
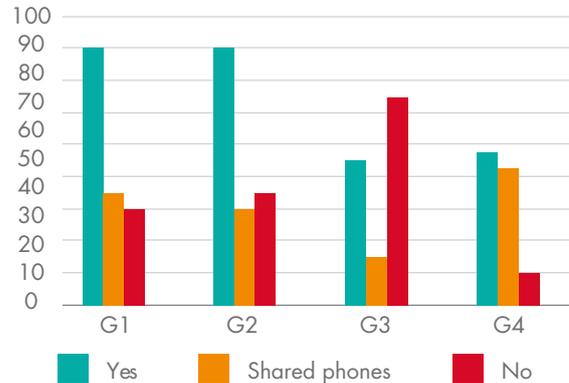
Graph 1.6. Sector of work: Female

\* The majority of 'other' is dressmaking and weaving across all locations.

## 5. TECHNOLOGY ACCESS AND SKILLS



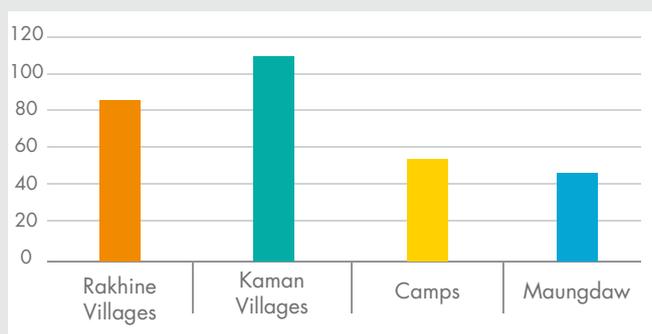
Graph 1.7. Computer Literacy



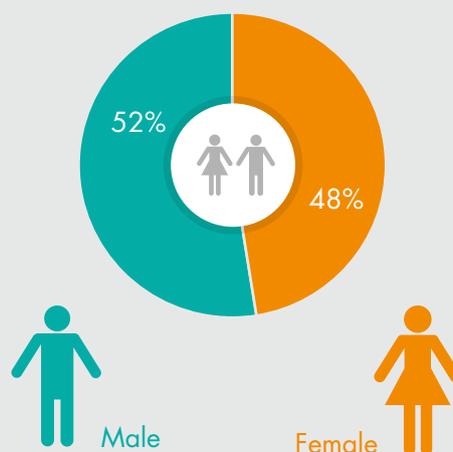
Graph 1.8. and 1.9. Phone ownership

## WHO: BUSINESSES

## Who did we talk to?



91	107	58	44
<b>300</b>			

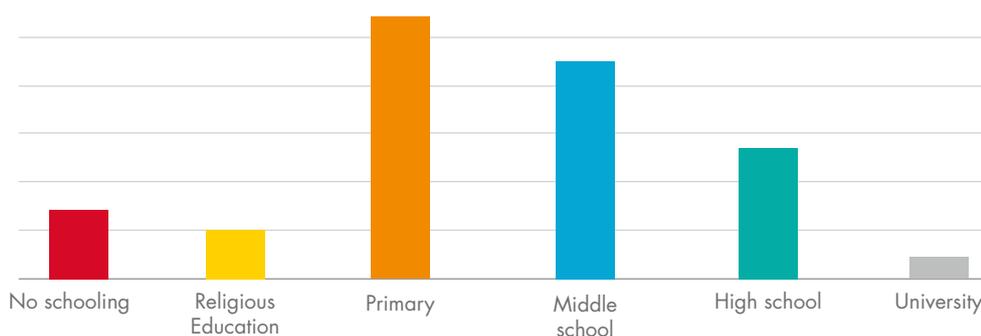


## 1. GENERAL

Average Age: Male: 38 years old, Female: 39 years old

SIZE	TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT	LONGEVITY	GROWTH
<p>91% of people interviewed were the business owner – demonstrating that most businesses were very small.</p> <p>Overall 41% of businesses reported having 1 employee and 58% reported having 2-5 employees.</p> <p>The largest single owner business group was in G4: Maungdaw at 61%.</p>	<p>Most businesses offered full-time employment opportunities, likely employing themselves.</p> <p>G3: Camps offered the most diverse employment opportunities with the majority of opportunities classified as 'part-time' followed by full-time, daily labour and seasonal work likely as a result of their limited employment conditions and opportunities.</p>	<p>The majority of businesses had been operating for more than 3 years – 55%.</p> <p>The longest operating businesses were found in G1: Rakhine (69%) and the lowest in G4: Maungdaw at 38%</p> <p>The greatest number of new businesses were found in G3: Muslim camps at 24% - significantly higher than other groups.</p>	<p>Only 12% of business reported increasing the number of employees, 75% had stayed the same.</p> <p>14% of G1: Rakhine villages reported employee loss, which is the highest number across all groups.</p>

## 2. EDUCATION



The majority of all business owners held a primary school education.

Graph1.10. Education level

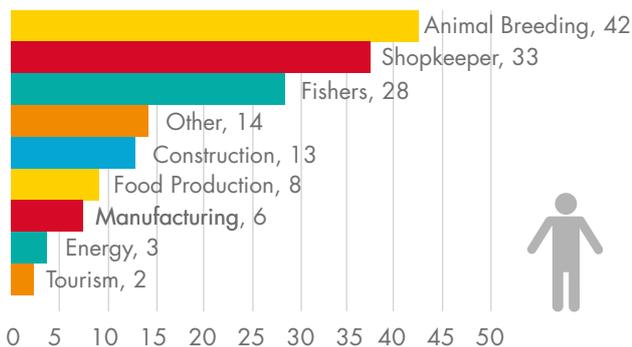
GENDER	ETHNICITY
<p>Female business owners had considerably higher rates of 'no schooling' (28%) than their male counterparts (10%)</p> <p>Even in the Rakhine group – which was the most educated male/female education divides were stark in which 18% of females had a primary school or lower education compared to their male counterparts at 7%.</p>	<p>Rakhine groups were the most educated as to be expected with the only university degree holds, albeit a very small percentage (2%).</p> <p>G2: Kaman business owners were the largest group to report 'no schooling' at 31% followed by G4: Maungdaw at 23%.</p>

### 3. SECTOR

G4: Maungdaw was the only group not to have animal breeding in the top 3 sectors of work. Animal breeding was in the top 3 of all other groups and appeared as the top sector for women in G2: Kaman villages and G3: Muslim camps.

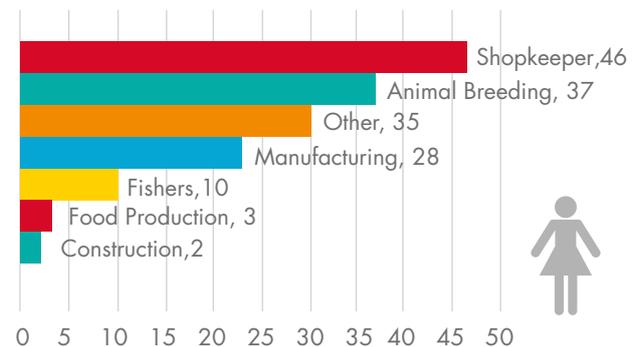
Manufacturing showed up in the top 3 sectors for women across all four groups – this is likely linked to the fact that the image selected for manufacturing was a sewing machine and most women were working in dressmaking or some form of sewing profession.

Fisheries was a male dominated sector and was among the top sectors for G1: Rakhine, G2: Kaman and G4: Maungdaw – likely due to lack of access it was not listed as a top 3 for G3: Muslim camps.



Graph1.11. Male Sector Ranking

\*OTHER: Machine repair, small shop, barber



Graph1.12. Female Sector Ranking

\* OTHER: Clothing store, dressmaking



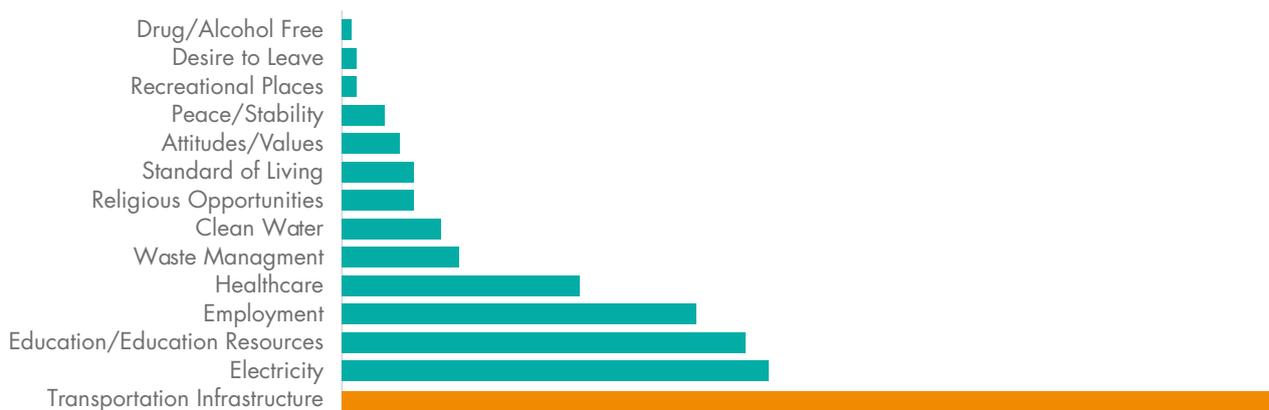
# FINDINGS

These findings are based on the combined review and analysis of all data gathered throughout the assessment process with the aim to better understand the situation for young people in Rakhine state and identify ways to better support them today and in the future. The analysis is focused on positive youth development pathways inclusive of participation, education and employment opportunities.

