ADORE
Mental Wellbeing & Care

ember

the SHM foundation

Case Study

ADORE

A deep dive into the journey, organisational structure, service model, and population supported by ADORE, with reflections on its impact and key lessons learnt

ADORE

City	Mandalay
Country	Myanmar
Region	Asia-Pacific

> **We strive to provide a safe, warm, and respectful environment that ensures comfort and care for all individuals.**

Organisational profile

Team size	Small (11-50 people)
Age of organisation	1-5 years

Key aspects of our work

Primary contextual issue	Intersecting identities
Life stage	All
Gender focus	All
Level of intervention	Assessment & direct care
Annual Reach	6,000+ people

Contextual issue

Myanmar is facing a long political and economic crisis and was recently affected by a devastating earthquake. **Many communities are experiencing displacement, violence, loss of income, and limited access to basic services.** These challenges have increased **emotional distress, stress, anxiety, and feelings of hopelessness among many people.** However, mental health support remains very limited, especially outside major cities.

In Mandalay, where ADORE is based, there are only two other available mental health services for a population of over 1 million people. Many low-income and underserved communities have little or no access to affordable mental health care, emotional support, or mental health education. Stigma and lack of awareness about mental health also prevent people from seeking help.

ADORE works to address these gaps by providing accessible mental health and psychosocial support services, emotional support sessions, workshops, and community-based programs. The organisation mainly supports underserved groups, including young people and vulnerable communities, who often do not have access to safe spaces for emotional expression, support, and well-being.

Objectives

ADORE aims to improve access to mental health and emotional wellbeing support for underserved communities in Myanmar, especially in Mandalay where mental health services are limited. **The organisation provides accessible and low-cost mental health support through workshops, counselling, and community-based activities.**

ADORE runs three main types of workshops: mental health knowledge-sharing sessions and webinars, safe spaces for emotional expression and release, and child-centered play workshops. The organisation also provides individual counselling and emotional support services for people of different ages and backgrounds, including children, young people, adults, students, LGBTQ+ individuals, volunteers, and people affected by natural disasters and crisis situations.

Through both online and offline activities, **ADORE creates safe and supportive spaces where people can learn about mental health, express emotions, build coping skills, and receive emotional support.** ADORE's approach combines **art-based activities, peer support, and community connection** to help people improve their emotional wellbeing and reduce stigma around mental health.

Journey

WHEN?

When was the organisation established?

ADORE was established on March 1, 2024 in Mandalay, Myanmar,

WHERE?

Where did the organisation start implementing its activities?

ADORE first started its activities at the Royal Hospital in Mandalay and later expanded through online services, office-based support, and outreach programs at schools, monastic communities, and partner organisations.

WHY?

Why did the organisation start its activities?

United by their counselling backgrounds and a shared commitment to addressing the lack of accessible community mental health services, they founded ADORE to improve access to mental health and emotional wellbeing support.

WHAT?

What did the organisation do in its initial stages?

ADORE began delivering counselling and art-based workshops for hospital patients and staff only, then broadened their reach to support children, young people, adults, and older people from different age groups.

WHO?

Who started the organisation?

In Mandalay, Myanmar, three volunteers who met while volunteering at another mental health organisation in December, 2023.

HOW?

How was the organisation's work started?

ADORE began through the shared vision of its three founders, who invested their own money, time, energy, and skills to establish the organisation and support its early growth.

Governance & finance

Organisational structure

ADORE is led by a founding team of three counsellors. Its work is divided in the following areas:

- Clinical/Counselling & Programs Lead, led by Tweety
- Administration Lead, led by Bhone Tint
- Finance Lead, led by May Phone
- Sales & Marketing Lead, led by Kyi Phyo Lwin

The organisation is also supported by **Mental Health Care Volunteers** who help as co-facilitators in workshops, and a Social Media Team that manages online content, design, and video.

Decision-making on the strategic direction of the organisation is made by the founding team. Each department lead is responsible for operational decisions in their own area.

Financial management

ADORE manages its finances carefully to ensure resources are used responsibly and support its mental health services. Financial management is led by May Phone, who oversees budgeting, expense tracking, and financial reporting.

