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# **LIFT Mid-Term Review** of the Delta II and Countrywide Programmes





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of the Delta II and Countrywide Programmes

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## List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

\$1US	1 US dollar is equivalent to approx. 860 kyat (mid-April, 2013)
AHWs	Agricultural Health Workers
BATWG	Bogale Agriculture Technical Working Group
CAEDP	Community Agro-Economic Development Platform
CBA	Cost-Benefit Analysis
CBO	Community-Based Organisations
CfW	Cash-for-Work
CS	Case Studies
CWP	LIFT Countrywide Programme
DAR	Department of Agricultural Research
DoA	Department of Agriculture
FB	Fund Board members
FBO	Faith-Based Organisations
FFS	Farmer Field Schools
FG	Farmers' Group
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FMO	Fund Manager Office
GAP	Good Agricultural Practices
HH	Households
HT	Hand Transplanting
IP	Implementing Partner
IRRI	International Rice Research Institute
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MKEM	Mekong Economics Ltd. (Myanmar)
MSN	Mangrove Service Network
LIFT	Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund
MTR	LIFT 2013 Mid-Term Review
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
SHG	Self-Help Groups
SMS	Short Message Service
SPT	Single-Plant Transplant
SRG	Self-Reliance Group
SRI	System of Rice Intensification
SSLDO	Shan State Local Development Organisation
Sub-IP	Supported National Implementing Partner
SWAT	Soil and Water Assessment Tools
TOR	Terms of Reference
TOT	Training of Trainers
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UoA	University of Agriculture
VDC	Village Development Committee
WHH	Welthungerhilfe
YAU	Yezin Agricultural University

## **IMPLEMENTING PARTNER (IP) REPORT REFERENCES**

Note: The most recent six-month IP reports referenced in the main report text are:

### **Delta II Programme**

[ActionAid 2/2012], *Building Local Capacities for a Livelihood Systems Approach in the Ayeyarwady Delta: Annual Report 2012*, Thadar Consortium Project, ActionAid Myanmar.

[AVSI 2/2012], *Promoting an Experience of Small-Scale Farmers' Cooperative in Labutta Township in Delta Region of Myanmar: Final Narrative Report 2012*, AVSI Foundation – Myanmar.

[IRRI 2/2012], *Improving Livelihoods of Rice-Based Rural Households in the Lower Region of the Ayeyarwady Delta: Annual Report 2012*, International Rice Research Institute (IRRI).

[WHH 2/2012], *Value Chain Development for Inclusive Economic Growth in Central Bogale/Mawlamyinegyuan Townships: Annual Narrative Report*, Welthungerhilfe (WHH).

### **Countrywide Programme**

[ActionAid 2/2012], *Civil Society Led Community Based Livelihood Resources Development in the Dry Zone: Annual Report 2012*, Thadar Consortium Project, ActionAid Myanmar.

[ADRA/ActionAid 2/2012], *Community Initiated Livelihoods and Poverty Reduction Project (CILPRP): Final Narrative Report: Annual Project Report 2012*, ADRA Myanmar and ActionAid Myanmar.

[CESVI 2/2012], *Livelihoods Security in Kyauk Mae and Naung Cho Townships in Northern Shan State: Narrative Report 2012*, CESVI.

[Mercy Corps 2/2012], *Building Community Resilience for Food Security (LIFT Non-Delta): 2012 Annual Narrative Report*, Mercy Corps.

[Oxfam 2/2012], *Building Resilient Livelihoods in Dry Zone: Annual Narrative Report 2012*, Oxfam GB.

[SWA 2/2012], *Improved Livelihoods through Civil Society Strengthening Project: Annual Narrative Report 2012*, SWISSAID Myanmar.

## LIST OF FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS (FGDs) AND CASE STUDIES

FGD 1	Agriculture and Livestock – Delta Region
FGD 2	Agriculture and Livestock – Delta Region
FGD 3	Fishery and Aquaculture
FGD 4	Fishery and Aquaculture
FGD 5	Non-Agricultural Activities – Delta Region
FGD 6	Non-Agricultural Activities – Delta Region
FGD 7	Lowest Strata – Delta Region
FGD 8	Lowest Strata – Delta Region
FGD 9	IP Staff – Delta Region
FGD 10	Agriculture and Livestock – Dry Zone
FGD 11	Agriculture and Livestock – Northern Shan State
FGD 12	Non-Agricultural Activities – Dry Zone (all female)
FGD 13	Non-Agricultural Activities – Dry Zone
FGD 14	Lowest Strata – Dry Region
FGD 15	Lowest Strata – Dry Zone
FGD 16	Lowest Strata – Dry Region
FGD 17	Lowest Strata – Shan State
FGD 18	IP Staff – Dry Zone
FGD 19	IP Staff – Hilly Zone (Shan State)
Case Study 1	Water-pond construction in Taung Thar, Mandalay (Dry Region)
Case Study 2	Pig-breeding activities in Shan State (Hilly Region)
Case Study 3	IP formation of CBOs in Labutta Township (Delta Region)
Case Study 4	Farmer Field Schools in the Ayeyarwady (Delta Region)
Case Study 5	Community efforts to rehabilitate mangroves (Delta Region)
Case Study 6	Water-pond renovation





## 1. Executive Summary

This report provides the findings and recommendations of the Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the Livelihood and Food Security Trust Fund's (LIFT) Delta II Programme and Countrywide Programme (CWP). The MTR was guided by 37 research questions specified in the MTR Terms of Reference, with a specific focus on determining whether LIFT's implementing partners (IPs) are on track to achieve the expected results and impacts.

The MTR took place over a four-month period, from mid-January to May 2013, and was carried out in two stages. Stage 1 consisted of a desk review of the relevant LIFT documents, and field research in the form of 19 focus group discussions (FGDs) and six case studies conducted by a local research firm, Golden Plains. Stage 2 similarly began with a literature review, before moving on to a series of consultations and interviews with LIFT IPs at their head offices in Yangon, as well as interviews with other key persons and institutions, including LIFT staff from the Fund Management Office (FMO), the LIFT Fund Manager, and representatives of the Donor Consortium and Fund Board (FB).

The Mekong Economics MTR team then undertook 23 days of fieldwork. One team covered the Delta II programme and one visited those working on the CWP, meeting with the field staff and project beneficiaries. The team conducted site visits to review project activities in over 40 villages. Upon completion of the fieldwork, three workshops were held (in Nyaung-U, Bogale, and Yangon) to share the information gathered with the IPs, as well as to validate or revise findings as needed. The final workshop was followed by a presentation of the initial findings and recommendations to the LIFT FMO and FB.

Most IPs were on schedule for delivering their inputs, and were on track to have their desired impact by the end of the project period, although more so in the Delta II programme than in the CWP. However, the MTR team determined that about 30% of activities observed during the MTR research period were expected to have "zero or unclear" impact by the end of the project.

Types of interventions that generally worked well included: cash-for-work (CfW) public infrastructure building; dialogue and information exchanges with government; well-designed and technically supported village development committees/community-based organisations/self-help groups; and ActionAid's village social protection fund. IPs that shone above the others included: AVSI, Metta, and Radanar Ayar in providing support to rice farmers; Pact microfinance; ActionAid's fellows' programme; and HelpAge/YMCA and SWISSAID/SSLDO in income-generating activities. The less impressive interventions were typically those that introduced new technologies to village households, such as new rice planting methods, the use of organic fertilisers, employing income-generating activities, working in cooperative business groups, and starting livestock "banks".

Poor project designs were the main reason that interventions failed. Few project designs were "results-focused" and so minimal analysis or data collection was evident.

Most Delta II IPs readily admitted that the shift to a development approach was not easy for them. They were trying new development experiments and working with market activities, but they had weak designs and work plans. Less complex and more familiar interventions, such as CfW or free assistance to farmer groups, worked better. IPs need help (learn-by-doing training) choosing and designing complex market-related projects.

LIFT and their IPs need to think more analytically about the net impact of projects during the design phase. Consideration of “displacement effects” (the substitutionary impact that one intervention can have on another activity) and limited local aggregate demand levels (insufficient local demand in comparison to local supply) is necessary. Part of the problem is that the IPs are focused on their target villages and they often fail to evaluate the wider impact of their work. LIFT should ensure that the full impact story is part of future project designs and evaluations.

Targeting (of poor households) throughout both LIFT programmes was predominately conducted through a conventional but not standardised wealth-ranking exercise. The subjective biases of wealth ranking, and the inability to compare absolute poverty levels between villages, leads us to recommend that they be replaced by a standardised poverty scorecards approach. This approach allows for a more dynamic analysis of the socioeconomic status of a household, which can be compared to a pre-determined poverty line benchmark for accurate targeting (detailed below). Generally speaking, targeting poor households was found to be relevant only for a sub-set of small-scale interventions, and should not be considered an urgent priority given the limited evidence that aid went to relatively well-off individuals, i.e., elite capture.

LIFT did not have a specific plan for an integrated approach for Delta II, or to impose IP cooperation. Consequently, the degree of collaboration between IPs depended primarily on the professional relationships that developed between IP field staff and the LIFT Coordinator. Operational coordination seems to have been satisfactorily achieved through monthly meetings.

A systematic, integrated, and cooperative approach must be imposed from above. Perhaps LIFT might lead a township profiling exercise and identify target villages according to a set of commonly agreed criteria, before identifying focus areas and then dividing these amongst the area-based IPs. Afterwards, ask IPs delivering complimentary specialised services to submit proposals to cover all of the focus areas, and ideally many more villages.

Since Cyclone Nargis devastated large parts of the Ayeyarwady Delta in May 2008, total rice production and productivity (yield per acre) has gradually recovered. We observed many IPs in the Delta providing extension education to farmers about good agricultural practices (GAP), delivered primarily through the Farmer Field Schools (FFS) approach. Extension education topics typically focused on crop production technologies and high yielding seed varieties. However, to help improve the food security and livelihoods of the rural poor, extension and rural advisory services should also consider offering trainings on value addition, market information, market integration, nutrition education, and youth development.

Given the apparent potential to facilitate a large-scale increase in the production of

rice, the adoption of systems of rice intensification (SRI) has remained surprisingly slow. Farmers are moving cautiously towards adopting hand transplanting (HT) and single-plant transplanting (SPT). However, it will take several more years for these techniques to be widely adopted (as they require supporting water-control infrastructure). Most farmers prefer to watch others experiment before attempting new planting methods, and even then, they will only try them out in limited areas. In addition, the majority of farmers still lack access to good quality seed suitable for their land, while the shortage of skilled labour needed for the hand transplanting method was another commonly cited problem.

Farmer access to savings and credit services has improved, but it remains difficult for poor households to manage their seasonal cash flow and expenditures, with some smallholders even having to sell their paddy before harvest at well below the market price to buy inputs. The participation and collaboration of many IPs with the private sector—e.g., rice millers, rice traders/merchants, the agro industry, and other food industry businesses—also remains rather weak.

A results-focused LIFT monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system should include a rolling research programme with universities and other relevant state organisations as and how allowed under evolving national laws. Yet the MTR required extensive field visits because basic output data was not being collected by IPs. For example, it is very important to know the percentage increase in rice yields from using improved seed, and how FFS graduates change their behaviour in relation to cropping systems learned from their FFS experiences. LIFT should support a research team, in collaboration with the Department of Agricultural Research (DAR) and Yezin Agricultural University (YAU), to conduct research into rice production in both the Delta II and CWP.