## PART I: THE YOUTH EXPERIENCE IN RAKHINE STATE

### 1. ACCESS AND INFRASTRUCTURE MATTER

When we asked young people what they wanted to change in their communities there was a resounding desire to fix the roads, bridges and the overall transportation infrastructure. Young people felt that their communities were suffering from poor quality transportation networks which then impacted their education, livelihoods and overall wellbeing. This ranking was consistent across genders and was only different for Group 4: Maungdaw in which electricity was ranked as the most important, however, it was very closely followed by transportation infrastructure.



Graph 2.1. What youth want to change

The lack of transportation infrastructure and the high percentage of young people living in rural areas impacts everything from education to employment. Access to quality formal and non-formal education is a real challenge in Rakhine state and varies significantly by community. In many areas youth do not have access to a

school and if there is a school nearby, there is little to no public transportation making attendance financially prohibitive.<sup>xii</sup> During interviews young people expressed frustration with road conditions. They said that travel even relatively short distances is tedious even in the dry season due to huge potholes, washouts, and general lack of maintenance.

Infrastructure and transportation also has an impact on the quality and availability of educators. Teachers do not want to work in remote areas and financial compensation is so low that it is not seen as financially feasible. A recent study highlighted the lack of financial incentive to teach. For example, a new graduate from a Government Technical Institute (GTI) could enter the market and make nearly 5 times more than what a GTI teacher might be paid with the same skill level.<sup>xiii</sup> Due to the low salary base and often remote nature of their work many qualified teachers choose to go abroad and work in countries like Singapore where they can enjoy better conditions.<sup>xiv</sup>

While some actors are trying to provide remote learning opportunities through mobile training, or bus-based activities<sup>1</sup> access to skills training remains virtually non-existent in remote rural areas. There is a notable lack of technical training skills such as construction, mechanical or industrial skills which requires some degree of training infrastructure and expertise.<sup>xvi</sup>

Muslim youth face additional access challenges as their movement is restricted to camps which do not provide government education, have limited services, and make access to safe and decent employment almost impossible. As a result, educational attendance among Muslim communities is considerably low with only 12% of 14-15 year old Muslim boys in IDP camps attend high school, and high school-aged girls from Muslim camps were 31 percentage points less likely to be attending school than boys.<sup>xvii</sup> This impacts their experience today and will have an even greater impact on their ability to live and work in the future.

Access challenges also inhibit small business development and employment opportunities for all young people in Rakhine State. Studies have found that the majority of 'support programs' for micro-entrepreneurs – who make up the majority of the Rakhine labour market – are concentrated in Yangon. This means that entrepreneurship services are not designed or translatable to the Rakhine reality and are not accessible to the youth that need these services.

While infrastructure challenges related to transportation were a priority concern for young people – the next major change young people wanted for their communities was access to electricity. According to the World Bank Myanmar has comparatively low access to infrastructure, particularly access to electricity, versus other countries in the region. UNDP Myanmar has reported that 58 percent of households do not have a public grid connection, 46 percent of households are in villages/wards that have no connection, while an additional 12 percent are in connected villages/wards. The main challenge is expansion to rural areas – where the majority of youth are living.<sup>xix</sup> The lack of infrastructure not only affects young people's learning outcomes but also has a significant impact on small business affecting almost 90 percent of micro enterprises, which damages their productivity.<sup>xx</sup>

“*There is only one house in the village that has access to electricity and we must buy our electricity from the village leader. The costs are prohibitive and we can only afford limited electricity a few hours a day.*”

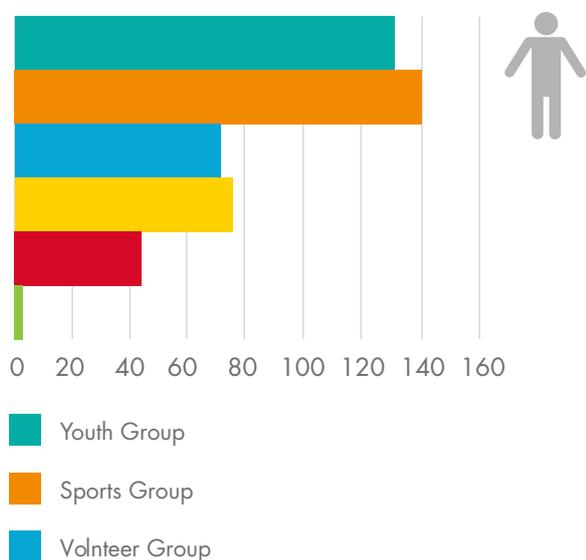
Young woman, G2: Kaman Village

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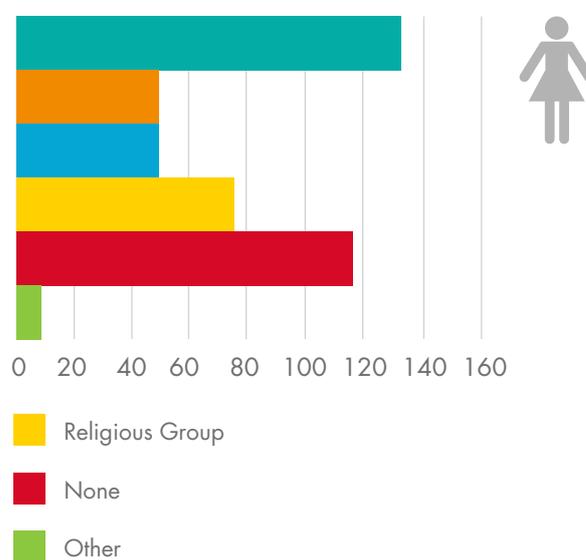
<sup>1</sup> Norwegian Refugee Council is delivering mobile training courses. ILO's program My PEC aims to bring training to young people in remote areas through a traveling schoolbus that comes with tools and trainers.

## 2. YOUTH ARE PARTICIPATING IN THEIR COMMUNITIES

When young people were asked if they participate in a volunteer or other activities in their communities, it was clear that young people in Rakhine State were very active and engaged – although this varied by location and gender.



Graph 2.2. Male Youth Activities



Graph 2.3. Female Youth Activities

Young women were far less likely to be engaged in an activity than their male peers. Thirty-one percent of young woman replied that they were not involved in any activities at all. In contrast, 91 percent of young men were participating in some form of activity. Youth of all ages from 15 to 24 demonstrated similar patterns of engagement and rates did not drop significantly as youth got older.

This changes considerably when you look more closely at the different locations and ethnic groups that participated in the survey.

G1: RAKHINE VILLAGES	GROUP 2: KAMAN VILLAGES	GROUP 3: MUSLIM CAMPS	G4: MAUNGDAW VILLAGES
<p>Youth from G1 were far more likely – than any other group – to be involved in a youth group or a religious group.</p> <p>Additionally, young women and young men were equally engaged in these groups with young women being considerably more likely to be involved in a religious group and less likely to be engaged in a sports group.</p>	<p>Youth were much more likely to be engaged in a youth or sports group.</p> <p>While young men were much more inclined to be in a sports group young women also reported participation in sports groups at a lower participation rate. Most young women were, however, involved in youth groups in their communities.</p>	<p>Over forty percent of young people in G3 – both male and female youth – reported that they were not participating in any type of group activity. This was the highest across all groups.</p> <p>This number was higher for young women with 86 percent of young women reporting that they were not engaged in any activities at all.</p>	<p>Overall, 28 percent of young people were involved in a youth group and 32 percent reported that they were not engaged in any activities at all.</p> <p>The low participation rates are from young women as over 48 percent were not participating in any activities at all.</p> <p>This is in contrast to their male peers who were involved in all different groups with a smaller percentage reporting non-engagement.</p>