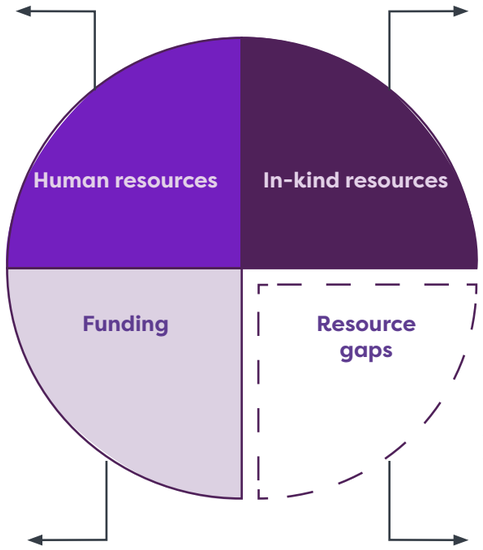
They record all income and expenses and keep clear financial documents to ensure transparency and accountability. Small and daily expenses are managed by the finance lead, while larger budget decisions are discussed and approved by the founding team.

Financial planning is done through simple budgeting for each program based on expected activities, workshop needs, and service demand. Regular reviews are conducted to monitor spending and adjust plans when needed. ADORE follows consistent financial practices to ensure proper documentation and responsible use of funds, supporting efficiency and the long-term sustainability of our services.

Resources

ADORE's team is composed of 6 members of staff, 16 Mental Health Care volunteers, and 6 social media team volunteers. Staff includes 4 team leaders, 1 counsellor, and 1 admin staff member. They are also recruiting an outreach staff member.

ADORE receives in-kind support through Counselling Corner. Weekly debrief and supervision sessions help counsellors reflect on their work, access training and emotional support, and improve practice. Volunteers provide unpaid support in workshops and social media. Foundation leaders also work at 30% of their full salary, contributing time, skills, and expertise.



ADORE has funding from Ember and the Seit Mate Swe (Counselling Corner) programme. They receive USD 1 per workshop participant and USD 5 per counselling session for clients who cannot afford services.

Key resource gaps include insufficient short-term funding to sustain staff, counsellors, and service growth. Additional paid staff, including an outreach worker, are needed to reduce workload. Counsellors and volunteers require further training and professional development. Improved technical systems are needed for monitoring, coordination, and evaluation, alongside stronger support for volunteer training, coordination, and retention.

Model & activities

Target population

ADORE supports people of all ages, including **children from monastic schools, young people, adults, students, and community members experiencing stress, anxiety, emotional distress, and other mental health challenges.**

Their clients also include **people affected by natural disasters, people facing difficult life circumstances, and LGBTQ+ individuals**. They work with people from different backgrounds and do not limit support based on gender, ethnicity, religion, or social status.

Services or interventions

ADORE offers a range of services to support mental health and emotional wellbeing. Their approach combines person-centered therapy, professional counselling, trauma-informed care, and community engagement. They provide a safe space where people can express themselves, understand their emotions, and learn healthy coping skills.

Individual interventions
Clients can access services through community referrals, social media, or through direct contact with ADORE. Individual counselling sessions are provided for people seeking emotional support or guidance, available both in-person and online. When appropriate, they offer 30-minute professional consultations that provide basic mental health guidance and help decide if further counselling or referral is needed. If needed, clients are referred to appropriate mental health professionals or organisations for specialised support.

Awareness raising activities
In addition, they conduct online awareness activities through social media and digital platforms to share information about mental health, wellbeing, and self-care with the general public.

Group interventions
ADORE also delivers a variety of workshops, including expressive art and clay activities, journaling, value exploration, child-centered play sessions, mindfulness activities, and mental health knowledge-sharing seminars and webinars. To maintain service quality and support professional development, counsellors receive regular supervision, and debrief sessions are conducted following workshops.

Impact

Key desired outcomes

Improved emotional wellbeing and reduced psychological distress among individuals accessing ADORE's mental health services in underserved communities.

Increased awareness and understanding of mental health through workshops, counselling, and online psychoeducation activities.

Stronger access to safe and inclusive mental health support through expanded counselling, workshops, and community-based outreach services.

Methods

ADORE uses a **mixed-methods approach combining quantitative and qualitative data**. Data is collected by the admin team through **intake forms, counselling records, workshop attendance lists, post-intervention evaluations, and feedback forms** from online and in-person activities.

Monthly reports are prepared based on indicators such as number of clients, participants, workshop attendance, and social media engagement. Qualitative feedback from clients and participants is also collected to understand experiences and needs.

Basic analysis is done internally due to limited capacity. **Findings are regularly reviewed** in team discussions to improve services and guide decisions.

Information systems

ADORE uses both paper-based and digital systems for data collection. Intake forms and counselling records are stored digitally, while workshop feedback and attendance are first collected on paper and later digitised by the team.