LIFT and the LIFT Fund Board should make strategic decisions regarding any Delta III programme this year. The first decision is whether it is time to move on from the villages where programmes currently operate. What we suggest is that the LIFT FMO work with regional governments and townships to develop “township profiles”. This would help establish which villages are the poorest, and which ones might make the most effective use of additional development assistance. One approach could be that LIFT defines the target area and works with area IPs to allocate villages. The IPs that offer specialised services can then prepare proposals to cover most or all villages in the Delta, which allow for economies of scale to be realised. For example, larger orders of raw materials and inputs for pathways and embankments could be procured by the IPs at more favourable rates.

The Countrywide Programme is beset with a number of challenges, with programme recipients suffering from the fallout from the 2012 drought, insufficient access to farm credit, and, in some areas, labour shortages and subsequent increases in labour costs. Many of the heads of households we spoke with said that the increased wage rate was too costly, and, as a result, they would not be able to clear, prepare, and plant fields as in the past. One of the prime drivers behind the higher labour costs is the recent government investment in road construction and repair. Projects hire local unskilled labourers at a rate at which farmers cannot compete. There may also be more sustained causes, such as the rising demand for construction workers in Yangon. While increasing wages brings problems for landowners, there are clear benefits for the

poorer landless households.

Within the CWP, at least half of the IPs faced significant delays in their project implementation due to numerous factors including: IPs needing more time than was originally planned for the start-up phase; slowdowns associated with working in partnerships or small consortiums; a general tendency to fall behind on the scheduled work plans; management or staffing issues; and, most importantly, initial project start-up schedules out of sync with the local community's agricultural cycles. In respect to these delays, it may be worthwhile for LIFT to consider cutting their losses on targets that cannot be adequately met, and consolidating gains made in other project areas.

Overall, Farmer Field Schools in the CWP were found to effectively disseminate new rice production techniques and be teaching good practices for growing other crops, which they shared through their personal networks. There were, however, numerous failed study plots, which increased farmers' perceptions of risks. Other activities promoted by the schools were not cost-effective, such as compost making, with farmers lamenting their lack of access to the necessary inputs, while explaining that they already had their own more cost-effective traditional way of compost making.

Some implementing partners paired FFSs with the provision of mechanised equipment in order to improve upland rice cultivation in their project villages. Introducing new technologies such as these, however, reduces workdays for landless and casual labourers who are dependent upon seasonal employment. The maintenance and replacement of these machines is also questionable, with the possibility that farmers may simply revert back to old "appropriate technology" farming methods when the machines require replacement.

As is the case in the Delta, the production and distribution of quality paddy seed in the Dry Zone is a major stumbling block that would benefit from the focused attention of one IP. The local provision of quality seed is typically done through seed banks, with mixed results. Addressing this concern on a larger scale is warranted.

Access to water remains a pressing agricultural issue across the Dry Zone, with some IPs designing programmes to provide farmers with irrigation to maximise yields and decrease risk. Drip irrigation, however, is only an effective tool to boost crop yields for relatively wealthy farmers who don't need assistance to do well. Increasing the quantity and quality of crop yields through modernising agriculture is a worthwhile objective, and a generally effective development intervention, but its limited effect on direct poverty reduction should also be recognised.

Terraces were developed and promoted by IPs to benefit both small-scale farmers and landless people in many villages. However, only a small percentage of households received support for terrace construction, due to the high cost of labour. Farmers also expressed doubt that the investment in terracing would pay off, due to the poor infrastructure in the area and low market demand for cash crops. In addition, sub-implementing partners (usually NGOs) that were contracted by IPs were weak in monitoring construction and maintenance, resulting in some shoddily built terraces that quickly fell into disrepair.

IPs used different models for promoting livestock breeding throughout the CWP, and the variations in returns were dramatic. Providing livestock was sometimes seen as

an easy way to aid landless households, yet often these interventions failed. The best approaches used a self-selecting mechanism to determine beneficiary households (such as attending compulsory training), combined with sustained technical support, including veterinary services.

Current efforts to strengthen linkages to markets are limited, with the majority of IPs failing to define how they can best work with markets, or indeed how their interventions impact existing markets. Efforts to promote appropriate income-generating activities require a thorough understanding or analysis of local markets, and full consideration of value chains.

This MTR addressed the issue of protecting the most vulnerable. It supports the 2012 LIFT Fund Interim Review recommendation that LIFT review its approach to social protection. The review found that conceptualising CfW as a social protection mechanism distracts from the problem of how to sustainably help the most vulnerable. Other types of community-based social protection measures promoted by IPs, such as asset transfers, unconditional cash transfers, village social funds, and community-based care, while potentially valuable as short-term measures to help the most vulnerable, do not constitute a social protection strategy within the overall LIFT programme.

The working relationship between IPs and LIFT relies on largely qualitative reporting mechanisms. This allows IPs and LIFT to identify and resolve implementation issues and adjust project activities. In addition, LIFT FMO also provides capacity support through written instructions, field visits from the FMO office, and workshops. Yet given the diverse needs of the IPs, from project designs to results-based management, LIFT FMO should issue a competitive tender for capacity building (practical training) in these areas.

In the Delta II programme, LIFT supported greater cooperation between IPs by recruiting a regional coordinator. In the CWP, where programmes are located across the country, LIFT appreciates that coordination is much weaker, resulting in fewer opportunities for IPs to come together to exchange experiences and mutual support.

The primary methods employed by LIFT M&E team to produce a set of lessons learned are through field visits and quarterly meetings with IPs. These visits and the lessons learned are documented by LIFT in two databases that hold IP performance information. However, no formal mechanism exists for discussing and sharing information amongst IPs. According to LIFT, part of the difficulty in sharing lessons is that many of the IPs don't work on the same projects or have the same end goals.

LIFT is considered to be an agency where donors work together and share information, thereby avoiding duplication. However, LIFT can be so much more than that. It is in a unique position because it can inform those who follow, which includes government departments. As budgets increase and they take on a greater role in rural development, the government of Myanmar can benefit from what works and what does not. LIFT has the capacity to become an information hub that supports high-quality research, pilots test ideas, and synthesises and shares information and lessons learned across IPs, which can contribute to policy debates.

Results-oriented M&E becomes more important when development, as an extension

to humanitarian assistance, becomes the stronger objective. But M&E also gets much more complicated when there are experiments to scale up, or where projects are working with markets. Aside from the International Rice Research Institute's (IRRI) testing, no Delta II activities had high-quality impact evaluation designs. (These require detailed baseline data, and carefully monitored results both of the treatment group and the selected control group). LIFT must identify proposed IP activities with the potential for scaling up, and make sure that they get the M&E support they need, thereby ensuring that small mistakes don't become huge ones when applied to thousands of villages.

By "results" we mean the outcomes of particular IP interventions, ideally some time after the projects have been completed, in order to show sustained impact. Future contracts could be structured differently. IPs could be paid in full for delivering what they promised (inputs), but with an end-of-project bonus based on measured result indicators, and possibly even an additional bonus based on a post-evaluation survey two years later. For IPs to become results-focused, we must first change their contracts and give them financial incentives to achieve such results.

The household baseline and impact surveys should suffice for reporting on IPs' higher-level outcome indicators, such as poverty reduction, livelihood improvements, targeting the poorest of the poor, and food security. The current subjective self-evaluations that IPs write up about beneficiaries, and the poor-quality IP impact surveys, are of no value. LIFT should entirely remove the task of higher-level outcome reporting from the IPs, and instead use the impact evaluation database to reach conclusions about the impact story of individual IPs.

LIFT could be of great service by sponsoring high-quality value-chain studies, starting with rice, and later shrimp, catfish, and fruit production. These are expensive but they would be national, with regional focus studies, and benefit the wider public good (i.e., not only LIFT IPs). Detailed studies would inform project choices, intervention designs, as well as policy dialogue and trade liberalisation.

The LIFT FB and FMO should decide LIFT's strategic direction during 2013. This requires answers to two key questions:

1. What should be the structure and geographic focus of a Delta III programme and a future CWP? For example, should they be state/region-specific? Will they support some or none of the current LIFT villages?
2. Will LIFT M&E stay focused on LIFT IP reporting to donors or expand into some form of rural development information hub (with a research programme)?

With a prioritised vision about the purpose of LIFT M&E, consideration can be given as to which LIFT M&E tasks should be centralised and which decentralised, and what capacity building and technical assistance should LIFT offer to the IPs. The obligation of having to report on higher-level indicators (e.g., measuring changing livelihoods) associated with a set of interventions should be removed from the IPs. Instead, IPs should rigorously measure and provide data on outputs and outcomes for specific interventions. One example of this would be a project that seeks to improve knowledge about prices. Researchers would assess what farmers know about farm-gate prices and sales volumes before, during, and after the intervention. Present IP

M&E frameworks, despite LIFT FMO assistance, lack basic outcome data, e.g., increased paddy yields and profits [FGD 7]. They also lack ways to measure the impact of a single intervention in a large project with multiple interventions. LIFT should support in-depth training for IPs preparing proposals in subjects such as participatory M&E, cost-benefit analysis, and results-based management, with some of the training sub-contracted and delivered in-country, and some offered through the internet.

## 2. Introduction

This report provides the findings of the Mid-Term Review of the LIFT Delta II Programme<sup>1</sup> and Countrywide Programme (CWP),<sup>2</sup> for the United Nations Office for Project Services' (UNOPS) Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund (LIFT) in Myanmar.

In accordance with the Terms of Reference, the purpose of this review is as follows:

- To assess mid-way the progress made (by the LIFT programme), to document and review the approaches used by the different implementing partners (IPs) in each of the two sub-programmes, and determine whether the IPs are on track to achieve the expected results and impact.

This report also provides:

- A series of actionable recommendations, based on the identification of best practices and lessons learned on design and implementation, and recommends how to best integrate those.<sup>3</sup>

The Terms of Reference for this research assignment specified 16 research questions that are addressed in this report. In fact, most of these “questions” are sets of questions, so there are actually a total of 36. Some apply to both the Delta II programme and CWP, and some just to the Delta II programme. After discussion with the LIFT FMO, the MTR team proposed to apply the Delta II market linkages question to the CWP, and to add the following question asking about how IPs worked with the private sector:

*Have market linkages been improved? Have IPs worked effectively with the private sector?*

Essential to all 36 questions is that they extract answers that explain sub-programme “results”. That is to say, can we understand what has been achieved, and to what degree are the IPs currently on track towards having a meaningful impact on livelihoods by the end of 2014? The LIFT IP reporting system provided little data to answer this core question, so the MTR also included primary data collecting.

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<sup>1</sup> Delta II builds upon the Delta I initiative that began in 2010 in response to the demand to provide post-Cyclone Nargis assistance to the affected region. At that time, 22 IPs delivered a series of one-year projects addressing rehabilitation and recovery in the Ayeyarwady Delta. Delta I ended in 2011 and was succeeded by Delta II.

<sup>2</sup> To be consistent with the terminology of the TOR, we use the term “programme” in this report to describe the two principal activities of the LIFT Delta II and Countrywide programmes, even though by definition, and as discussed in this report, they are not. Rather, the two have evolved as a series of complementary projects or sub-programs addressing livelihoods and food security across their respective geographic areas.

<sup>3</sup> Request for Proposals (RFP) for Consulting Services: Mid-Term Review of LIFT Delta II and Countrywide Program. 00070927–Livelihood and Food Security Trust Fund (LIFT) in Myanmar MYA/12/MMOC/RFP/0004. p. 12.