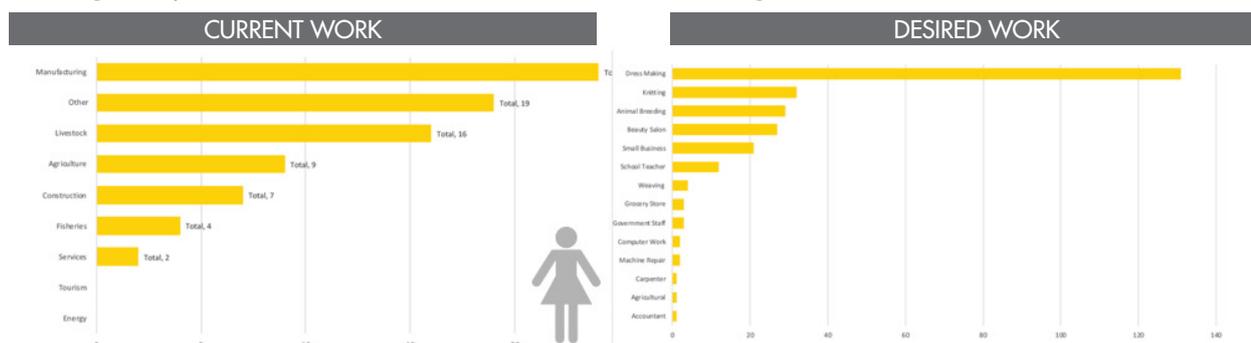
Overall across all groups, except G1: Rakhine, young women were far less likely to participate in youth, volunteer, sports or religious groups and G3: Muslim youth - both young men and women - living in camps were the least likely to participate in these types of activities. Additionally, married youth and youth with little to no education were also less likely to participate. Overall, however, the participation rates were quite high and young people often shared the desire to participate in these activities even if they had not done so in the past.

“ I would be interested but that is for youth that go to school and I have never been to school. Maybe it is something I can do when I am older.”

G2: Young Woman, Kaman Village

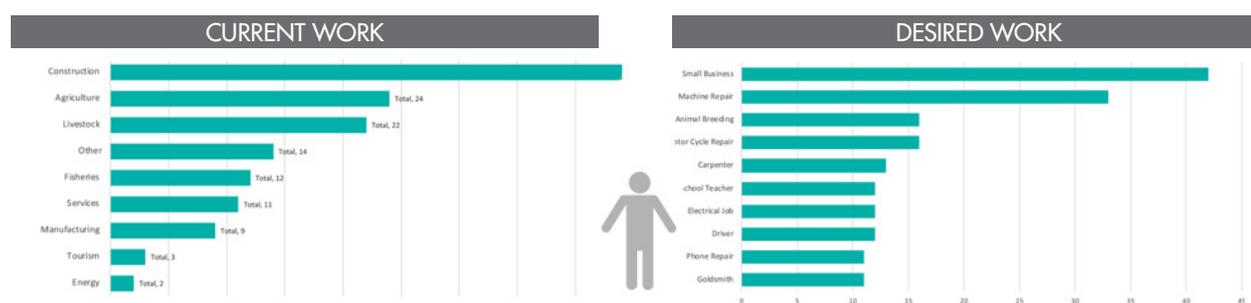
### 3. YOUTH EMPLOYMENT: REALITY AND ASPIRATIONS

Families and young people are ultimately very realistic about their employment opportunities and their employment desires were a direct reflection of their experiences and exposure at the community level. Only 31 percent of the total youth surveyed were working (40 % of males 22% of females). Young women were working in ‘manufacturing’ which was understood as dressmaking, other included homebased work/home care, followed by livestock. Young women also wanted to work in dressmaking – far and above anything else. Distantly followed by dressmaking was knitting, animal breeding beauty salon and a host of other areas not all of which were gender-defined.



Graph 2.4. Current work (on the left) and desired work (on the right) by the young woman

Overall, the majority of young men were employed in construction followed by agriculture and livestock, in line with national trends and statistics for the country and the region. If you combine agriculture with livestock, this accounted for the majority of employment for young men. However in terms of their employment hopes young men wanted to have a small business and work in machine repair. The third most popular desired job was animal breeding. If you combined machine repair and motorbike repair this would be the most desired area of employment by far. Young men came up with considerably more employment ideas than young women. These ideas, however, remained consistent with parental aspirations and local trends. Often concepts like machine repair and small business owner were mixed as they felt that gaining a technical skill and then opening a shop would provide a more consistent and better income.



Graph 2.5. Current work (on the left) and desired work (on the right) by the young man

## Parents Desired Employment for their Children

Unsurprisingly, young people shared similar employment aspirations to their parents. Parents listed the top 3 most desired careers for their children to be 1) shopkeeper 2) teacher and 3) dressmaker. This information is not disaggregated by male and female youth and the prevalence of dressmaking, while more popular among young women, is also accessible and sought after by young men, albeit at a lower level.

When parents were asked why these careers were important, teacher was commonly cited as a dignified position, one that brought with it status and meaning. Shopkeeper had community status, was considered highly accessible and provided a stable income. Dressmaker also had status, particularly when it was talked about as 'designing dresses', was considered accessible, safe and provided stable income. Additionally parents and young people assumed dressmaking had linkages to the growing garment industry in Myanmar - as noted above.

“As a carpenter I can make up to 10,000 MMK per day and I can work in the village or a big city like Sittwe.”

Young man, G1: Rakhine Village

“If you gain a skill you don't have to go to foreign countries to work and can stay in your community.”

Young man, G2: Kaman Village

“Animal breeding is safe and it is in your community. You can do animal breeding while you do other jobs as well.”

Young woman, G2: Kaman Village

“I can sell one chicken for 8000 MMK, 120 MMK for an egg and 200,000 MMK for a pig.”

Young woman, G2: Kaman Village

“Dressmaking is safe and it can generate income – if you are proficient you can also teach others.”

Young woman, G1: Rakhine Village

“I only earn when I complete a dress and I regularly complete two to three dresses per month.”

Young woman, G3: Muslim Camp



#### 4. YOUTH TECHNICAL SKILL DEVELOPMENT: ACTIVITY AND INTEREST

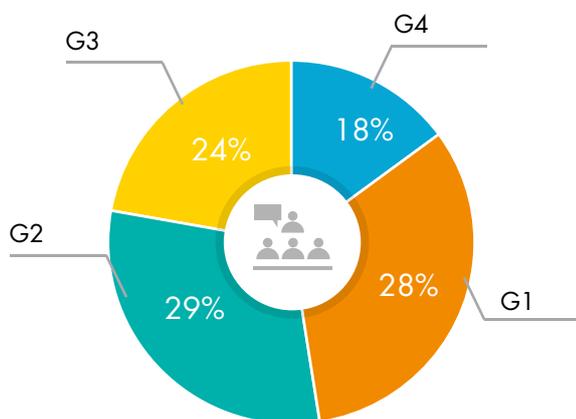
Young people and families across Rakhine state have identified the need for skills training and often prioritize training over other types of interventions. According to the Rakhine Needs Assessment 39 percent of respondents selected “vocational training” as a top priority, followed by 29 percent who selected “education” and only 16 percent selected “job creation” as important areas to prioritize for livelihoods improvements.

xxi

When youth were asked what they needed most in terms of accessing employment they overwhelmingly identified skills as their greatest need. This was consistent for male and female respondents. Skill development was surpassed by the need for mentorship/support by only one group - G4: Maungdaw but was immediately followed by the need for skill development.

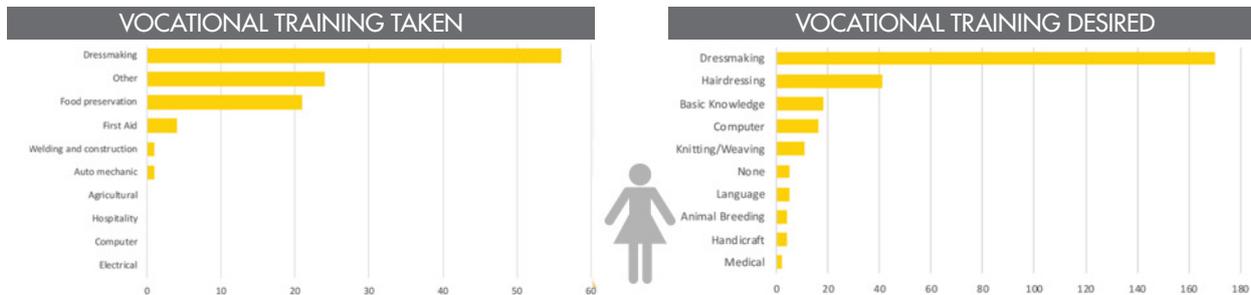
Despite the high desire to attend training over 70 percent of youth had not attended a skills training. The G2: Kaman youth had attended the most skills training at 29 percent followed closely by G1: Rakhine youth at 28 percent. In G4 Maungdaw reported the lowest attendance levels at 18 percent – they also appeared to have the least diverse courses available. Of those attending courses, over 90 percent were offered by non-government organizations inclusive of international and national organizations.