Digital tools such as spreadsheets and Google Forms are used to compile monthly data, including participant numbers, counselling clients, and social media engagement. These systems are low-cost and easy to use, but rely on manual data entry, which can be time-consuming and may cause occasional errors. **Limited digital infrastructure also affects real-time data management and analysis.**

Reflections on impact so far

Since its establishment on March 1, 2024, **ADORE has reached over 6,000 participants** through its mental health services and **delivered more than 350 workshops in partnership with over 40 organisations.** ADORE has helped increase awareness and reduce stigma around mental health in underserved communities in Mandalay and beyond. People in Mandalay now have greater understanding of mental health and are more willing to seek professional help when needed.

P**articipants report improved emotional expression, increased willingness to seek support, and a stronger sense of connection through safe, community-based spaces.** Online outreach has also expanded access to mental health information and self-care knowledge, especially for young people and other vulnerable groups.

Learnings

Strengths or drivers

ADORE's main strengths lie in its youth-led, community-based approach and strong understanding of local needs. The organisation combines counselling, creative therapies, and awareness activities in accessible online and offline formats.

Strong volunteer engagement, partnerships with over 40 organisations, and a flexible low-cost model support wide outreach. Social media use also helps reduce stigma and increase mental health awareness among young people and underserved communities.

Challenges

A key challenge is the increasing demand for mental health support following the earthquake and ongoing crisis, which exceeds current service capacity. Many people also face financial difficulties, making it hard to access services regularly. Mental health stigma can reduce willingness to seek help. In addition, internet instability affects online service delivery and communication with clients and partners.

Limitations

Limited and unstable funding remains ADORE's main constraint, which affects long-term planning and limits the ability to scale and sustain services. The organisation has a small team, creating high workload pressure and slowing expansion of activities. There is also limited capacity for formal monitoring, evaluation, and data analysis, which makes it difficult to systematically measure outcomes and fully assess long-term impact.

Opportunities

There is growing awareness and reduced stigma around mental health in Myanmar, creating opportunities to expand services and reach more communities. Strong youth engagement and social media presence support wider outreach. Partnerships with over 40 organisations provide opportunities for collaboration and scaling services. Investment in staff, outreach, digital systems, and training could further strengthen service delivery, monitoring, and long-term sustainability.

Partnership Journey with Ember

Initial assessment

ADORE stands out as a youth-led initiative offering accessible mental health support in a highly stigmatised and politically unstable context. Their model combined workshops, counselling, and creative expression, delivered both online and offline. Their agility, responsiveness, and problem-solving approach—as young leaders navigating complex challenges—is particularly commendable.

They aimed to expand their reach to 1,000 people through workshops and counselling sessions, with a target of 20 workshops for 2025. They also planned to build a sustainable model where low-cost services finance free offerings. They're exploring on-ground volunteer involvement, adapting to the country's instability while growing community access.

In response to the earthquake that hit Myanmar in March 2025, ADORE expanded its reach and activities. They started workshops for survivors in camps, shelters, orphanages and community centres. By mid-2025, they had already supported 900 people. ADORE's model includes mental health education, individual counselling, knowledge-sharing sessions, arts-based workshops, safe spaces for emotional expression and release, and child-centred play workshops, psychological first-aid training and volunteer programmes.

Key achievements

Ember's support has helped ADORE sharpen its programme model, clarify its strategic direction, and strengthen how it communicates its work. This has included support with storytelling, wellbeing, visibility, team skills, and organisational planning, alongside dedicated leadership sessions. The partnership has also supported ADORE to build its impact and sustainability, including through monitoring and evaluation support and early thinking around income generation.

- Through the partnership with Ember Mental Health, ADORE achieved important progress in organisational development, service delivery, and team capacity. They strengthened their internal systems through model mapping, vision-setting sessions, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework development, and case study workshops. These activities helped them better understand their structure, clarify their goals, and improve how they design and deliver mental health services.
- The partnership also supported team wellbeing and cohesion through a staff retreat, where members had space to rest, reflect, and reconnect. This helped strengthen cohesion, communication and resilience within the team.
- In addition, participation in the GMHAN Conference in the Philippines allowed them to connect with international mental health organisations, learn global practices, and gain new ideas for improving their work. Ember also supported ADORE with a photography project to create visual assets, and connected them with opportunities to share their work with platforms such as MHIN.
- Key strengths identified include ADORE's strong youth-led, community-based approach, committed team, and effective use of creative and accessible mental health methods. The organisation also shows strong adaptability and engagement with underserved communities. Key areas of opportunity include strengthening long-term funding strategies, improving monitoring and evaluation systems, and structure of organisation.
- Overall, Ember's support has helped ADORE strengthen its organisational foundations, improve programme planning and quality, and build the skills and confidence needed to sustainably expand mental health services to more communities across Myanmar.