Due to the size and scope of LIFT, however, it has been difficult for the MTR team to reach firm quantitative conclusions on many matters. To this end, we caution that this report is based on a series of snapshots, or quick exposure visits, rather than a comprehensive survey of each IP.

The report begins with a summary of findings about all observed IPs and their interventions for the Delta II and then CWP. This leads to conclusions about whether the programmes are generally “on track”, and which IPs and interventions are “working best”. Subsequent chapters then address various sets of TOR research questions, before turning to review the particular findings (and research questions) about Delta II and then the Countrywide Programme. The role of the LIFT FMO is then discussed. The final chapter lists our recommendations.

### 3. Background

LIFT's objective is to promote agricultural production in the most vulnerable regions of Myanmar, and help the country to effectively address the food and livelihood security of the poor and vulnerable. Through this, LIFT contributes towards the country's achievement of Millennium Development Goal 1.<sup>4</sup> LIFT has targeted increasing food availability and incomes to two million target beneficiaries.

Specifically LIFT has set out to achieve a range of programme outputs:<sup>5</sup>

1. Increased agricultural production and incomes supported through improved production and post-harvest technologies, and improved access to inputs and markets.
2. Targeted households supported in non-agricultural livelihood activities and/or trained in livelihood skills for employment.
3. Sustainable natural resource management and environmental rehabilitation supported to protect local livelihoods.
4. Effective social protection measures that increase the incomes, enhance the livelihood opportunities, or protect the livelihoods assets, of chronically poor households.
5. Capacity of civil society strengthened to support and promote food and livelihoods security for the poor.
6. Monitoring and evaluation evidence and commissioned studies used to inform programme and policy development.

Additionally, the following two outputs address management structures:

1. Funds are allocated in line with the FB's policies and are accounted for in a transparent manner.
2. Fund flow and partner performance are monitored and evaluated.

Within the three agro-ecological zones of the: (i) Ayeyarwady Delta; (ii) Dry Zone;<sup>6</sup> and (iii) Hilly Areas,<sup>7</sup> LIFT chooses where to implement its interventions based on the following selection criteria:<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> MDG1 aims to halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day (now \$1.25/day); to achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people; and, reduce by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.lift-fund.net/downloads/LIFT\\_Briefing\\_Note\\_Oct\\_29\\_2012\\_V2.pdf](http://www.lift-fund.net/downloads/LIFT_Briefing_Note_Oct_29_2012_V2.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> This includes the low-lying central regions of the country, including large parts of Mandalay, Magway and southern Sagaing Regions.

<sup>7</sup> The Hilly Areas include the Chin, Kachin, and Shan States.

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.lift-fund.net/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=1](http://www.lift-fund.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1).

- Where food and total poverty and vulnerability are greatest (based on available primary, secondary, and proxy data);
- Where there are international and local partners with experience and the capacity to implement programmes;
- Where there is potential to link up two or more partners, so as to achieve programme coherence, scale, and impact;
- Where there is opportunity to monitor and evaluate project activities and to capture lessons; and
- Where there is a potential for pro-poor rural economic growth.

LIFT programme objectives still remain very much valid and relevant. Programme objectives were specified in relation to the LIFT call for proposal criteria, and were a central part of the evaluation process. They remain relevant to the proposal criteria two years into their implementation.

Following Cyclone Nargis, LIFT joined existing efforts offering humanitarian assistance to the affected areas. In other regions, LIFT has focused specifically on a development agenda of improving livelihoods by increasing agricultural production, targeting vulnerable households, promoting social protection measures, and strengthening civil society to support poor communities. To this end, the development assistance provided by LIFT is well justified, and donors are helping households get on their feet much more quickly than they would have without it.

LIFT's objectives to contribute to supporting livelihood recovery are coherent and consistent with the general developmental needs of the country. In particular, the strategic direction of Delta II was clear and appropriate regarding planning for a follow-up to the initial Delta I recovery projects. However, in the Dry Zone and Hilly Areas, where there have been concerted efforts to address food security and vulnerability, the programme have been generally less successful in developing integrated strategies between IPs.

## 4. MTR Methodology

The Mid-Term Review took place over a four-month period, from mid-January to mid-April 2013, and was carried out in two stages. Stage 1 was conducted by the national consulting partner, Golden Plains, a non-government organisation in Myanmar. It consisted of a desk review of the relevant LIFT documents, and conducting focus group discussions (FGDs) and case studies with project beneficiaries and IP staff. Golden Plains conducted 19 FGDs, covering both the Delta II and Countrywide Programme. Guiding questions for the FGDs were based on the research questions stated in the TOR, and were designed in a collaborative process between the Mekong Economics' team leader and the Golden Plains research team. They drafted 19 FGD summation sheets to document their findings, which are annexed to this report.

The case studies are thematic papers (rather than "case studies" as such). Topics for the case studies were determined jointly between LIFT, the team leader, and Golden Plains. The team leader also worked with Golden Plains to develop a questionnaire framework to assess each topic. Golden Plains then gathered information for these case studies in tandem with their FGD fieldwork. The case studies were given greater depth by including information from many of the IP annual reports and other relevant documents. During the course of Phase One, the team leader and project coordinator provided additional training and support to Golden Plains. They also participated in the drafting and strengthening of the FGDs and case studies. The FGDs and case studies are referred to in this report when they are able to substantiate and provide further depth to the MTR team's findings and recommendations.

Stage 2 began with a desk review of the provided documentation, and other literature about rural development, poverty reduction, food security, and social protection in Myanmar. Stage 2 also included a series of consultations and interviews with LIFT IPs at their head offices in Yangon, as well as interviews with other key persons and institutions, including LIFT staff from the Fund Management Office (FMO), the LIFT Fund Manager, and representatives of the Donor Consortium and Fund Board (FB). IP head offices that were not visited were provided with a questionnaire to fill out.

The TOR specified that the MTR team would spend most of their time in the field visiting villages, with one sub-team covering the Delta II programme and one visiting the Countrywide Programme, meeting with both IPs and project beneficiaries. The MTR team undertook 23 days of field work in the two regions. Guided by the TOR research questions, the two sub-teams undertook thematic interviews, led discussion groups, and conducted site visits to see project activities in over 40 villages. The full fieldwork itinerary is provided in the Annex. This review is, therefore, largely a fieldwork-based report, which synthesises the findings and issues found during visits to IPs and their beneficiaries in townships and villages.

Upon completion of the fieldwork, three workshops were held; two workshops (in Nyaung U and Bogale) covered the three geographical regions, and one was held with IP head office representatives in Yangon. These workshops served both to inform IPs of information gathered, as well as validate or revise findings as needed. Participatory exercises were conducted in the workshops to determine IPs' perceptions on various

operational issues, such as elite capture and beneficiary targeting. This allowed the team to contrast these perceptions with their findings in the field. The final workshop was followed by a debriefing of initial findings and recommendations by the team leader to the FMO and FB.

## 5. Results and impacts

### 5.1 Introduction

A mid-term review is no substitute for a results-based M&E system. Nevertheless, the MTR team has endeavoured to answer all the ambitious questions listed in the TOR, including those asking for judgments across all activities and all IPs. The TOR questions that this sub-chapter addresses are copied in the box below. Before presenting our detailed findings, however, we must make an important qualification: our conclusions about IPs and their activities are based on small non-random samples, typically from visiting one to three relevant villages of an IP operating in more than 100 villages. Consequently, presenting what we have found should be viewed as a foundation for reaching firmer conclusions by adding the experience of LIFT FMO professional staff, and by encouraging IPs to present quantitative data to confirm or dispute our conclusions.

*Have the IP projects been implemented as scheduled and how well? What have been the achievements/results so far? Are IPs on track to demonstrate impact at the end of the project cycle?*

*What interventions are working best to increase crop and livestock production? To improve income-generating activities? To support fisheries and aquaculture? To strengthen local organisations for future livelihoods interventions? To support social protection? To support the sustainable management of natural resources?*

The tables 5.1 and 5.2 below present a summary of our findings about all the key activities observed during the research period. This includes findings from the case studies, FGDs, and fieldwork by the two teams as described in the above methodology. We have scored each key activity on two criteria: The “adoption rate” and “net impact”.

The adoption rate is our conclusion about whether an activity is producing results, and whether these are of greater or lesser number than the total number of direct beneficiaries of inputs. Thus, for example, 50 persons may have been trained in something, but maybe only 23 are actually applying that training (the “result”). In our system, that result would be a “B-” (where “B” stands for “benefit”):

- B-** Means less than 70% who were planned to do something are actually doing the activity.
- B** Means 71-95% of those planned to are doing the activity.
- B+** Means over 96% of those planned doing this activity (Note: it can be over 100% if other non-beneficiary households are replicating/copying the supported households).

Where benefits are in the nature of public goods (e.g., mangrove plantings, Case Study 5), we typically score B+ as the whole community gets some benefit (outcome/result).

We rate only the directly observable outcomes of activities, not counting any multiplier or spill over effects (e.g., that credit may lead to lower prices for goods and services). This rating system is obviously rudimentary, but it nevertheless provides an initial snapshot of whether IPs and their activities are getting meaningful results.

The second summary measure is “net impact”. “Net” is in terms of the whole township area, so it includes consideration of matters, such as displacement effects (discussed below). For example, if an IP supports a village to make and sell 3,000 cooking stoves in the township, but that results in 3,000 fewer sales by existing suppliers across the township, then the net impact in terms of households using stoves is zero [CS 5]. Actually, as it is difficult to measure net impact, we would conclude “unclear” in this case. The categories are not precise: “positive” means just that—more than zero; and “strong” is an indicator of what we would consider as a particularly good developmental investment.

We then make two calls with respect to net impact:

- We mark an “**X**” for where we think net impact will/could be by the end of 2014.
- We mark an “**O**” for where we think net impact will/could be in 2018.

This is because “impact” is typically something that takes time to reach its full effect. Measuring impact at the end of a project implementation period is not the full story. Activities may be having impact because they are still being subsidised, and some months after closing the project those activities may cease to exist. That is why post-evaluations are so important for “learning lessons” and understanding real impact. For example, a water pump might be expected to work well some months after installation, but after two years is it still operational? Were the villagers able to source and buy spares parts? Did they have the technical knowledge to make repairs? Was ownership so vague that no one felt responsible to solve these problems? In this example, if we felt that almost all pumps would be fine and operating end-project we place an “X” in the “strong” column, but if we also felt that the repair and maintenance plans and support were weak we would put the “O” in just the “Positive” column. This is because we are guessing that most pumps will not be operating if we were to come back in a few years to check. (In the Delta, we saw five water pumps in five different villages installed by international NGOs after Cyclone Nargis and none were operational).

## 5.2 The Delta II LIFT Programme

The Table 1 below scores 29 activities under the Delta II programme, across 11 IPs. Actually, these activities are typically sets of interventions under a general output objective (and an IP is often more than just one non-government organisation). Sometimes, however, it is one intervention, such as Proximity Design's CfW infrastructure projects. Others are a complex set of interventions with one overarching objective (e.g., increased livelihoods), such as those implemented by Welthungerhilfe/GRET. Under each "activity", we provide brief notes (in orange cells) that provide a brief explanation of why we reached our conclusions. Many of the issues raised in these notes are treated in more detail later in this report.