Attended and Desired Vocational Training. The courses youth had taken varied according to sex and location. Overall dressmaking was the most attended course followed by ‘other’ which included weaving or knitting. In



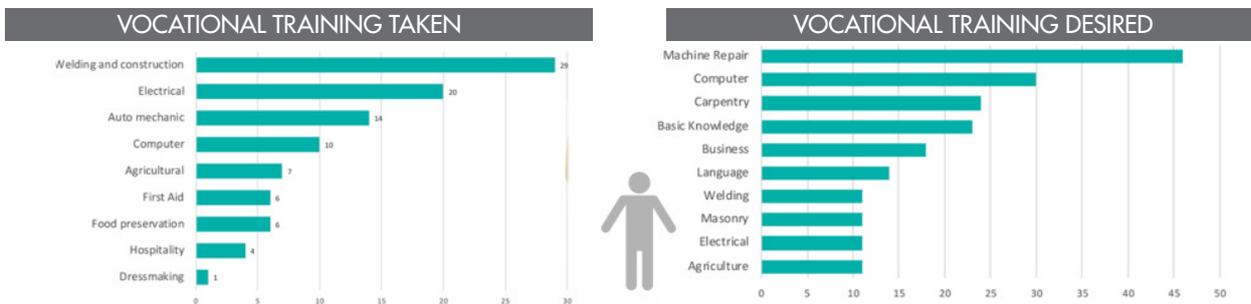
terms of desired trainings young women also wanted to take dressmaking, followed by hairdressing, basic knowledge and computers. While still very gender-specific young woman did desire to take an expanded variety of trainings that included cross-cutting skills like basic knowledge, language and computers. Animal breeding, while only requested by a few young women was interesting given the large number of youth involved in this field. It is notable that while young women expressed interest in attending computers and language courses not one female had reported attendance.

Graph 2.6. Vocational training Attendance



Graph 2.7. Vocational training taken (on the right) and vocational training desired (on the left) by the young woman

The courses taken and desired by young men were much more diverse than those attended by young women across all locations. Young women had only taken 2 or 3 different types of courses in each location while there were 6 to 8 different types of courses attended by young men. Additionally, desired courses to some degree matched what they were taking except there was a desire – much like young women – to expand to include more cross-cutting skills such as ‘basic knowledge, computers and language.



Graph 2.8. Vocational training taken (on the right) and vocational training desired (on the left) by the young man

When examined by group the courses attend are quite different:

	G1: RAKHINE VILLAGES	GROUP 2: KAMAN VILLAGES	GROUP 3: MUSLIM CAMPS	G4: MAUNGDAW VILLAGES
Male	Electrical, Welding	Welding	Auto Mechanic	Computers
Female	Dressmaking	Dressmaking	Food Preservation, Dressmaking	Dressmaking

\* Two are listed when they are tied or almost tied.

### Desired Courses

When we asked young people and their parents what types of courses they wanted it was almost a direct reflection of what was being offered. The top choices across all locations for parents were: dressmaking, electrical wiring, carpentry, life skills and mobile phone repair.

Interestingly, when youth were asked what courses they were interested in they often shared two to three different trainings that they wanted to take. These groupings complimented one another and were almost their own version of a developmental training plan. Common combinations were handicraft, dressmaking, knitting/weaving and business development or conversely medical, animal breeding, language. Young people clearly understood and wanted to create a development pathway for themselves and recognized that they needed other complementary and supplementary skills to be successful in a certain sector.



### *Understanding youth selection of vocational courses*

To better understand why these courses were a priority we asked youth in multiple focus group discussions before and after the survey implementation to gain a deeper understanding. Overall, it was clear that **youth valued these courses because they believed that there would be a direct linkage to employment opportunities and local realities had a significant impact on how these outcomes were, or were not realized.**

For dressmaking it was clear that families supported their daughters to attend because there was often an immediate, albeit small, financial benefit following the course. After just one course young women were often able to sell basic products from the safety of their home. However, there was another assumption - by both parents and young people - that dressmaking skills would be transferable to the growing garment industry in Myanmar. Young women and families were not aware that dressmaking courses are almost non-transferable to the garment industry and in Rakhine the garment industry is almost non-existent. According to key informant interviews there may be future investment in this sector in Rakhine likely linked to the special economic zones, but this has yet to develop and currently infrastructure challenges make manufacturing and industry prohibitive in most places.

For young men, many of them attended courses in a sector where they had some previous experience working as daily labourers. They saw the course as an opportunity to advance their skills and ultimately their pay. In an interview one young man even had a highschool education and was on track to go to university. He was taking electrical wiring in the youth center (G1: Rakhine Villages) because he knew there were plans to bring electricity to his village in the future. He saw the course as an opportunity for future employment and he said he was more interested to attend electrical wiring than to attend university because he felt he was more likely to find a job. He then, however, went on to say that the training was too short and too basic to find employment and he would need an advanced level course and opportunities to apply his learning in a real-life setting.

Overall, young people were taking and desired to take courses that they believed would provide them with a financial future. The courses prioritized by young people and their families were courses that were accessible to the lowest education levels and yielded some immediate financial return. Dressmaking, by far, was reported to be the most accessible, the most immediately lucrative and the safest (particularly if employed within the home).

## New Training Opportunities

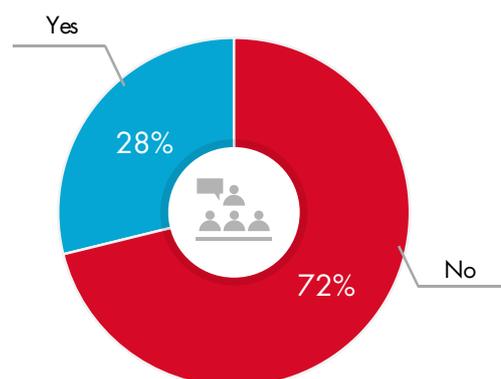
With a variety of actors offering the same basic level courses, often concentrated in similar locations due to access restrictions, it is critical to consider different training opportunities and employment pathways for young people. An ILO assessment recommended a variety of skill sets that would better serve the market and the population such as animal husbandry, agricultural methods including crop diversification and improved farming techniques, sewing and tailoring, mechanics, handicrafts, carpentry and masonry. The study highlighted that these skills have value at the household level in terms of economic resilience and also have the potential for income generation.<sup>xxii</sup> While some actors are currently offering handicrafts, carpentry, tailoring/dressmaking, masonry and mechanics these courses have not been clearly mapped to employment outcomes at the local level and may not be relevant in every location or may require adaptations and partners to facilitate related learning and employment opportunities.

Of those listed above two interesting opportunities are to include training in agriculture and livestock breeding - with a focus on value chain activities. The majority of the population in Rakhine is engaged in these sectors and yet according to an ILO study less than one-in-ten households said they have received agricultural training and one-in-one hundred received training in livestock raising – which was only provided to Rakhine households. Additionally, over half of agriculture farmers and livestock breeders identified the need for further training.<sup>xxiii</sup> Youth expressed interest in these trainings – while they were not the number one requests – both agriculture and animal breeding were requested trainings. Young women requested animal breeding and young men, agriculture.

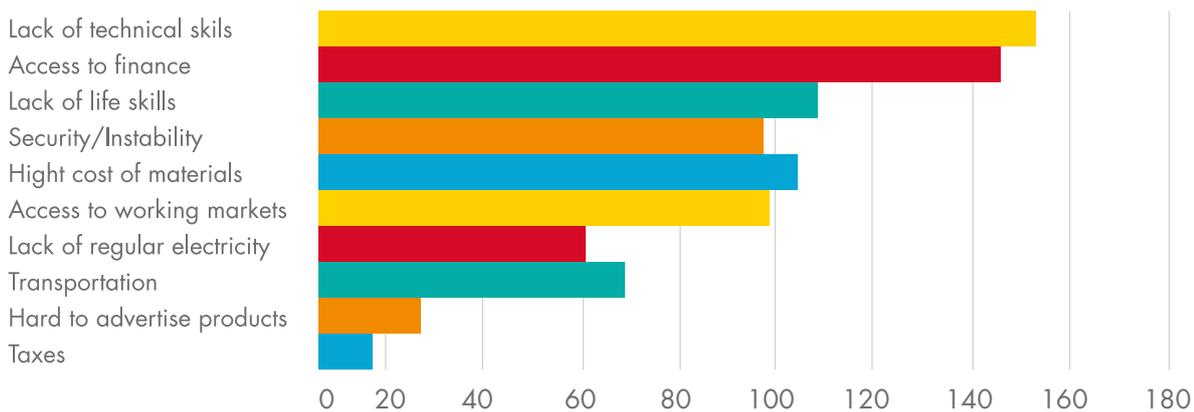
An assessment conducted by Adventist Development and Relief agency back in 2013 highlighted other new and interesting trainings, some of which are now commonly found on the market, and some that could be further developed. These technical skills sets include: maintenance and service of mobile phones, computers, sewing machines; drivers (truck/bus); carpentry; hospitality; nurse's aide and pharmacy assistant; management; car workshop and service; rubber plantation worker (gardener or agriculturalist); accounting; sales; poultry livestock breeding; steel welding/gas/arc; candle making; photographer/designer; concrete brick making; gemstone repair, gold fish breeding and sale.<sup>xxv</sup> Lastly a study that reviewed the courses offered through Government Technical Training Institutes (GTI) identified fisheries and hospitality as priority skill development areas, and something that they had not yet been able to incorporate.<sup>xxvi</sup> Of course, the appropriate skills certainly depends on the context and below we will examine the sector potential of Rakhine.

