

Reconstruction of Auk Pyun Wa Village

Auk Pyun Wa Village and Cyclone Nargis

1. Auk Pyun Wa was a fishing village in the east side of Ale Kyun in Ngapudaw Township (now Labutta Township) of the Ayeyarwaddy Division, comprising 127 households with a population of 589.
2. Cyclone Nargis hit Auk Pyun Wa in the evening of May 2nd, 2008, destroying everything, including the huts built on the river bank, the monastery, the pagoda, the primary school and four shrimp paste factories. Almost all of the fishing boats and fishing nets were also washed away by the waves that came as high as 15 feet. Altogether 221 villagers lost their lives.
3. The local authorities moved the surviving cyclone victims to the refugee camp set up at the Thin Gan Gone monastery. They stayed there for about a month together with other refugees from nearby villagers. A monk by the name of U Thumngalar from Mandalay was one of the first persons bringing relief to Ale Kyun. At the request of the refugees from Auk Pyun Wa, he built 3 large huts for them to return to their village and start life anew. Later a platoon of naval personnel from the Panmawaddy Region Naval H.Q. based on Hainggyi Island arrived to carry out relief and recovery operations.
4. A relief team from the Cape Negrais Committee (CNC), which was carrying out relief work on Ale Kyun, distributed 10 shelter box tents to the villagers. The navy later built about 70 temporary individual huts made of bamboo, thatch and tarpaulin sheets, so that families living together in the large huts could move out into individual huts.
5. A total of 125 households, comprising 368 adults and children, relocated back to Auk Pyun Wa temporary village a month after the cyclone devastated the original village.

Decision to Reconstruct Auk Pyun Wa Village

6. On May 30, 2008, the leader of the CNC Relief Team, U Kyaw Thu Tun (PHGE) and the leader of the Medical Team, Dr. Ye Moe Myint (PHIH) reported back to the Chairman and members of the CNC (from SPA/FMI Group) the situation on the ground in detail. They pointed out two important aspects. The first one was that in their area of operations, there was no longer any need to carry out rescue work because the cyclone victims had been moved from their respective villages to the refugee camps set up at Thin Gan Gone. The second point they emphasized was the need to carry out relief and rehabilitation works for the villages that were totally destroyed. Auk Pyun Wa was among the 4 villages on Ale Kyun that had suffered severe devastation.
7. Based on presentations made by the two team leaders, the Chairman of CNC laid down the following directives for the Committee:
 - To select an appropriate village on Ale Kyun that was totally destroyed and to draw up a master plan to reconstruct the village.
 - To also include health care, education, and livelihood recovery aspects in the master plan.
 - To use local products in the reconstruction as much as possible.

The Committee studied the situations of the 4 destroyed villages and came to a decision to reconstruct Auk Pyun Wa for 3 main reasons.

- The proximity of the location of the village to CNC Relief and Medical Base Camps at Thin

Gan Gone.

- The villagers themselves were keen to go back to Auk Pyun Wa.
 - There was donation of land (former salt lakes) to build a new village.
8. On June 2, 2008, an assessment team led by U Kyaw Thu Tun was sent to Thin Gan Gone and Auk Pyun Wa villages for 3 days to hold discussions with the local authorities, village elders and monks, in order to find out site information, actual needs of the villagers at Auk Pyun Wa, the cost for building single family houses, availability of contractors and workers, availability of basic construction materials, etc.
9. The CNC met on June 18, 2008, and at that meeting CNC was transformed into a new relief and recovery committee, comprising only of the SPA/FMI Group and a few friends from abroad who had been supportive of the CNC efforts from the beginning. The committee was named the Cape Negrais Relief and Recovery Committee (CNRRC). It met for the first time on June 19, 2008, when the members discussed the most appropriate name for the new reconstruction project and it was unanimously agreed to adopt the name "Environmentally Sustainable Pilot Village - ESPV" which was proposed by Ms. Jane Brooks.
10. At that same meeting, the CNRRC Chairman formed the Construction team for Auk Pyun Wa village as follows:
- U Kyaw Thu Tun (PHGE) - Team Leader
 - U Tin Phone Aung (PHGE) - Administrator
 - U Kyaw Naing Oo (Yoma Bank) - Finance Officer

It was decided that the ESPV should include 125 single family homes, water supply, electricity (rice husk generator or solar system), village office, health clinic, village market, jetty, primary school, and a storm shelter cum community centre.