Of the 29 activities, most (23) received a rating of "positive" (B) in terms of results flowing from inputs, while three are rated B+, and three are rated B-. Similarly, we feel 22 activities will have a "positive" net impact by the end of the project, but only 18 by 2018. Nine activities will have a "strong" impact either by 2014 or 2018:

- a) ADRA mangrove plantations
- b) AVSI farmer groups
- c) AVSI training and assets
- d) Pact loans
- e) WHH/GRET village committees and their revolving funds)
- f) Radanar Ayar rice seed and support
- g) Radanar Ayar agriculture support services
- h) ActionAid/Thadar fellows and CBOs
- i) ActionAid/Thadar social protection model.

As noted above, these tables and the conclusions reached are based on small samples and short visits to villages. Further, the lack of a centralised M&E system means that our field findings cannot be compared to quantitative data about IPs or the programmes in general. For example, one common intervention was to support the poorer households to start vegetable gardens. After visiting maybe five to eight villages with this intervention we conclude that fewer than 20% of the individuals supported and trained were able to sustainably grow vegetables year-after-year. The LIFT M&E system is not designed to identify such findings, nor is it designed to measure the total number of households that are supported to grow vegetables across all IPs. The lack of aggregate numbers—of databases—made it more difficult for the MTR team to reach firm conclusions based solely on their visits.

Table 1. Rating of Results and Effects in Delta II page 1/4

Delta II Programme							
Summary of Outputs, per Implementing Partner	Key Observed Activities	Replication (use/adopt)*			Net Impact		
		B+	B	B-	Strong	Positive	zero or unclear
Long run = 0; End 2014 = X; Beneficiaries = B							
<b>Mercy Corps/AYO</b>							
Improved agricultural productivity	Formation of Farm Producer Enterprises (FPEs); provision of productive assets and machinery, improved seeds, fertiliser and pesticides (via credit from suppliers); training on improved agricultural techniques for monsoon, summer rice, and winter crops, as well as mechanical maintenance.		X			X	O
	FPEs were provided free machines and inputs, including training, so 'use' was clearly high ('B'), but difficult to replicate as volume of activity is fixed by volume of available subsidies. Positive impact by end-project, but sustainability unclear (depends if 'improved techniques' are adopted and willingness (and capacity) to reinvest in assets and inputs.						
Economic opportunities for poor households	Formation of village vegetable groups (VVGs); training in vegetable farming; provision of inputs, including seeds, tools, fertiliser and pesticides; and distribution of treadle pumps for irrigation.			X		X/O	
	A minority in VVGs were very active, but active ones seemed to be doing well. Sustainability seemed likely as they could use seeds from previous crops. Most, however, were for home consumption so cash for inputs (after free fertiliser and pesticides) is a concern.						
Improved integration of market actors in local value chains	Establishment of relationships between the FPEs and the business community; assisting with contract negotiations for the purchase of inputs on credit.			X			X/O
	Not working. More trusted individual farmers can get such credit, but sellers do not trust donor-gathered groups to not default.						
	Provision of support to downstream value addition enterprises (rice millers) in the form of business training and partial grants for capital investments in their machinery.		X			X/O	
Free equipment upgrades improved mill productivity but that is not sustainable, and the impact on rice farmers is minimal (some time-bound subsidy built-in with the deal). Business planning assistance may have a long-term impact on some mills.							
<b>ADRA/EcoDev</b>							
Improved productivity and employment opportunities	Construction of ponds for aquaculture production; technical training for aquaculture.			X		O	X
	Failure both in technical specification of work, and quality and quantity of training. Possible positive long-run impact if LIFT is able to support rehabilitation project in 2014.						
	Implementation of cash-for-work system for casual labour.		X			X	O
Clearly short-run positive income effect, and end-project positive benefits from having trees. Tree ownership, however, is unclear and long-term benefits from cropping might not be shared.							
Increased profit margins for fisheries products	Exhibitions to link producers to new markets and wider buyers; establishment of storage facilities for storing equipment, raw materials, and value-added products, and processing the raw into finished goods; product testing and market analysis studies.			X			X/O
	Activities undertaken, but benefits modest. Lack of shrimp supply from ponds, but also 'doing business' harder than expected and needs to be led by problem-solving entrepreneurs.						
Improved natural resources and environmental management and protection	Rehabilitation of mangroves; establishment of roadside and riverside plantations	X				X/O	
	Strong positive public good benefits, but hard to measure (better fish stocks, less erosion, storm protection, etc.).						

**Table 1. Rating of Results and Effects in Delta II page 2/4**

AVSI							
Established/strengthened farmer cooperatives	Creation of farmer cooperative groups; implementation of a market information system; training in agricultural machinery maintenance; study tour of Ayeyarwady Homeland.		X			O	X
	Farmer group active and successful, but small group (21) and self-selecting (e.g., willing to commit time needed). Market information data superseded by cell phones. Key farmers very business savvy.						
Improved agricultural productivity and quality	Training in improved farming techniques; provision of agricultural inputs and assets (granary and buffalos); training to the landless in home garden development.		X			O	X
	Significant AVSI inputs well utilised and managed. Home gardens have few successes, however.						
Secured livelihood assets	Implementation of embankment renovation project to protect paddies from salt water intrusion.	X					X/O
	Important for water control and new rice growing methods, as well as salt control. Other farmers, other than cooperative group, also benefit. Positive in long-run if maintained.						
LEAD							
Increased Incomes of rice farmers	Introduction of row plantations and bio-fertiliser application in monsoon-season rice production; provision of training and inputs for seed multiplication; training refresher course for agricultural extension workers (AEW); and technical assistance and inputs for the establishment of demonstration plots for winter crop plantations.		X				X O
	Seemed to be working well, but little evidence of that in the particular village we visited.						
Increased Incomes of the landless	Provision of livestock (pigs and chickens), vaccines, and animal feed; formation of livestock-raising committees; training refresher course for Livelihood Extension Workers. (LEW)		X				X/O
	Considered and participatory approaches, supported by village-resident LEAD staff, have enabled pro-poor (landless) activities to be more successful than generally found. Still small-scale, however, and 'displacement effects' common.						
Pact							
Increased livelihoods security and productivity	Provision of loan products to undertake various income-generation activities.		X			X/O	
	Seems to be wide coverage of most LIFT villages. Successful model, but high administrative costs (and in a protected microfinance market). Helping to fill a service void; strong impact. Despite claim to provide many products, it offers only a basic few in reality. Weak targeting of the poor.						
WHH/GRET							
Strengthened self-help capacities; increased agricultural productivity and incomes	Creation of village and CAEDP management committees promoting technology; coordinating activities and monitoring results; improved farmer access to quality agricultural machinery, agricultural inputs and Management Advice for Family Farms (MAFF); demonstration of new appropriate agricultural technology (crop varieties and/or management).		X			O	X
	A mixed set of activities with mixed results. MAFF seemed unimpressive, and as with all IPs, no treatment/control hard data was being collected to prove if effective or not. Management committees were effective in coordinating the inflow of subsidies for agricultural activities, following clear regulations and practices. Some new technologies/practices likely to be retained post-project for strong impact.						
Improved agro-processing and storage facilities	Creation of 'rice and pulse boards'; upgrading of agro processors; establishment of inventory credit scheme; improved access to new/improved post-harvest/storage facilities and knowledge for 'best practice' post-harvest and storage management; vocational training.		X				O X
	Many delays and mediocre results in this complex area. Generally positive for beneficiaries, given free support. Long-term impact unclear or possibly 'positive' but at considerable cost: many lessons to be learned.						
Enhanced enabling environment for market access	Local forums for farmer networking with private sector stakeholders (rice mill owners, traders, wholesalers, etc.); study tours/exchange visits to model value chain development activities; and improved access to current market processes through a market information system (CAEDPs)			X			X/O
	Market information system redundant. Farmer forums lack purpose; no results. Those servicing farmers trust individuals, not groups; groups also cannot get much discount on input prices. Value-chain studies weak and lack price data.						

**Table 1. Rating of Results and Effects in Delta II page 3/4**

IRRI						
Enhanced local knowledge of new varieties of rice	Rapid rural appraisal of farmers' needs for rice varieties; establishment of demonstration sites for new technologies; participatory varietal selection (PVS) trials; capacity building training in PVS.		X			X/O
	IRRI are very necessary rice growing specialists, but their intervention vision is confused. Participatory trials make little sense. IRRI should be 100% subsidising tests in a few villages with a view to up scaling to thousands.					
<b>Proximity Designs</b>						
Improved village connectivity and non-farm income opportunities	Implementation of cash-for-work infrastructure projects (bridges, footpaths, footpath embankments).		X			X O
	Clear and simple benefits, and end-project had a positive impact. Longer-term unclear unless infrastructure maintained. A good activity given lack of local government funds for such investments.					
Increased food security and bolstered incomes through increased agricultural productivity	Training in seed selection using salt water and green manure techniques, and accessing crop SWAT team help.		X			X/O
	Green manure mostly a failure, yet seed selection trick a clear winner. SWAT team has some impressive success stories, but general cost-benefit unclear. Could be scaled up if cost-effective, but also should start integrating into government extension service systems.					
<b>Radanar Ayar</b>						
Certified rice seed production established	Provision of registered seed, grants, fertiliser, technical support, and farming tools to farmers.		X		O	X
	Seems viable business given dire lack of quality seed supplies (and productivity gains from having them), yet no cost-benefit analysis again. IP support to farmers seems comprehensive and considered, including planning for post-project sustainability.					
Increased productivity and quality of rice production	Provision of certified rice seed, grants, and fertilisers to farmers; mobilisation of farmer pools; capacity building training in seed banking, seed producing and good agricultural practices (GAP); provision of farming inputs (seeder and hand harvester) and services.		X			X O
	Clear benefits to those getting free support. Sustainability depends on reinvesting savings made from higher productivity (and on-going access to quality seed supplies). IP aware of these issues.					
Support mechanisms for GAP established	Creation of Farmers' Advisory and Agri-Testing Unit (FAATU); provision of field supervision and technical assistance; technical support for seed bank mechanism; and land use and land testing services.	X			O	X
	Well-designed interventions that will positively impact many farmers. Basically a substitute for government services in these areas. Need to do more working with government. If post-project financial sustainability issues addressed in 2014, then positive long-term impact.					

**Table 1. Rating of Results and Effects in Delta II page 4/4**

ActionAid/Thadar							
Enhanced organisational capacity of local IPs and CBOs	Capacity building trainings, workshops, and exposure visits for local IPs and CBOs; establishment of fellows/volunteers program		X		X	O	
	IP model 'best practice' in moving carefully and with community participation. Fellows program excellent, with exceptions. Could be seriously scaled up. Long-term impact depends on local area aggregate demand (e.g., 'natural limit' for size of revolving funds at given interest rates) and displacement effects.						
Models of sustainable livelihoods	Implementation of livelihood improvement initiatives (home gardening, pharmacy, group/individual animal bank).		X			X/O	
	Mixed but generally positive results. Animal banks risky and problematic in many ways. Because of careful approach, activities tend to have better chance of success, yet many fail.						
Social protection for livelihood security models	Implementation of social protection initiatives (livelihood protection, accident and emergency health funds, food credit, and free food).	X			X/O		
	Very impressive use of small amounts of funds from loan repayments. Important financial help in emergencies, but can only cope with small numbers and amounts.						
MSN							
Local demand for fuel-saving stoves and tree saplings established	Stove and tree sapling market surveys; community orientation meetings.			X			X/O
	Mediocre research that should have brought the whole proposed model into question.						
Improved production capacity for fuel-saving stoves and tree saplings	Establishment of mass production centres (stoves and tree sapling).			X			X/O
	Many quality and sales problems, but fundamental displacement effect problem (market already saturated at a prevailing price). Project should have focused on marketing issues: raising awareness to encourage new households to buy; letting local suppliers meet the new demand you create. Not clear that stoves are economical where wood supplies are relatively plentiful.						
Enhanced local knowledge of the scarcity/ways to conserve forestry resources	Distribution of IECs; community capacity development trainings; exhibitions/workshops; study/exchange tours; establishment of market points.	X				X/O	

### 5.3 The Countrywide LIFT Programme

The Countrywide Programme tables below list 63 activities—more than the 29 above for the Delta II programme. This is partly because the CWP “activities” are more disaggregated and some IPs have many output areas. For example, SWISSAID/Shan State Local Development Organisation (SSLDO) has 15 output areas with 24 activities.