## 5. YOUTH SOFT SKILL DEVELOPMENT – DEMAND AND OPPORTUNITY

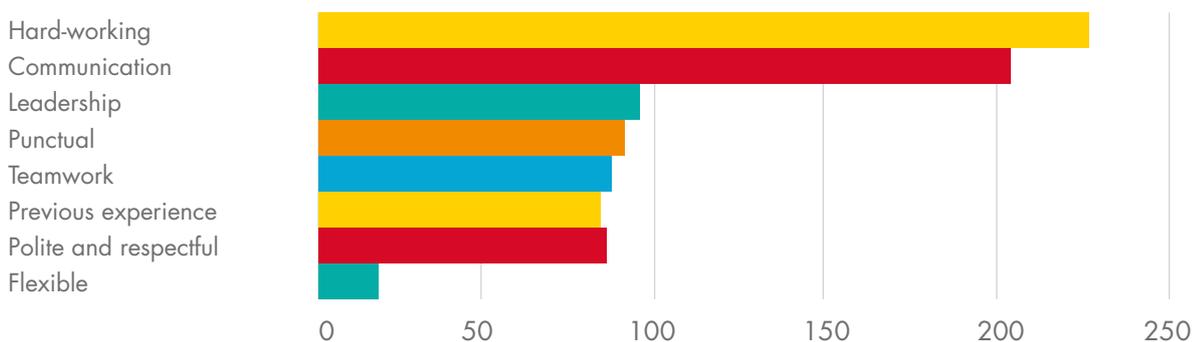
There is extensive international research demonstrating that youth require a hybrid mixture of soft, hard and vocational skills to succeed in the workplace in the 21st century.<sup>xxviii</sup> A report published by a group of donors in 2017 – USAID, Mastercard Foundation and the ILO argued that soft skills development should focus on the five sets of skills. The focus skills are positive self-concept, self-control, communication, social skills and high-order thinking (which includes problem-solving, critical thinking



Graph 2.9. Life Skills Courses Attendance



Graph 2.10. Business Challenges – reported by business



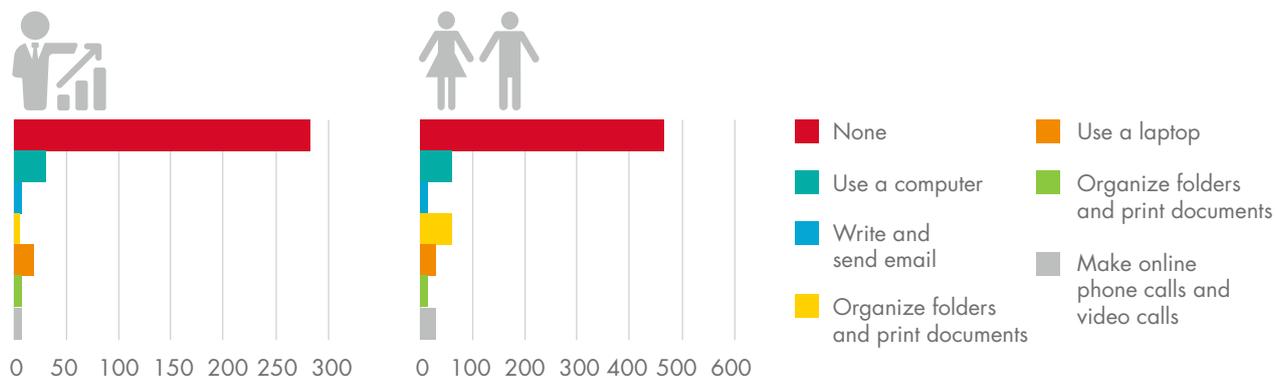
Graph 2.11. Soft Skills – required by businesses

and decision-making).<sup>xxx</sup> Youth program approaches emphasise the need for young people to develop life skills for employment outcomes and as a means to navigate important life decisions. In this section we are using a broad definition of life skills to include soft skills such as communication and leadership and skills young people need to navigate their lives and their careers such as financial literacy. This section will also explore transferable skills such as language and computer literacy.

When youth were asked if they had participated in life skills training very few young people across all locations had taken life skills courses. G2: Kaman Villages reported the highest participation rate at 42 percent while in G4: Maungdaw only one person reported having taken a life skills course. Yet, there is a strong demand for the development of life skills at the national, state and local level. Overall, business that participated in the survey, ranked the lack of life skills in the top three challenges that they faced, the ranking varied only slightly by group.

The type of soft skills desired by business owners in Rakhine State were quite different than the skills desired by firms and companies recruiting employees in urban centers. In Rakhine businesses reported that most needed soft skills were hard-work and communication – across all groups and equally for male and female business owners. The emphasis on hard-work likely reflects the need for dedicated and hardworking low-skilled labour. In contrast – market research at the national level, and more likely linked to likely to urban centers, highlighted the need for foreign languages (57%), computer and general information technology skills (65%) and soft skills such as managerial leadership, interpersonal, and critical-thinking.<sup>xxx</sup> Another study by IREX found that employers prioritized soft skills such as analytical thinking, creativity and initiative over digital skills demonstrating the importance of life skills for skilled labour.<sup>xxxi</sup>

Computer literacy and language skills - while not life skills - can be lumped into the category of transferable skills meaning that they can be learned and applied to a variety of different professions. For example, if you

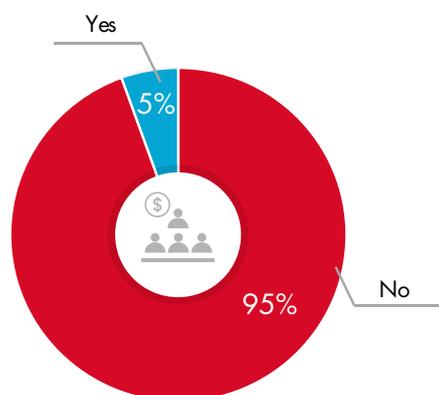


Graphs 2.12. Computer literacy required by business and 2.13. Computer literacy of youth participants

take a computer course it doesn't not mean you will need to work in information technology but could even work in a shop where you need to use a computer to track and record sales. In Rakhine the demand for these type of transferable skills was very low as evidenced through the business survey respondents.

In Rakhine State the majority of businesses did not require any computer literacy skills and the youth surveyed did not possess these skills. Demand trends for language skills is more complex when explored nationally and regionally due to the differing needs of businesses and diversity of ethnic languages across the country. In the Rakhine context language is particularly challenging as the Muslim population living camps do not have access to language training or opportunities to interact in the Myanmar or Rakhine language.

Nationally, in urban centers private sector actors operate in Myanmar language and some firms and international actors are also increasingly interested in English, Chinese, Japanese, Korean and other regional languages. In Rakhine participating businesses across all groups required employees to speak Myanmar language. Only businesses from G3: Muslim camps did not require Myanmar language skills as many businesses and young people no longer speak the language. According to a recent study led by Peace



Graph 2.14. Attended Financial Literacy Training

Development Initiative less than one-third of males and less than 15 per cent of females from the Muslim camps and villages were able to speak Myanmar language. Additionally, the Rakhine language - which is also taught in school and used regularly within the community - is very important requirement for employment and is also important for certain sectors within the Muslim camps. For example, all government employees in Rakhine speak the Rakhine language and 95 percent of those working for humanitarian organisations also speak Rakhine.<sup>xxii</sup> Another area of skill development critical for youth development is financial literacy. In the youth survey financial literacy was explained as training on how to save money and manage your money. Only 3 young people, out of 563, requested some form of financial literacy or financial management training and parents did not mention financial management at all. The only group to mention the importance of financial knowledge were small businesses owners when asked what advice they had for someone starting a business.

Overall, the demand for life skills and transferable skills in an urban setting are very different than the demand for skills with the Rakhine market. Introduction of language, computer literacy and other soft skills need to be compliments to a foundational vocational skills training that can provide some economic return otherwise it will be unlikely that young people will be able to attend due to competing priorities.



