

EU Myan Ku Fund distributes first billion in payments to over 12,900 garment workers

Garment workers who have lost their jobs due to the COVID-19 pandemic are receiving financial assistance through a €5 million [7.9 billion MMK] European Union emergency cash fund, “Myan Ku”. Since 1 May, the “Myan Ku” initiative has distributed payments to a growing number of recipients, today reaching 12,913 individuals and 1,041,000,000 MMK in payments. Recipients include over 11,000 women factory workers from Yangon, Pathein, Mandalay, Bago, Magway Region and elsewhere across the country

“During this period, my factory was closed and I had no income. So, I worked in farming but it does not cover my family needs. Meanwhile, this Myan Ku support can solve my family’s basic needs,” said Ms. Eaindra Htet

The Myan Ku team of phone operators currently handles calls and applications from tens of thousands of workers from across the country every week. Although a majority of workers are resident in Yangon, over three thousand have received support in Pathein and surroundings, and several hundred in the Mandalay and Magway Regions. Workers who have returned to home villages in Rakhine State, Kayin State, Mon State and elsewhere have also received emergency cash support.

“The real strength of a society should be measured by how it treats the most vulnerable. Myan Ku has extended a safety net under those at risk of sliding into extreme poverty, with extra support to pregnant workers and women with young children. This success is also thanks to the strong support to Myan Ku from the social partners, including employer organizations, trade unions and the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population,” said EU Ambassador Kristian Schmidt.

In total, over 20,000 workers from 122 factories in the garment, textile and footwear industries have so far applied. Many applications have been submitted by the factories’ human resources managers who are trying to coordinate support for recently terminated or suspended employees. Trade unions have also gathered applications from their members and hundreds of workers have applied directly to the hotline, which is operated from 8am to 8pm daily, Monday to Friday.

“As I have no other sources of income during this pandemic period, the support from Myan Ku helps me to cover my family’s basic needs, especially to buy basic food,” said Ms. Moe Thandar Win

Background:

Myan Ku has been 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 the predominantly female garment workers from all over Myanmar who lost their jobs due to the crisis.

The initiative is funded by the EU's NEXUS Response for Myanmar and implemented by the United Nations Office of Project Services (UNOPS) and sequa's SMART Textile & Garments project staff.

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.

Cash transfers are remitted to workers digitally using Wave Money. To support garment workers in need, and as part of their corporate social responsibility, Wave is providing services to the Myan Ku project without their regular transaction fees.

The Myan Ku eligibility criteria are published on the SMART website here:
<https://www.smartmyanmar.org/en/employer-application-for-myan-ku-support-for-workers>