Fourteen (22%) of the 63 activities are rated B+ in relation to their adoption rate. These include the HelpAge/YMCA Village Development Committee’s approach and community home care; Metta’s Farmer Field Schools (FFS); SWISSAID’s paddy support and construction of bunds; and Proximity Designs’ pond rehabilitation and loans for pumps. Many more activities (27 or 43%), however, are rated B-. For most of these we rate net impact as “zero or unclear”. Thus, there are many CWP activities that must be currently considered “off track” in terms of achieving desired impact.

Similarly, while there are some activities rated as “strong” in terms of net impact by 2014 or 2018, there are many more rated as “zero or unclear”. Indeed, 53% of activities are scored as having “zero or unclear” impact by 2014 or 2018. Some are due to external factors, such as a drought that damaged home gardens, and the disease that killed the chillies crop. Other disappointments, however, were due to internal considerations, such as poor project designs, delays that missed seasonal cycles, and IP capacity weaknesses (including poor technical knowledge). Sometimes, IPs complained about farmers being conservative and reluctant to adopt new techniques, yet often it seemed that techniques being proposed were not really economically viable or sustainable (such as attempts to promote organic fertilisers).

The reasoning behind the delays and intervention scores (B-, B, or B+) are provided in (pink) text boxes under each evaluation, as marked by an “X”, in the following tables. Generally the scores of the Countrywide Programme are lower than for the Delta II, but across certain types of activities there are many parallels. For example, income-generating activities rarely score highly. The reasons, discussed in more detail later in this report, basically relate to a lack of knowledge by IPs about how to work with markets. Other activities, such as promoting organic fertilisers, seem attractive to IPs but much less so to farmers who have better and cheaper alternatives. Group purchasing interventions were more often successful, but this is because capital inputs were given for free, e.g., building a storage facility. Nevertheless, the impact of allowing a smoothing of investment and consumption over the year (due to having storage) seems significant, and much more so than vague ideas that groups of farmers can buy wholesale and get cheaper prices. (Retail margins are already very thin and bulk purchase discounts are small, 5% at best.)

**Table 2. Rating of Results and Effects in Countrywide Programme, 1/5**

Countrywide Programme							
Summary of Outputs, per Implementing Partner	Key Observed Activities	Replication (use/adapt)*			Net Impact		
		B+	B	B-	Strong	Positive	zero or unclear
Long run = 0; End 2014 = X; Beneficiaries = B							
<b>GRET/CORAD</b>							
Improved agricultural tech knowledge	Terracing, water management systems, organic fertilisers, new agricultural practices livestock management.			X			X/O
	Organic fertiliser activities abandoned. Low success rates result in limited sustainability of agriculture demonstration projects. IP field team possesses limited technical knowledge and experience.						
Improved productivity and income diversity	Crop diversification, improved agricultural practices, new seed varieties.			X			X/O
CBO cooperation and networking	Support to, and formulation of, community/farmer groups; training local facilitators.		X			X	O
<b>Mercy Corps/AYO</b>							
Support to select local organisations to address community food security concerns	FFS and new crops supported; seeds and improved planting technical support; and some cattle provided.			X			X/O
	Local plans prepared by community VDC.						
Community resilient plans prepared	Limited development of robust plans. Basic focus on local needs and priorities. Limited evident facilitation.			X			X/O
Select farmers increase agricultural production, IGA and credit/revolving funds established	Agro-loans for seed and livestock managed by VDC. Interest rates/terms set by group. Complements other local systems (banks, past UNDP, money lenders).		X			X	O
	Little benefit from AYO's and FFS's demonstration of agricultural practices as a virus devastated chilli crops. This, in turn, left borrowing beneficiaries with no ability to pay back loans. Ground nut plants generate better results; attractive nominal returns overcome low costs/yield ratio. Corn seed that provides higher yield is not affordable to all farmers. Access to large and more attractive markets constrained by high transport costs.						
<b>Oxfam</b>							
Local representative organisations est., focus on added value to improve food production and increase outputs	Collective purchasing through groups; increased quality and quantity, with storage and selling based on market demand. Groups managing risk and support to vulnerable groups in increase incomes		X			X	
	Two main achievements: 1) improved collaboration between government and communities, and 2) significant improvement in sesame quality.						
Local organisations have capacity to manage risk and support vulnerable groups, thru increased income	Training and formulation of local interest groups.		X		O	X	
	Limited group support and a rise in local prices resulted in limited success to group purchasing. This might be a result of overly ambitious spread across sectors instead of targeted assistance. Community-based healthcare component was not as successful as community-based social protection mechanism.						
Evidence/achievements used to shape local and regional practices	Dialogue and exchange of information and learning with government and local administration.	X			X/O		
	Project delays led to missing first growing season, thus limited start-up and preparation for community mobilisation. Very little time to provide follow up and assess farmers' uptake of technologies and other impacts (productivity, income) by the end of the project.						

**Table 2. Rating of Results and Effects in Countrywide Programme, 2/5**

HelpAge/YMCA							
Community capacity to manage integrated development activities	Training of VDC and community groups on developing action plans.	X			X	O	
	Sophisticated VDC approach. Significant effort and investment has lead to competent and effective VDC broadly engaged. A higher-than-average emphasis on inclusiveness and targeting. NO EXIST STRATEGY FOR VDC SUPPORT.						
Improved agricultural production and HH incomes	Targeting HHs on reducing food expenditure.			X		X	O
	Unlikely that some indicators (adoption of techniques by farmers) will be fully met. IP expects around 80% yet recent estimates show from 40-60% success rate; interviews reveal frustrations with 'farmers who seem reluctant to adopt new techniques'.						
	Soil management through bund construction, and water harvesting and irrigation works constructed.			X			X/O
	Irrigation techniques relevant to wealthier farmers yet cannot be replicated by poorer farmers.						
IGA through livestock management and small business	Training on livestock management and post-harvest activities; food processing; and access to credit.	X				X/O	
Community based support to health, hygiene, and nutrition	Support to VDC to lead on local initiatives to support home care for the vulnerable, elderly, and PwDs.	X				X/O	
	VDC lead on integrated community development activities: systematic and theoretically sound. Some degree of rigid approach.						
	Improved hygiene practices through training and support including food nutrition and food preparation.						
Community natural resource management and disaster risk reduction (DRR)	Energy efficient stoves provided, natural resource management and DRR awareness training and mitigation planning.		X			X/O	
Capacity of local groups to influence policy and practices in Dry Zone (DZ).	Training to VDC leaders on advocacy, lessons learned workshops and est. communication links between local admin authorities.		X			X/O	
	Improved regional impact as a result of evaluation workshops and FGD-based assessments in villages. VDCs M&E sub-committee achieved greater coordination and participation than other IPs. VDCs also incorporated government staff in coordination activities.						
CESVI							
Support to community improvement to livelihoods	Training, working with VDCs and vulnerable groups in community.			X			X/O
	Considerable delays meeting most targets as a result of weak project design.						
Targeted vulnerable households supported on agricultural production and diversified	Distribution of paddy seeds and fertiliser, through rice-bank payback scheme. Tree nursery training.			X			X/O
	Beneficiaries stated that variety of plantation and number of training days is not sufficient. No follow-up from IP and 'loose' targeting resulting in limited scope of operations.						
Vulnerable households have access to IGAs and extension services	Seed bank established with 25% payback mechanism.			X			X/O
	Beneficiaries received the paddy and fertiliser with little training or sufficient instructions, despite the beneficiaries' preference for support to existing crop (corn). Project targets were not relevant for poorer upland farmer thus making benefits short-lived and unsustainable.						
Community-based natural resource management for conservation and income generation.	A village reforestation Plan for 33 households (HHs).			X			X/O
	Little strategy observed in IP's activities and targets, exemplified by forestry activities that do not correspond to overall goal. Limited scope and significant delays in training activities.						
	Energy stove distribution.			X			X/O
	Significant success of fuel usage demonstrations (40 households purchased a stove independently). 'Loose' targeting resulted in benefits for category 3 households rather than (poorer) category 4 households.						

**Table 2 Rating of Results and Effects in Countrywide Programme, 3/5**

UNDP/PACT							
Rural access to microfinance targeting poor and vulnerable households	Banking outreach established to potential clients.		X				
	Only narrow range of loan products were offered at this stage. Households were often using an agricultural loan for purposes other than farming.						
	Farming households have access to agricultural loans in the amount of US\$75-US\$150 per HH per year.		X				X/O
	Livestock loans were implemented, despite beneficiaries' request. In addition, IP did not address the clients' need for higher loan ceilings for certain agriculture activities.						
	Access to loans to invest in livestock, poultry and fishery activities: US\$75-US\$150 per HH per year.			X			X/O
	None of the members have earned income yet from their pigs. Specific loans for livestock (a very popular loan request) has not been developed from HQ yet (even though it is in the LIFT proposal).						
	Most vulnerable households (MVHs) have access to micro-loans in the amount of US\$30-\$40 per HH per year for investment in HH-level IGA.			X			X/O
	Loans misused despite IP staff informing beneficiaries about purpose and benefits of other loans. Most vulnerable loan not offered in Northern Shan. 3,000 households target is not feasible in target region. IP did not provide sufficient instructions on wealth ranking which resulted in no targeted loans.						
	Further development and progressive roll-out of new microfinance products.		X			X	O
	In the long term, Pact has promised to build a micro-finance office from which the community can manage their own micro-finance project once Pact leaves, but they were not sure when/if this will happen.						
	Capacity development of institutional microfinance service providers.			X			X/O
CESVI, UNDP and Pact all work in the same township. They circulate monthly reports about what they achieved the previous month and next month's plan. The benefit of knowing one another's projects was not clear, leading one to believe it is more an informing exercise rather than a real coordination process. CESVI was not aware of Pact's status in the village visited until we informed them. The relationship with LIFT is administrative (reporting, finance, audits), nothing programmatic.							
Metta							
Farmer Field Schools established	Core groups of farmers trained in upland rice cultivation through FFSs, and exposure to new technologies in their own fields.	X			X		
	Simple, straight-forward, and effective. Design is focused and appropriate to the local communities' needs for inputs and support. The project resulted in considerable improvement to rice yields. Interviews indicated that production has increased from 10-12 baskets per acre to 30+ (as high as 60) baskets per hectare. Project remains on track and on schedule with its targets.						
	New practices to increase rain-fed upland rice yields appropriate to up-scaling.	X			X		
	Delay in M&E as activities were not synchronised with the harvest schedule in some villages.						
	Introduced appropriate tools and equipment for weeding and sowing seeds in rows.	X			X		
	Simple, relevant, and effective technologies have been adopted. FFS proved to be a successful mechanism. Scaling up: the project is concerned about the need to scale up vertically (broader community inclusion), as well as horizontally (extended to other villages). IP believes that current success proves this is base for scaling up. IP exceeded a number of targets (except fish ponds).						
	Core facilitators skilled in both facilitation and upland rice technologies.	X			X		
	An additional course was added to refresh the farmers' knowledge of activities.						
	Development of a facilitator's guidebook.						X/O
	Lesson learned were documented and passed along to IP HQ. However, the team interviewed said that lessons were not documented nor implemented properly.						