## PART II: YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PATHWAYS IN RAKHINE STATE

### 1. POST-TRAINING PATHWAYS

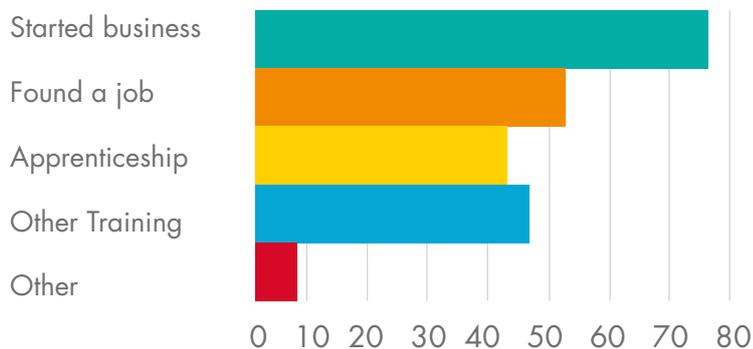
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Technical and soft skill trainings are only part of the youth development process, what happens as a result of trainings is also critical to positive youth futures.

Of the youth participating in a vocational training course most young people reported that they had been linked to some form of follow-on opportunity as a result of their experience. The pathways listed included finding a job, apprenticeship, additional training or 'other'. Other was generally representative of no follow-up action had been taken. These results are consistent with the Danish Refugee Council's review of youth technical trainings in which "most training graduates had generated at least some income from their new skills (but not enough to be fully employed)".<sup>xxxiii</sup>

In one-to-one interviews young people confirmed that post training they had been able to access additional opportunities as a result of the course. It was very common that they were connected to job opportunities – albeit short-term – through their instructors who worked in the field in which they trained. Other youth started small home-based businesses with the funds received post training and others used the funding to pay for a tutor or travel to an apprenticeship to further develop their skills. All of these pathways support greater skill advancement and connection with employment.

In interview settings it became clear, however, that young people who had started a business, found a job or been linked to an internship or apprenticeship were often in a very similar or the same financial state as they were prior to attending the training. For example, all of the young men who participated in one-to-one



Graphs 2.15. Youth report post-training pathways

interviews had taken a vocational short-course had previous experience as a day labourer in the technical field in which they had trained prior to the course . After the training they either continued working in the same field as a day labourer – since their skill set had not increased enough to move into a more senior role – or they had started a small business that often provided the same income as they would have made as a labourer. These small

businesses were very small and were making less or the same as they had made previously working as a day labourer, although as they pointed out their working conditions were much improved. Other youth used the funding to pay for transportation to the apprenticeship that they had been doing previously or the fees of a teacher that had worked with in the past.

Interestingly, of the youth interviewed, only young women who had taken dressmaking had made a relatively significant change in their income status and in some cases their social status as a result of the course. In many cases young women who were able to sell dresses were also able to spend less time in the field and were encouraged to take additional courses for skill development - advanced dressmaking. In one case the young woman attending the dressmaking course had never attended school and this was the first time she was able to gather with other young women outside of her family, gain new skills, take time away from field work, and have some financial independence. While dressmaking had provided these young women some opportunity there was increased risk associated with the new skills to be pulled into unsafe or hazardous working environments - particularly related to the garment industry.

All young people – regardless of the course and outcome of the course – noted that they needed advanced and additional skill training to be successful. For example, youth attending dressmaking wanted designer skills and ‘advanced dressmaking’ to create their own patterns, young men attending carpentry courses wanted skills related to specific tools used in the field to be able to access different levels and types of semi-skilled work. Overall young people recognized that the short-courses could not boost their livelihoods without additional skills, support systems and opportunities.

“ 20 days is not enough for youth to learn these new skills, they need more time. Maybe they could repeat the training if they need more help?”

Mother, G3: Muslim Village

“ I need advanced dressmaking so I can design dresses for special occasions. (i.e. weddings).”

-Young Women, G2: Kaman Village

“ Sometimes we don’t have an opportunity to apply what we have learned from the training in real life.”

Young Women, G1: Rakhine Village

Parents, more than youth themselves, emphasized the need for job placements, factories and industry in Rakhine State. They felt that the skills were important but useless when not linked directly to employment.

“ My son took a short carpenter training and after that there was no change in their employment – he did not get a job.”

Mother, G2: Kaman Village

“ Skills need to be suitable. – if there is no factory dress-making isn’t useful.”

Mother, G1: Rakhine Village

“ We want international organisations to invest in a factor in our community to bring jobs.”

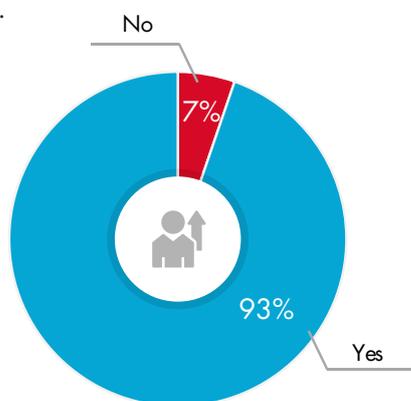
Community Leader, G2: Kaman Village

The challenge of linking trained youth to employment is even a problem for Government Technical Institutes which provide formal certifications for employers. Studies have found many GTHS courses did not provide sufficient practical skills to secure employment after graduation and most trades were only relevant to students who continued higher education in technological universities.<sup>xxxiv</sup> Whereas youth participating in short-course vocational trainings at the village level currently do not have access to these certifications and even if they did there is only one GTHS in Sittwe which all attendees are from Sittwe township -and no Muslim students are not allowed to enroll.



## 2. SECTOR ORIENTATION: WHERE TO FOCUS

Nationally, the agricultural sector accounts for 36 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employs a majority of the workforce – mostly in low-income labour, low-skilled labour.<sup>xxxv</sup> This is consistent in Rakhine where the majority of people are employed in agriculture, followed by forestry and fishing, and wholesale and retail trade.<sup>xxxvi</sup> Young people and businesses surveyed reflected these statistics but the top sectors varied according to geographic, political and cultural influences. For example – while fisheries was among the top sectors for G1: Rakhine, G2: Kaman and G4: Maungdaw it was not listed for G3: Muslim camps due to imposed restrictions on the Muslim community. The only sector that was prevalent across all locations, and was accessible to both male and female youth, was animal breeding – all other sectors varied as noted above.



Graph 2.16. Youth: Want to start a business

Identifying the right sectors for skill development is critical to support young people and investment should be in sectors that are producing safe and decent employment. According to the World Bank more labor-intensive sectors (agriculture, construction and manufacturing) have stronger effects on poverty alleviation by increasing absolute income and this appears to align quite well with the current conditions in Rakhine state.<sup>xxxvii</sup> However, according to key informant interviews, these sectors can be challenging – particularly agriculture – because it has a deficit of decent work and currently produces the worst paid, least protected job opportunities. There is potential, however, in different agriculturally related value chain activities but these jobs depend on investment, technology and new ways of working.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

Nationally growth is coming from energy, construction, manufacturing, tourism and the information technology sector.<sup>xxxix</sup> While some of these sectors do exist in Rakhine not all are accessible to young people and functioning. For example, due to the lack of infrastructure the manufacturing sector is not stable and is concentrated in economic centers and tourism, while promising for Rakhine, is currently not accessible to rural-based youth.

The garment industry plays an important role in Myanmar nationally, data from the 2016 Enterprise Survey suggests that firms in textiles and garments industries employ the largest share of workers in Myanmar’s non-farm, non-government, non-micro enterprise private sector, and contributed the most to net job creation. This however, has not translated to Rakhine State where this is only one small garment factory located in Sittwe.<sup>xi</sup>

Comparing the national and Rakhine-specific investments and opportunities for young people the primary areas of alignment appear to be in the following: 1) Agriculture 2) Livestock/Animal Breeding 3) Infrastructure/Construction and 4) Small Business Development with an opportunity to look at social services and education.

	AGRICULTURE	LIVESTOCK/ ANIMAL BREEDING	INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT	TOURISM	SMALL BUSINESS	FORESTRY/ FISHERIES	MANUFACTURING	EDUCATION
Labour-Intensive (job producing sectors)	Agriculture		Construction				Manufacturing	
Youth Sectors (survey)	Agriculture	Animal Breeding	Construction		Small Business	Fisheries		
Business Sectors (survey)	Agriculture	Animal Breeding			Small Business	Fisheries		
Rakhine Investment Plan	Agriculture	Livestock	Infrastructure/Transportation Development	x	Small Medium Enterprises	Fisheries		Education
ILO Report: Youth	Agriculture					Forestry		
National Vocation Foundational Curriculum (NVFC)	Agriculture		Construction & Trades	Customer Service	Customer Service Technology & Creative Arts		Manufacturing & Engineering	Social services

Other areas to consider include education, tourism and waste management.

**Education:** While education is listed as a priority for Rakhine state and an area of investment for the NVFC this would be another important area to build the skills and capacity of teachers and trainers – particularly in remote and rural areas.