The master plan was prepared and SPA Design took care of the layout of the village and the architectural drawings for the buildings.

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11. The CNRRC contracted United Engineers to set up the solar power systems and MTE construction company to build the storm shelter/community center. A contractor from Pathein was awarded the contract to build the primary school and a local contractor from Thin Gan Gone to build single family homes. All the construction work was to be done under the close supervision of the PHGE construction/supervisory teams on the ground, in accordance with the specifications contained in the Master Plan.
12. U Kyaw Paing represented CNRRC (SPA/FMI Group) at the Coordination Meeting of the National Disaster Preparedness Central Committee (NDPCC) held on June 28, 2008, which was chaired by the Chairman, the Prime Minister of the Union of Myanmar. Auk Pyun Wa village was one of the 50 destroyed villages that NDPCC decided to reconstruct as the first phase of rehabilitation. U Kyaw Paing reported the CNRCC plan to reconstruct Auk Pyun Wa village as an ESPV to the Central Committee.
13. The Government supplied timber, Alu-zinc roofing sheets, and concrete footing blocks free of charge to the private companies entrusted with the tasks of reconstruction of the villages (but with the condition that the cost of timber might have to be paid back later). CNRRC also received these construction materials for the construction of 125 single family homes.

14. The jetty was the first structure to be built by CNRRC at Auk Pyun Wa. The ground-breaking ceremony for the new village was then conducted on July 3, 2008 in accordance with the local customs and traditions at the site where the health clinic would be built.
15. Most of the construction materials were transported to Auk Pyun Wa from Yangon and Pathein, both by riverine as well as land transport. PHGE construction team built the village office and 3 sample single family homes for the contractor. In addition, CNRRC also built 2 guest houses - Sabai and Sagawar, the health clinic, and the village office. Construction of 125 single family houses and the two guest houses was finished on September 12, 2008, just two and a half months after the ground breaking ceremony and was accordingly reported to the Ministry of Mines, which was the focal Ministry for that area. The villagers gradually moved into their assigned houses from their temporary shelters. The primary school, the health clinic, solar power station and water trestle were completed at the end of September. The laying and connection of water pipes, setting up of solar panels and equipping the solar power station with necessary equipments were done during the month of November.
16. The ground breaking ceremony for the storm shelter/community centre was conducted at the site on August 28, 2008. Work started immediately after the arrival of the construction materials shipped from Yangon and Pathein. The building was completed during the second week of December and is now fully operational. The construction of the village market, village name post, repair work of the embankments, internal roadways, and timber bridge to the school across a small creek, was completed in early December.
17. While the various construction works were being carried out, CNRRC took on the livelihood recovery task by buying and distributing different kinds of fishing nets to the fishermen (who make up 90% of the total work force at the village) to enable them to start work at the onset of the fishing season in October, buying buffaloes for 3 farmers, donating timber and roofing sheets to the 4 shrimp paste factory owners, helping to make the fishing boats received from the Government more sea-worthy, and contributing cash to the dry goods and grocery store owner for capital. A village library and a library for the primary school were also set up by CNRRC.
18. All this has been possible because of the support and guidance given by the National Disaster Preparedness Central Committee, the support and clear directions given by CNRRC Chairman and members, generous donations received from the Singapore Red Cross Society (SRCS) amounting to 80% of the cost of the whole project, IsraAID and AJC who undertook the responsibility for the livelihood recovery of the villagers and individual donors from abroad and within Myanmar. Last, but not least, recognition must be given to the Construction Team headed by U Kyaw Thu Tun, PHGE construction/supervisory teams headed by U Ohn Myint, U Maung Maung Yi and U Nyan Soe, who stayed on ground in shifts together with the villagers for months on end, working tirelessly under severe weather and environmental conditions with dedication, perseverance and true professionalism. The cooperation and enthusiasm shown by the cyclone victims themselves are also highly commendable.
19. Auk Pyun Wa ESPV is an important and meaningful summary of CNRRC's relief efforts in the delta area after Cyclone Nargis.