Table 2 Rating of Results and Effects in Countrywide Programme, 4/5

SWISSAID/SSLDO							
Direct agricultural support to targeted households	Support for agriculture and rice paddy, addressing community priorities with technical inputs.	X					X X
	Strong and well-supported partnership between the IP and the local IP. Effective but scale of support is small in respect to agricultural inputs and number of livestock. Scale up is constrained by limited human resources, trainings/skills, and financing.						
Income generation support mechanism for targeted households	IGA training and support and marketing analysis (value chains) planned but not implemented.			X			X/O
	IGA activities have not begun. No vocational training under this activity has begun. This requires all VDCs to develop their prioritised training plans, which they seem to be unable to produce. Limited ability to achieve target time frame.						
	Buffalo provision and livestock seminar and training, with VCD.		X				X
	Buffalo payback system was adjusted as it wasn't working as intended. System was not well designed. Not enough livestock to meet local expectations. Similar critique regarding agricultural inputs.						
Social protection measures provided to poor targeted households	Training of beneficiaries.		X				X/O
	Cash-for-work pond rehabilitation activities limited and delayed.			X			X/O
Strengthening local capacity of local partner organisations and communities on livelihoods and food security	Delay due to slow transfer of funds and late start. Hard soil for digging was a problem. Widespread and good participation.						
	Training and workshops for committee members and IEC activities.	X					X/O
	Strong, well-supported partnerships between IP and the local IP, including overall support, training, and guidance. Cooperation has begun with technical (agriculture) departments that result in mutual support and assistance to communities. No link to any local regional planning structures, just reporting to authorities on work plans.						
	Support to local VCD plan established.		X				X/O
M&E evidence and studies to inform the programme and support approach	At local level VCD plan is focused on community infrastructure. First VDC plans were imposed by SWISSAID SSLDO to move things along. This pressure resulted in wrong timing for activities with regards to seasonal and agricultural cycles. Despite issues, VCD is well managed and well represented (now more inclusive), including women's participation.						
	Reporting and documentation of lessons learned compiled and submitted for planning and review.	X					X/O
Consortium partnerships to deliver	Lessons learned have been documented and compiled in the various reports submitted to LIFT. See annual report 2012 and bi-annual report 2011.						
	Joint planning and partnerships.			X			X/O
	Sharing field practices and research with civil society, government, and private sector.						
Community empowerment and support to local institutions for development and planning	Thin coverage over too many sectors, as well as overly wide geographic area. Delays in certain activities as AA took a long time to implement community preparatory work. The proposal did not include a start-up phase (e.g., needs assessments, training of Fellows). 'Catch up' resulted in rushed activities. Further delays have been caused by understaffing of AA. Only 6-7 of AA's 11 project staff positions have been filled. The coordination between Thadar agencies has caused many delays.						
	Community leadership (VDC) supported and broader inclusion promoted.			X			X
	Women's leadership proved a serious challenge, even though 90% of Fellows are women.						
	Self-help groups formed and support mechanisms (loans and training) provided.		X				X
	SHG appeared to function well even with a lack of clarity regarding their inclusion criteria.						
Vocational training (SME, IGA)	Social protection initiatives promoted through community-based projects.			X			X
	Social protection was in two forms: social assistance (project material inputs), and promotion of participation among themselves and thereby increasing some people's social positions.						
Community water supplies and irrigation works repaired	Mechanic, carpenter, and sewing training courses provided.			X			X/O
	Water system repaired and new tube wells provided through cash-for-work activities.		X				X/O
	Meet other LIFT IPs operating in Magwe division (Pact, ADRA, AA, CESVI) as well as others (SC, MSI, PC), during the Magwe division government coordination meetings. The IP submits monthly reports to three levels of government, with no feedback but, reportedly, 'necessary to be able to operate'. MAS (DoA) staff assist in FFS training under the project, which improved technical knowledge. Vocational training was too expensive to set up as a business.						

**Table 2 Rating of Results and Effects in Countrywide Programme, 5/5**

Soil conservation and forestry improved	Construction of bunds on unproductive land.	X			X/O			
	Water supply infrastructure projects were delayed because AA was late with training on how to draft a proposal. Caught up later, but rushed. Five deep tube wells remain to be built in 2013. Cash-for-work was meant to be done during the lean period (when poor have little work), but in some cases was done, for example, in November. Cash-for-work was meant to be for the most vulnerable people but ended up being for everyone, because villages felt that everyone must work together (social cohesion).							
	Forest-user groups established.			X			X	
	Bund demonstrations have been very well received by the community. Resulted in some unproductive land being put back into production with decent yields. Some non-beneficiaries (medium and large landholders) have replicated it themselves on their own land.							
Nutrition and basic health and hygiene	Health and hygiene training.		X		X	O		
	The staff could not properly explain the overall approach and purpose of the forestry component (forest user groups, community forestry).							
Positive Deviance Health (PDH) Training	Focus on infant health and body weight, and training on malnutrition, cooking and feeding.			X			X/O	
	PDH trainees could not testify of improvement in health status of children. Nutrition/hygiene component makes staff feel they are spread too thin.							
	Positive deviance health trainings courses provided.			X		X	O	
Village health volunteers established	Trained and supported to monitor infant health.		X			X		
Support to agriculture and markets	Distribution of tools and new farming techniques.		X			X	O	
	Trainees specified benefits to behaviours/practices. Most things they didn't know before the training, and some things they knew a little bit but the training convinced them to put into practice.							
	The project budget for agricultural inputs is enough for small tools only, though villagers want larger ones like power tillers.							
	Market survey assessment carried out for food products (dried onions, sesame, juices, etc.).		X				X/O	
Livestock support	Distribution of livestock and supported training.		X			X	O	
	Achievements in food processing on both small and large scales. ADRA created their own brand and established a retail shop for clothing and food products. They purchased from vocational training beneficiaries that produce up to their quality standard and sell in their shop. Profit goes back into the project, e.g., funding of study tours. Conducted seven study tours to link producers with markets.							
	<b>Proximity Designs</b>							
Rehabilitation of community water supply systems.	Village assessment conducted based on eight criteria.		X			X	O	
	Coordinated with local planning office.							
Farmers' productivity support	Pond rehabilitation and de-silting/dredging through cash-for-work.	X			X		O	
	Small loans to farmers to purchase pumps.	X			X			
Addressing food security and household income through agricultural support and peoples empowerment	Establishment of self-help groups.						X/O	
	Would be relevant at some point in time to most households (older persons are often not economically active anyways). The project is not pro-poor because it lets any person who fits the criteria participate, regardless of wealth considerations (with the exception of some project inputs that focused on poor disabled households).							
	Improved access to agricultural inputs.		X			X	O	
	Increased access to livestock.							
	Limited support to fertiliser and livestock activities through loans.							
	Home gardening/support to HH nutrition.			X			X/O	
	The home gardening intervention failed because all the plants died during the drought last year.							
	Vocational training and establishment of alternative livelihoods.			X			X/O	
	Training on nutrition and hygiene.			X			X/O	
	Very basic: Hygiene training three times, ½ day each time, using visual aids. Six latrine 'demonstrations', which were built for six of the poor households SHG members (Two from each of three SHGs). There has been no awareness raising on disability issues.							
Awareness raising on disability issues.			X			X/O		
Could not find evidence of awareness-raising activities done by DPDO. Participating women said there have not been any such types of sessions (training or otherwise).								

## 5.4 Summary conclusions about results and impacts

Most IPs are on schedule for delivering their inputs, although a significant minority were delayed in starting particular activities by up to nine months. Similarly, most are on track to achieve their impacts by the end of the project, although this is true more in the Delta II programme than in the CWP. Overall, about 30% of activities are rated as having a “zero or unclear” impact by the end of the project. Many are rated as “unclear” because the IP does not provide any quantifiable output/results data across all their villages, so if we found some concerns in one village we visited (e.g., only one of eight vegetable garden-supported households remained active) the impact becomes “unclear”.

The MTR team was particularly impressed with how specialised IPs were complementing area IPs. Area IPs (who implement various interventions in “their” villages) were generally well on track to having a positive impact in the chosen villages. The typical area model was to provide assets (machinery or cash during Delta I or subsequently) to kick start revolving funds while ensuring good governance of such funds. Assets were being rented out to provide some years of income stream.

The more pertinent question is will these achievements be sustained post-project? One Bogale village was given a free drum seeder but it was now broken. The villagers were thinking about repairing it. “We don’t have the money, and it is not the season now, so we just wait”, one villager said. “We think it will cost 3-4 lakhs. We don’t know where to take it in town.” It may have been better for sustainability to fund villagers the equipment purchases through local private suppliers. Mr. Hla Win, who sells tilling machines in Bogale Township offers a one-year warranty. “We send the mechanic out to their village within a week of their calling”, he said. “We don’t even charge for transport during the first year.”

More worrying is the sustainability of the community groups and associated funds established by donors in these villages. Lacking any formal legal status, we observed that there are four things that can happen when the donors leave: outright theft; dissolution (e.g., all members take a share of the fund and go home); elite capture and it continues as before, but does not grow; or it continues as before and grows. Generally, we are optimistic, and note that the IPs have gone to great lengths to ensure that groups operate transparently, accountably, and democratically. There is also some awareness of longer-term issues, such as setting funds on a growth path,<sup>9</sup> and consideration of how to save in order to replace expensive machines when they die.

The interventions that worked best may be classified by types or by the better IP approaches. The better IPs were implementing interventions similar to many other IPs, but differences in their approaches were producing better results. Thus good investments by LIFT in the future may be in particular interventions, but also in particular IPs.

Types of interventions that generally worked well:

- Cash-for-work (CfW) public infrastructure: In an environment where

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<sup>9</sup> IPs would do well to help SHGs and CBOs to explicitly plan for growing their funds, with annual targets.

state funding of local infrastructure has been almost non-existent, these interventions have provided very necessary public goods and projects, such as building ponds [Case Study 6], bunds, pathways, and embankments, and planting mangrove trees. Some, however, were less successful due to rushed and poor design and insufficient technical support.

- Dialogue and information exchange with government: Oxfam is developing particular expertise in this area, including lobbying activities. Other IPs and LIFT FMO would do well to learn from this pioneering effort.
- Well-designed and technically supported VDCs/CBOs/SHGs: It is easy to establish these to channel project inputs, but the better IPs take sustainability seriously and ensure that such organisations accommodate local power structures; plan carefully and openly before receiving funds; and manage activities and funds following clear and transparent rules. This was supported by an “eating with the people” approach to capacity building (explained below). We highlight ActionAid as demonstrating best practices in this approach.
- Village social protection fund (ActionAid): A social security fund is built from taking a very small portion of loan repayments to the CBOs, and that fund is then managed by a group of women. They decide who will receive the funds and the terms of loans, on a case-by-case basis. This is sustainable and has a high impact but is small.

