

EU Myan Ku Fund extended. European Union doubles funding for garment workers in crisis as CoVID economic fallout continues

Doubling support to 10 million EUR, the EU commits further to help the tens of thousands of mostly unemployed women migrant workers in the sector. 60,000 workers already supported since programme launched on May 1st, 2020.

"With Myan Ku support I could afford a maternal check-up at the clinic... we could afford food and pay our rent so that we did not get evicted." said Ms. Chit Thae Wai, a garment factory sewing operator. Chit Thae is one of over 800 pregnant workers already supported by the Myan Ku project.

Last year, the EU Myan Ku Fund disbursed 108,320 total cash assistance payments to over 60,000 garment factory workers from every State and Region of Myanmar. 84% of beneficiaries were women, and the greatest support went to those who were pregnant and to those workers who received little or no severance pay. 99.9% of cash payments were successfully distributed using the mobile money platform of Wave Money, a leading mobile financial services provider in Myanmar who agreed to cancel transaction fees to support the Myan Ku CoVID response effort.

The extension phase of the EU Myan Ku Fund is planned to operate from January 2021 until February 2022. Financial support for laid off factory workers is still a key feature, but is pivoting even further in the direction of assistance to unemployed pregnant workers and unemployed workers with young children under age 10. Migrant workers and workers willing to complete skills training programmes will also be supported. The scope of expert nutritional support services is also expanding, with 2,000 women targeted to receive maternal counseling and direct nutritional support from the project's doctors.

"Phone consultation is very helpful for pregnant women, especially in this time due to the COVID-19 situation where medical care services are not easily accessible." said Dr. Khin Khin Kyawt, one of the medical doctors assisting the project in providing nutritional phone counseling to hundreds of pregnant workers.

The average payment size per beneficiary per month was 75,000 MMK in 2020, with the payment range varying from 25,000 MMK up to 125,000 MMK. Recipients often indicated this was the only income they received during critical points in the pandemic, such as during the first national lockdown in April and during the second lockdown in September and October, 2020.

"Myan Ku will continue to come in support to the most vulnerable, mainly pregnant workers and workers with young children and migrant workers. But as we are entering a recovery phase, the program will also aim at getting more workers back to work by supporting unemployed workers to complete skills training programmes and to match-make unemployed workers with factories for jobs." said EU Ambassador Mr. Ranieri Sabatucci.

Background:

Myan Ku was set up in April 2020 by the European Union as a rapid response measure to alleviate the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on predominantly female garment workers in Myanmar who lost their jobs due to the crisis.

The initiative is implemented by the Nexus Response Mechanism, an EU-funded program managed the United Nations Office of Project Services (UNOPS), and sequa gGmbH, together with Wave Money.

Local stakeholders and organizations supporting the successful implementation of the project include the Confederation of Trade Unions Myanmar, the Myanmar Garment Manufacturers Association, the Centre for Economic and Social Development, Pyi Gyi Khin, Opportunities NOW, and Thone Pan Hla.

The Myan Ku eligibility criteria are published on the website: www.smartmyanmar.org

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