**Tourism:** Myanmar’s tourism sector is an important participant in GVCs and recipient of FDI that stands to become an important source of new jobs.<sup>xii</sup> Rakhine has already invested heavily in tourism consistent with the country’s overarching approach – however, given the limited reach of these jobs to rural youth these opportunities feel distant and inaccessible. That being said, transferable skills such as customer service and critical-thinking can be developed and applied to small business development and as tourism grows transfer to these growing opportunities.<sup>xiii</sup>

**Waste Management:** Only 0.1 per cent of the country’s labour force was employed in water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities in 2015 (Fig. 9). Improvement in water and sanitation access and the much-needed implementation of a municipal waste management system for collection, safe and sustainable disposal, recycling and composting practices will provide decent job opportunities in the future.<sup>xiiii</sup>



### 3. SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT: RISK AND OPPORTUNITY

Small businesses are central to the economy in rural Rakhine and many families own and manage small business ventures. Most of these enterprises are very small and operate at the street level with few links to the formal sector or organized traders.<sup>xliv</sup> This is consistent with the businesses that were surveyed across all locations where 41 percent of business reported having only one employee.

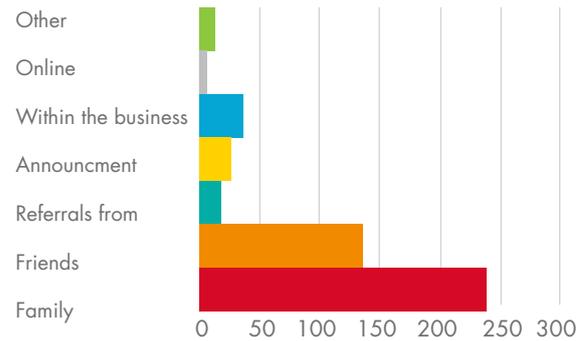
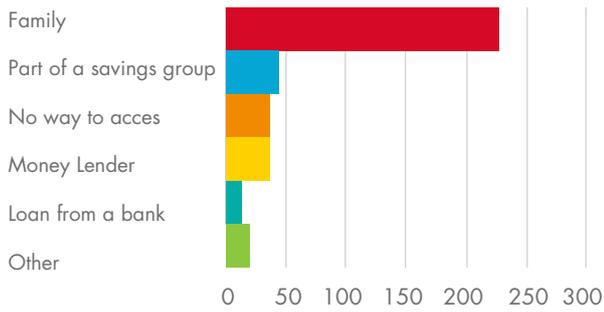
The business survey also revealed that ‘shopkeepers’ or ‘small business owners’ were among the largest category of businesses in Rakhine. Animal breeding and shopkeeper were tied as the two main areas of work across all surveyed businesses. It should be noted that micro-enterprises were particularly desirable for young women due to their low capital requirement and the ease of combining family work with business activity.<sup>xlv</sup>

Small business development is popular and is considered desirable by both parents and young people. Therefore, it is not surprising that the majority of young men and women want to start a small business. A recent in-depth study looking at youth employment outcomes found that entrepreneurship promotion interventions were correlated to larger effect sizes, relative to the base category (skills training), and that they appeared to be the most successful interventions.<sup>xlvi</sup> In summary, focusing on entrepreneurship has better employment outcomes than skills training alone because it is focused on creating jobs. To date very few organizations in Rakhine are providing business development training with the exception of NRC, ILO and DRC to name a few – and so far these trainings are somewhat new and being delivered at a small scale.

“ There are no small businesses that do not provide an income.”

Young Woman, G2: Kaman Village

At first glance, entrepreneurship and small business development appears to be an obvious pathway for young people due to a high level of desirability coupled with the fact that self-employment is one of the best ways to address youth unemployment challenges. However, there are important challenges to take into consideration when designing and implementing entrepreneurship programming in Rakhine. The youth survey revealed that while youth were enthusiastic to start a business they had very little knowledge of what makes a



Graphs 2.17. Youth: Where to get a loan and 2.18. Youth: Where to get a job

business successful and were willing to use hard-earned savings to start a business that could fail or provide very little income.

Additionally, when asked about business ideas young people shared examples of existing businesses that were already in operation in their community. For example, one young woman said that there were already 4 dressmakers in her community but she wanted to start a small business selling the same product for the same price. This was similar for young men wanting to open a phone repair business. Below are a list of the small business ideas proposed by young people. One young person was interested to start an online payment service.

“Of course everyone wants to open a small shop – this is because you operate within the space in which we live where this is the most common mode of employment.”

Key Informant Interview, Sittwe

While studies have found that individuals with vocational training are twice as likely to be an owner of a micro enterprise than those with no such training, young people require more than vocational training to become business owners.<sup>2</sup> In summary, not everyone is cut out to run a business and there are considerable environmental factors that require consideration before promoting entrepreneurship programming. A study by GIZ finds that “entrepreneurship is more likely to be successful if undertaken by an entrepreneur (a person that has an idea, capital and likes to take risks); happens in a conducive eco-system and when the start-up is well adapted to market realities (among other factors).”<sup>xlvii</sup> To develop this type of ecosystem for young people to start new initiatives considerable work needs to be done to introduce new ideas and concepts, provision of basic financial literacy, access to finance and business mapping skills – all delivered with ongoing support and guidance.

“Young people need additional support to start-up a business.”

Father, G2: Kaman Village

The need for mentorship and ongoing support is critical to support youth in business ventures. Young people shared - as part of the youth survey - that some of their greatest challenges to accessing employment were a lack of mentorship and guidance. This is particularly relevant in the context of starting a business. Many of the businesses surveyed said they would be willing to provide guidance and mentorship for young people who were interested to start up their own venture - which is promising - yet many of these small businesses would benefit from mentorship and support as well.

A study conducted by the Aspen Network in Myanmar noted that “the limited level of financial literacy among local entrepreneurs is a significant challenge to overcome ranging from how to set up a basic accounting system to technical industry-specific knowledge”.<sup>xlviii</sup>

Business also face considerable challenges access finances, particularly in Myanmar and more acutely in Rakhine. For example, in Myanmar less than 4 percent of micro enterprises have a bank account for business purposes.<sup>xlix</sup> When youth were asked where they might get a loan very few understood the concept and not surprisingly, the majority said they would ask their family for money. A small percentage did mention that they were part of a savings group.

#### 4. THE CHALLENGE OF JOB PLACEMENT

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Finding full-time employment in a business or company is challenging for young people in Rakhine, particularly at the community level. Existing businesses are small and they do not hire many employees, recruitment practices are localised through friend and family networks and youth do not have job searching skills and resources to access more formalised networks.

Of the businesses surveyed 83 percent hired through family networks, and no businesses reported using online employment websites or social media networks for recruitment. This closed system severely limits the entry points for young people making an already small job market even smaller.

To address challenges related to job awareness some organisations are trying to develop networking opportunities and apprenticeship placements for young people. Internships can be a powerful learning tool but rarely are businesses able to hire youth as employees due to the lack of skills and likely their inability to grow. Private sector trainings serve as a good networking tool so youth can get exposure and employers can also select the best potential employees for their needs. Job fairs can also be useful when there are jobs on offer, which is more common in urbanised areas like Sittwe. While job fairs will have little impact in remote areas there are still opportunities to leverage technology as a way to share these opportunities more broadly.

A critical part of building knowledge of employment opportunities is also building employability skills, which includes how to search for work and how to apply for jobs. Given the low levels of computer literacy mobile phone platforms could be a good way to expand and share these opportunities but will still require focused skills training. We already know that most young people have phones - but many young people, particularly young women, do not have the same level of access to phones and often express challenges to navigate web-based platforms.<sup>1</sup>

“ You need to hold job fairs.”

Mother, G1: Rakhine State

Parents know that youth are not able to find employment and when asked what young people needed to access jobs they asked for more training, job fairs, mentorship and even to build factories to employ people in their communities.

“ Even if I am good at a skill it is still difficult to find a job, I still need help.”

Young Man, G4: Maungdaw



“ I want a garment factors in my community so that girls can work as a dressmaker.”

Mother, G2: Kaman Village

While building more industry in Rakhine rests on infrastructure development and foreign and government investment there are local opportunities to build co-operatives, women’s groups and other initiatives that need support accessing markets. During the assessment very few of these types of initiatives were identified and there may be an opportunity to better support this type of approach. One common reference was made to the organisation called Precious Lady, a Myanmar-based enterprise, that facilitates access to markets for handicrafts and provides training for product development. Given the limited market-access in the camps and rural location of many of the trainings there are opportunities to facilitate more opportunities for groups to develop and design competitive products for the market with support from experienced entrepreneurs.



## 5. GENDERED EXPERIENCES

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Gender played a defining role in this youth-led assessment from the beginning – starting by ensuring equal representation of male and female youth facilitators. A thread throughout the entire analysis demonstrates one consistency – across all locations and contexts - young people’s opportunities were defined by their gender. While the local context is extremely important and certainly has an impact on the most relevant skills, sectors and employment opportunities.

Even from the start youth facilitators found it much easier to access young women to participate in the survey because they were often at home – across all groups. Young men, in contrast, were often working and not available until later in the day.

During the assessment girls surveyed young women and boys surveyed young men - so below are young people’s experience of finding youth during the survey process.