IPs that shone above the others:

- Support to rice farmers: AVSI, Metta, and Radanar Ayar were the most impressive in this area. They all adopted a multi-faceted package of interventions to increase rice productivity and quality. Their approach was also flexible, with new initiatives added during implementation, and in consultation with farmers. As with other rice support projects, however, they overestimated the willingness of farmers to take risks and adopt new techniques quickly. They could also be more effective by thinking of farmers as business people and how they could use their IP role to maximise farmer profits.
- Pact microfinance: Basic loan products play an important role in supplementing other sources of finance for households. Pact retains privileged access to the microfinance market in Myanmar, and we have some criticism of their efficiency (below), but there is no denying that they help to meet the demand for affordable finance.
- HelpAge/YMCA and SWISSAID/SSLDO did relatively better than other IPs in the difficult domain of creating income-generating activities (IGA), which included providing livestock and post-harvest technologies. They, as others, suffered from inexperience implementing such interventions on a small scale and, therefore, lack staff with specialised knowledge. As mentioned below, LIFT should encourage IPs to build expertise in some specialised areas.

The less impressive interventions were typically those that can be categorised into interventions that sought to introduce new production techniques and technologies to village households. This often involved IPs trying to push households into something they had not done before, including commercial business activities. Consequently, such interventions had a high rate of failure or were very slow to be adopted. These efforts included introducing new rice planting methods, income-generating activities, organic fertiliser production, cooperative business groups, and livestock banks.

LIFT will benefit from focusing future support on the better interventions and IPs, while still testing new models for IGAs and other interventions (supported by robust intervention-specific M&E). An alternative, or complimentary approach, would be to consider the broader picture of rural development and consider where donor funds may support a few larger, and possibly private sector agents for change. Certainly LIFT can now engage and support the Myanmar government on many of these matters. Developing the national strategy to provide quality rice seeds, for example, is a high priority. We present some specific recommendations about how LIFT may move quickly to work with government, but a broader strategic analysis of future options for LIFT is beyond the terms of reference for this MTR and its specific research questions.

## 6. Change and relevance

*Have any external factors influenced the project delivery? Which ones and how? Are the project objectives still valid?*

### 6.1 External Factors

The main external factor that has changed and has important implications for LIFT is the political reform process that began in 2011. This has led to a removal of international sanctions, and a transformation in the role of government in Myanmar. LIFT, and LIFT IPs, can now formalise previously informal relations (see the Working with Government section).

Another external factor has been the rapid spread of technologies into villages since 2010. In 2011, when fewer than 10% of Bogale villages had mobile phone coverage, GRET was delivering hard copies of market price information to villages every two weeks, and Welthungerhilfe (WHH) updated village notice boards monthly. Mobile phone coverage now reaches over 90% of villages, with 2 to 10 persons per village having a phone (often as a business, renting them to others to make calls). GRET is working on sending prices as text messages (SMS via mobile phones), which then get written onto a village blackboard. On the other hand, as one farmer remarked: "I just ring people in nearby villages and in town to get prices when I need them". The head of the Planning Department in Bogale said that mobile phones had improved prices for farmers, particularly as they could compare prices and secure deals before incurring transport costs: "Don't think lowly of the farmers," he said. "They are busy making their own networks using mobile phones".<sup>10</sup>

IPs should consider ceasing their market price services. They could direct resources more usefully to a farmer question-and-answer service (GRET staff visit villagers monthly, collect questions, and return with answers the next month). Firstly, common farmer questions and answers could be shared in some form of publication (a page in a farming magazine?) and/or aired regularly on the radio. Secondly, if this service could be relayed via SMS, then it could cover hundreds of villages. There are significant scale economies in such activities, and IPs would do well to think of providing such services beyond "their" villages.

Furthermore, almost all villages now have televisions and DVD players, which open up new communication options. In Bogale, only two villages are connected to the national grid, but another 402 of the 575 in the township have generators partly due to a government loan scheme. Other villages have electricity through diesel engines (through transformers), solar cells, or biogas systems. Consequently, every village we visited had batteries, televisions with DVD players, and mobile phones.<sup>11</sup> In

<sup>10</sup> Farmers in Thone Htut Village said that through mobile phones they know that prices and measurement scales are better at mills in Pyar Pone and in Mawgyun than in Bogale. Mobile phones also make wedding and funeral logistics much easier.

<sup>11</sup> The LIFT Baseline report noted that, in late 2011, only 14% of LIFT Delta/Coastal villages were on-grid or had generators.

Ngapi Thone Hle Village, which was typical of the Bogale area, residents reported 14 televisions, five DVD players, and five mobile phones in their village.<sup>12</sup>

### Getting Information to Farmers

WHH, Proximity Designs, and other IPs, conducted “video road shows” last year, bringing along their own televisions, DVD players, and generators. Proximity staff noted: “They complained because our video was only ten minutes long, and they wanted copies so they could watch it again”. This approach is already outdated. LIFT should consider a tender for a firm/NGO to work within the University of Agriculture (UoA) to deliver agriculture extension information products directly to villages in Myanmar. These would include DVDs (of mostly existing materials, such as previous television programmes, with local language subtitles), and a quarterly magazine for farmers. LIFT and LIFT IPs (and other organisations) would feed this UoA information hub with case studies and advertising (such as for Proximity Design’s farmer support services). IPs could have a regular page in the magazine. The purpose would be to provide very specific information of value to farmers: What type of garlic grows well in this area? How to recognise fake fertiliser? How to repair seeding machines? It would be perhaps 40 pages and distributed free to every village in Myanmar (maybe with some content changing across areas). Some revenue could be raised through advertisements.

## 6.2 Programme Objectives

LIFT’s objectives remain very much valid and relevant. Supporting livelihood recovery is a coherent objective and consistent with the general development needs of the country. Programme objectives (which include developmental assistance) were specified as required criteria when the IPs applied LIFT funding, which meant that all interventions were designed to meet that criteria. They remain relevant to the criteria two years later.

It has only been five years since Cyclone Nargis. The Delta II programme was one of the first development efforts—following humanitarian assistance—established for those most affected. It is well-justified development assistance, and donors have helped households get on their feet and out of debt much more quickly than they would have otherwise.

A different issue is whether the objectives (and LIFT Delta II criteria) are most relevant to the poverty alleviation needs of the Delta as a whole. The Delta may be roughly divided into three zones defined by water quality: fresh, brackish, and, salt. Villages in the salt-water zone tend to be poorer as they have fewer economic opportunities. Proposals for LIFT Delta II were to focus on development, with less emphasis on direct poverty alleviation. Following that instruction, some IPs focused on the (richer) fresh water areas, believing they had the most development potential for a given investment. In addition, development results are best achieved working with landed households, which are better off, thus IPs offered them more direct assistance. This was the case even though the LIFT baseline survey showed that 70% of Delta households

<sup>12</sup> The January 2013 conclusion of the Microfinance in Myanmar Sector Assessment may already need reconsideration: “...the scope for branchless banking seems limited due to the lack of infrastructure and the high cost of SIM cards.” (p.v).

were landless.

In retrospect, “sustained poverty alleviation” would have been a more appropriate criterion than “developmental assistance”. Adding the word “sustained” (sustainable) is enough to move it from humanitarian assistance. IPs could, for instance, be encouraged to introduce “technically sustainable” equipment and machinery, and “financially sustainable” income-generation ideas. “Sustained” could be pragmatically defined as an impact that remains in effect two, three, or even five years after programme closure, as measured through a post-evaluation impact survey. The “developmental assistance” criteria in the call for Delta II proposals shifted attention away somewhat from directly assisting the poorest households because the interventions tended to focus on short-term impacts.

Furthermore, strengthening the focus on poverty would have led to more attention on exactly how IPs working with the non-poor (i.e., the larger land owners) would impact the poor. In many cases, the causal arguments presented by the IPs in this regard are weak. Some extra labour, for example, is hired for rice intensification work [FGD 7], but clearly the vast share of benefits goes to the landowner.

## 7. Design and component quality

*What was the quality of the design of projects and the quality of the project components?*

Poor project designs contributed to many interventions failing. They also led directly to poor quality components. For example, when IPs underestimated the technical expertise required for interventions, the staff often suffered from inadequate training and support to solve problems. The EcoDev shrimp ponds are an example (see the box below).

Furthermore, IP project designs lacked a focus on results (as did LIFT contracts with IPs), which is reflected in the on-going lack of results-oriented M&E data. Most Delta II IPs readily admitted that the shift to a “development approach” was not easy for them, their staff, and even for the beneficiary villages, which expected handouts.

Many income-generating activity designs were typically based on some sort of market or value-chain study, which led to choosing intervention points and then designing the activities to achieve the targets. These research activities were low budget and low quality, lacking price data or rudimentary cost-benefit analysis. Price data is essential to understanding the local value chain, and crucial in helping decide if an activity might be profitable.

Less complex and more familiar interventions, such as CfW, worked better. In providing livestock to poor households, for example, the IPs had clearly learned lessons from Delta I. They sourced the animals locally, provided training as needed, and helped ensure livestock were vaccinated.

IPs need help in choosing and designing complex market-related projects. LIFT FMO should itself build capacity to advise them in this area for Delta III, including conducting training in the last year of Delta II.<sup>13</sup> If LIFT FMO lacks resources they can tender to outsource such capacity-building support.

LIFT and donors also need to think more analytically about the net impact of projects during the design phase. This report offers multiple examples of “displacement effects”, which involve taking into account the secondary “knock-on” effects on the entire Delta as part of the net assessment. For example, a donor might help a village by locally sourcing four buffaloes, but the Delta still has the same number of buffaloes. The Delta-wide shortage of livestock has not changed. Attention might be better focused on buffalo health and breeding interventions rather than facilitating asset transfers.

GRET’s Community Agro-Economic Development Platforms (CAEDPs), or group-run shops, become less attractive when the negative impact on existing shops is taken

<sup>13</sup> Actually, generic training courses on design and evaluation methods have public good characteristics. One idea, therefore, would be a “DFID University”, where anybody could take free on-line courses. (This is similar to the online service of Coursera: <https://www.coursera.org>). At some point it might be possible to take exams at British Council offices around the world, allowing individuals to work towards an accredited British degree.

into account. Similarly, a new A1 stove operation enters a competitive market to put another out of business. The Mangrove Service Network actually had fundamental cost and quality issues, and could not sell their stoves profitably at prevailing prices [FGD 5]. New shrimp paste sellers mean fewer sales for others [FGD 3]. These displacement effects diminish locally if products are sold outside the project target area, such as in Yangon, or if they replace imports to the area (many cooking stoves come from China). ADRA, for example, is marketing delta shrimps in the Dry Zone. Part of the problem is that IPs focus on “their villages” without evaluating the wider impact of their efforts. LIFT should ensure that the full impact story, including the knock-on effects on private producers and prevailing prices, is part of future project designs and evaluations.

Knock-on effects can also be positive. The labour-intensive rice hand transplanting (HT) method leads to more income for landless workers. Less obvious, however, is that donors have also reduced employment opportunities in the Delta by providing labour-saving devices. Most agricultural machinery causes a net reduction in worker days. Donors have given away thousands of such machines at no cost or with subsidies, thereby making these labour-reducing options more attractive than they would be otherwise.<sup>14</sup> Over time, industrialisation will draw workers to urban areas and increase the opportunity cost of rural workers. This will raise rural wages and cause increased use of labour-saving machinery. To pre-empt that process by subsidising the purchase cost of labour-saving agricultural machinery is, however, likely to cause unemployment and lower rural wages. In Ma Gu village, Bogale Township, Ayeyarwady Division, we were told that the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) had donated a power tiller in 2009. The village had collected US\$480 in rents thus far, which is only for maintenance. The replacement cost of the machine is US\$1,800. When the tiller is no longer repairable, villagers said that they would purchase the more labour-intensive and appropriate technology replacement: buffaloes.