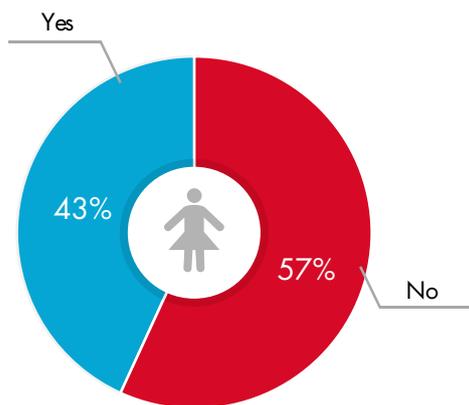
“ We have no difficulties finding youth [girls] in the village because most of them are at home.”

Female youth facilitator, G4: Maungdaw

“ In the morning most of the youth [boys] are at work so it was difficult to find them for an interview, but in the afternoon they came back and we could do a lot of interviews.”

Male youth facilitator, G2: Kaman, FGD

It is this simple fact that then sets the rules for how young men and women engage in employment and to some degree education. Young women were consistently linked to opportunities that allowed them to work in the home and from home – while roles for young men were outside of the home, often regardless of the working conditions. There are exceptions of course, but the results of this assessment certainly demonstrate a



Graph 2.19. Hire female employees

preference by families, young women and young men for opportunities that support these cultural gender divisions.

Preferred and attended vocational training opportunities for girls were very limited and reflected the role of women in the home, likely linked to motherhood and family responsibilities as well as safety and security. Yet, the trainings led to some income generation for young women, and could be done in the safety of their home - assuming the home is safe. In contrast, training opportunities for young men were much more diverse and the majority were linked

to some form of physical labour. Trainings for women were often associated with beautification in some way - dressmaking, flower production, soap making or handicrafts whereas trainings for young men were often linked with household and community needs - carpentry, masonry, electrical wiring, among others. This gender division can appear to divide essential and nonessential work putting more importance on men's work.

Across the country, women have limited access to employment opportunities - the female labour participation is low at 47 percent. This is particularly low when compared with neighboring countries in southeast Asia, namely Vietnam at 79 percent and Cambodia at 77 percent. On average, in Myanmar, women earn about 30 percent less than men, even when controlling for factors that may drive the wage differential. Female ownership (at 27 %) and management (at 29%) of private firms is lower than in other countries in the region and women dominate in teaching and nursing (which fits the stereotype of women as caregivers). Lastly, the garment sector is female-dominated - 80 plus percent women.

The business survey also found that companies were less likely to employ or hire women. G4: Maungdaw reported having the least female employees. Only 23 percent of business had female employees while in G1: Rakhine villages 51 percent of businesses had female employees. Overall, very few women were employed by businesses and when they did have a job it was most often self-employment.

Studies show that the division of labour in Myanmar and specifically in Rakhine is reflective of power structures that favour men over women – placing decision-making power at the household level with men. A gender study in Rakhine found that women and children's meaningful participation in community leadership and public decision making structures is very limited - leaving women and children, and often youth - without a voice.<sup>li</sup> This was reiterated in focus group discussions and interviews with key informants who highlighted that women do not have access to leadership roles in the community. The same study found that while Rakhine women have slightly more decision-making power within the family than Muslim women, neither decision-making power nor are considered to have a prominent role in the community decision-making process.

These disparities were consistent across all components of the assessment, limiting women's access and mobility, while pushing men to work and take on dominant roles in the household.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

Young people do not follow a linear path from education to employment. The one thing that is consistent for youth is that they all have different experiences and forces that inform their lives. As a result, technical and soft skill development should be linked to pathways for young people to explore new opportunities, apply and build knowledge and skills for the future.

## BUILD PARTICIPATION AND YOUTH LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Working with youth to become owners and leaders of programming is not only good for their development it also supports sustainability.

- 1. Build cascading leadership models for young people.** Ensure that programs provide young people with leadership and paid opportunities within the program to grow and serve as role models for their peers. This is not only critical to program sustainability it can also expand the reach of the program and ensure programs are working and expanding at the community level.
- 2. Incorporate youth-led projects and initiatives that address community needs.** Young people want to be engaged in their communities and they have expressed deep frustration with structural challenges they are from roads to electricity. Incorporate youth-led projects as a graduation component of training programs that allow youth to focus on the issues that matter to them and employ the skills they have learned.. Consider providing training supplements and activities that align directly with community needs when possible.

## FOCUS ON EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES AND PATHWAYS

Vocational skills are only part of the puzzle, and knowing how those skills fit into the local market will make them actionable and define the actions organizations can take to facilitate employment and educational opportunities.

- 3. Build market knowledge and skills.** Young people and communities need to have a better understanding of the market and how different skill sets link to opportunities. Provide youth with a market overview before selecting courses and continue to give them more information about the context and future opportunities. Continue to engage youth in market-related scoping activities, when possible.
- 4. Provide mentorship and options for youth.** Overall, youth need to understand their context and have options to take meaningful next steps for their lives. Studies showed that in low-and middle-income countries, measures that provide multiple services and programme components to youth lead to better outcomes and participant profiling, monitored programme participation and incentives offered to programme participants and service providers are key determinants of success.<sup>lii</sup> In summary, one size does not fit all and programs that offer support services and guidance and linkages to different pathways better serve young people.<sup>liii</sup>
- 5. Support a small business development ecosystem.** Increase technical skills, business and management skills, financial literacy skills, and social skills for young people to support better small business development. Ensure that young people understand the market and sustainable business practices before supporting business start-up.

## EXPAND ACCESS AND SUSTAINABILITY

Roads and transportation networks are terrible, access to different communities continues to shift - yet it is the communities that need services who are being missed, start with the reality and work backwards.

- 6. Introduce and leapfrog with new technologies.** Identify opportunities in all trainings to introduce new technologies relevant to that particular field, if even at a basic level. This could mean using a computer or phone during the training or could mean having open training hours with new equipment in the center or within the community. In light of the lack of infrastructure there is an opportunity to 'leapfrog' the traditional development pitfalls and take advantage of technological innovations to scale in Myanmar. With the wide adoption of smartphones as an indicator that the population is willing to embrace new technology opportunities. Myanmar is a great fit for learning from other countries' mistakes and implementing innovative solutions.<sup>liv</sup>
- 7. Partner with local actors.** Local partners are already offering training in remote areas and are able to access hard-to-reach locations. One of the biggest challenges in Rakhine is the rural-based population and lack of access to training and resources. Decentralising programming and building rural presence in partnership with local actors will not only expand reach but will build relationships with communities and across communities.
- 8. Target the most disadvantaged youth and design for them.** Studies show that targeting the most disadvantaged youth increases programme effect. Across measures of targeting, a focus on low-income youth, those with low levels of education or exhibiting strong disadvantages in the labour market triggers higher employment and earnings gains for youth across all country income levels.<sup>lv</sup> This means

when looking at the needs of young people in Rakhine, youth living in rural areas with low access to education and services, the most-remote are the place to start.

- 9. Engage parents and manage expectations.** Make sure that expectations and outcome of training is clear for young people and their families and whenever possible work directly with parents to support youth to access courses, and shape opportunities. When working with parents and youth make sure that the objectives of programs are clear and enlist parents in support of program outcomes, as partners.

## LINK SKILL TRAINING WITH GROWTH AND OPPORTUNITY

If it were easy everyone would do it, understanding how vocational training fits into the complex web of the education sector and links with a shifting economy is hard to do and requires constant mapping and re-mapping in partnership with experts and the community. It also requires making connections where they might not already exist.

- 10. Maintain economic resiliency courses and integrate market knowledge and transferable skill development.** Reframe courses that do not have clear market linkages as economic resiliency and couple them with financial literacy with an overview of the market to better position youth for the future. Ensure that youth understand the possibilities after the course and do not have unattainable expectations associated with short courses. Introduction of language, computer literacy and other soft skills need to be compliments to a foundational vocational skills training that can provide some economic return otherwise it will be unlikely that young people will be able to attend due to competing priorities.

- 11. Expand courses to challenge gender norms.** While some youth came to a specific course to learn a specific skill, youth often youth attended whatever courses were available as they were all seen as providing value to their education and employment opportunities. There are opportunities then, to introduce courses that are perceived as 'male' or 'female' to the other sex, for example cooking and food preparation for young men and electrical wiring for young women. Additionally girls and boys should be receiving cross-cutting courses to build their technology and soft skills. As computers and technology become integrated this will build capacity of both boys and girls.

- 12. Introduce agriculture and livestock training.** Through the lens of safe and decent work outcomes introduce short-courses that build specific agriculture and livestock skills that can generate income. Where possible partner with private sector actors who are promoting new technologies to develop skills. Course format does not need to be only a short-course, could be workshop based, tool or technology oriented. Courses could include animal husbandry, agricultural methods including crop diversification and improved farming techniques, fertilizer application, to name a few.

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