IPs sometimes failed to take account of the local context when designing projects. Accommodating the local context is, however, more of an implementation management problem, not a pre-project planning problem. The Delta I Evaluation Report is littered with examples where village-specific conditions caused problems. We also found quite a few. For example, in Case Study 2, pigs were purchased that were unsuitable for local conditions, severely hampering the project’s success.

The Delta I Evaluation Report then recommended that IPs be more knowledgeable about local conditions. Yet it is unrealistic to expect detailed investigations by IPs into such matters as soil quality or water levels in dozens of villages before delivering a standardised product or service. Aside from cost, the IPs do not have the capacity. The villagers themselves may not know whether a new piece of machinery will work or a variety of pig will thrive in their village. (The example of pigs being unsuited to the locale can be found in FGD 11.) As in business, with even the most detailed of plans, you can still fail.

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<sup>14</sup> A qualification is that post-Nargis some cheap or free machinery was just replacing machines lost in the storm, thus restoring the pre-Nargis balance between capital and labour. This is particularly true when it was appropriate technology being replaced with the same, e.g., buffaloes.

## Learning from Failure: Shrimp Ponds

EcoDev built 26 of 50 planned shrimp ponds in the Delta area before withdrawing from their project. The idea was to replicate basic shrimp ponds following a Vietnamese sustainable mangrove-based model. On paper, it should have worked: shrimp fry are easily collected in the area; shrimp farming is already practiced in natural ponds; and shrimps fetch good prices in the local market.

The 26 ponds cost about \$US2,600 each to construct, paying landless workers 2,000 kyat (\$US2.4)/day. Once completed, they were leased to individual farmers to invest and manage. None have worked. Reasons for failures include sluicing gates that were either too high or too low, the lack of deep water areas in ponds, immature mangrove trees not giving enough shade, inadequate technical training and guidance, and incorrect use of lime to control diseases.

In Yae Twin Seik Village, there were four ponds rented out at 20,000 kyat (\$US24/month). One villager tried raising crabs in two ponds. He put in 1,000 female crabs at a cost of 300 kyat each, and one month later harvested 700 crabs at 700 kyat each. When he tried again, he only got 800 mature crabs from the initial 2,200. The next attempt produced an even poorer result. Without a net covering the whole pond, the crabs escaped. "It was a deep pond and I thought they could not escape", said the villager.

Another villager raised shrimp. After three months, they were 2-3 inches in length, so he waited until they grew to 3.5 inches. He hired security guards at 60,000 kyat (\$US72)/month. The shrimps disappeared—all of them. "If they were stolen, then some at least would have been left", he said. It remains a mystery. In other villages, the more typical experience was that the shrimp fry died soon after being put in the pond.

The precise lessons to be learned need to be drawn out from these experiments. The ponds remain a good idea. This type of shrimp farming, however, is not simple and should have been accompanied by more intensive technical assistance. It is also risky. Diseases can wipe out whole areas, and salinisation can make the land useless after 5-10 years. EcoDev should have tested five ponds before proceeding to build 26. This is, in our interventions typology (below), an interesting experiment for scale. From experiments we expect failures and an iterative learning process: five ponds would have given us the same initial lessons.

The "local context" solution is implementation management, which depends upon prompt results reporting. Is the machine being used one month after delivery? How many pigs are still alive? Prompt feedback on results means that machines can be modified or moved elsewhere. If certain pig varieties are not thriving, deliveries can be stopped early. In other words, live with the village-specific failures, but learn from them early.

One approach is to introduce effective monitoring and results reporting. This could be achieved through the "Sponsor-a-Spreadsheet" initiative promoted by Engineers Without Borders. This is a basic management system to ensure that assets, e.g., water pumps, are properly monitored and maintained over many years.<sup>15</sup>

Many IPs were in fact responding to results feedback, but not in a systematic way. Nor were such lessons being formally documented and shared across IPs.

<sup>15</sup> See Engineers Without Borders-<http://www.ewb.ca/africa/>.

## 8. Targeting

*Has the target audience been reached? Was the selection of villages and households appropriate?*

Targeting throughout the LIFT programmes was predominately conducted through a conventional, but not standardised wealth-ranking exercise.<sup>16</sup> Wealth ranking is a participatory poverty assessment tool for rapidly collecting and categorising information at the community level on social stratification. The technique involves identifying community-determined characteristics of wealth and poverty, usually based on landholdings, livestock owned, and other material assets. Working from these characteristics, each household is placed into one of four categories: poorest, poor, non-poor, and wealthy households. This determination may be done by the villagers or by the donor.

Wealth ranking as a poverty-targeting tool is contentious for a number of reasons:

1. Wealth ranking is a relative measure of wealth, not absolute. Thus households are only poor or wealthy in relation to other households in the village. Consequently, villages and townships cannot be compared, and resources tend to be spread evenly across villages despite some being clearly poorer than others.
2. The wealth-ranking approach is subjective and informants may be in a position to bias results, particularly if they believe it will lead to more or less assistance to the community.

Wealth ranking, therefore, does a poor job of identifying the poorest households in a township. Furthermore, many IPs do not in any way act on the information collected to determine which households can be beneficiaries. Consequently, targeting methods do not lead to targeted outcomes.

Some donors chose self-selection for their beneficiaries, rather than targeting. Pact claims to target only small and marginal farmers for agriculture loans, but, actually, they lend to all those who form groups. AVSI invited all 107 rice farmers from Ah Hmat Gyi Village to join the FFS and participate in the project, but only 46 signed up. AVSI set rigid rules (anybody missing a lesson is fined 1,000 kyat), and used self-selection to determine real commitment. Those 61 who did not join were the poorer farmers. Many had only a couple of acres and spent much of their time fishing or migrating for work seasonally, so they could not attend the school as required. In this particular instance, self-selection by farmers for rice intensification support (and microfinance) was, therefore, appropriate.

While most IPs nominally undertook measures to target the poorest households, it was typically landowners that benefited most in terms of their share of total project expenditures. The 2012 LIFT Baseline Survey reported that 72% of Delta/Coastal Zone

<sup>16</sup> In both the Delta and the CWP, the MTR team saw variation in the wealth ranking exercise, though typically these comprised four categories ranging from the poorest to the wealthiest in the community.

households were landless, while 7% had fewer than five acres, and 21% had more than five acres. The 21% are receiving much more than 21% of LIFT funding.

It may be argued, however, that support to agricultural livelihoods, by necessity, focuses on households with land (i.e., the non-poor), and that options to support the landless are limited. They lack land for poultry, they cannot attend sustained training (migrating seasonally for work), and some lack the resources to even feed a pig. To what extent then should IPs work directly with the landless, or give priority to initiatives that have clear pro-poor knock-on impacts? If an IP is satisfied to work mostly with the richer landowners, then perhaps they should consider stopping any targeting exercises.

Ultimately, increasing the incomes of the landless relies on getting more days of work, getting paid more per day, or running a non-land business (selling vegetables, growing mushrooms, offering battery repairs, etc.). Many IPs have indeed been directly assisting the landless through CfW projects, and offering loans and training to undertake various off-farm income-generating activities. Casual labourers only benefit from better-off rice farmers when landowners have to hire more people or if daily wages rise. Hand transplanting rice plants increases days of work, while machinery reduces days. Daily wages rise only if there are labour shortages. Those skilled at hand transplanting are in short supply, and can earn 5,000 kyat a day. Less skilled workers earn less, but anecdotal findings from our visits suggest that daily wages seem to be rising modestly. The long-run solution is the creation of factory jobs and rural-urban migration, which depopulates the countryside and pushes up daily wages. In other words, the best approach to support the landless rural poor is to create as many formal sector urban jobs as quickly as possible. When we asked 30 landless women (Pact beneficiaries) what they wanted for their children, they laughed at what they deemed a foolish question: "For them to get jobs in Yangon, of course". The best direct assistance to the poor is to educate their children.

A good alternative to wealth ranking is the flexible use of the 10-question poverty scorecard. "Flexible" in this context means crosschecking results with the community, which may make changes based on observations or unique knowledge. For example, "That household should be 'poor' as her husband died last month". This improves precision, and community awareness and ownership of the results. For reasons detailed in recent UNDP reports,<sup>17</sup> poverty scorecards are preferable to participatory wealth ranking as a targeting methodology. LIFT should encourage the use of the poverty scorecard when it funds new IP projects. As mentioned previously, targeting poor households, however, is most relevant only for a sub-set of small-scale interventions, e.g., livestock handouts. It is not relevant to many interventions, particularly when self-selection has obvious advantages. Furthermore, given the limited evidence of elite capture, discussed below, targeting is not an urgent priority.

Targeting, done properly, helps to avoid "elite capture" of interventions. Elite capture is the process by which a group uses its influence and perhaps its links to external

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<sup>17</sup> Targeting Poor Areas and Poor Households: Review of Methods Relevant to Myanmar. A. McCarty. UNDP. May 2013. p. 13.

parties, such as an NGO, to channel support to itself. These elites may be traditional leaders, newly elected local representatives, or others.

In both the Delta II and the CWP, elite capture was evident in some of the communities, but never to an alarming degree. Examples included one community volunteer (ActionAid fellow) who was also the daughter of a local administrator, and wealthier land owners serving as representatives of the village development committees (VDCs). When there were concerns that processes were not transparent, as was the case with several WHH villages, support was suspended. In general, however, communities did not seem dominated by key individuals, and there was strong awareness about project activities and benefits.

Community leaders are, for the most part, doing what they think is beneficial for the community, which confirms previous research:

“(T)here is also no evidence of core leaders co-opting ... for narrow personal or state interests. To the contrary, their participation is often seen as a resource ... as the core leaders are not seen to misuse funds”.  
(Kempel, p. 41)

IPs were undertaking many activities to minimise the risk of elite capture in their community-based development projects, including:

- External monitoring of activities;
- Public forums following rules, such as minimum numbers for attendance, frequency of meetings, and secret voting;
- Broad inclusion of the community, including women’s participation in decision making;
- Use of well-written manuals, poverty maps, village development plans, and other public tools to reduce the opportunity for distortion;
- Frequent site visits by IP staff;
- Encouraging participation and engagement by local administration (government) technical staff, which was another external means of monitoring through visits; and
- A sound feedback system wherein public audit and accountability reinforces community-based control of committees and local decision-making bodies.

## 9. Collaboration and Coordination

*How was the collaboration between and the coordination with other IPs? Have any synergies been developed?*

*In what way have they engaged with the local and regional authorities? What would be the options to develop and strengthen this relationship?*

### 9.1 CWP Coordination among IPs and with government agencies

Good cooperation and well-established working relationships with Department of Agriculture (DoA) township-level officials were observed in only a few programmes in the Dry Zone. (Oxfam and HelpAge were strong performers here.) Government technical support, as well as cooperation in taking care of crops, especially cotton, was found in Inkone Village, Tharzi Township. The government staff and technicians often paid field visits and explained the benefits of using good quality seeds and suitable pesticides, and the methods and timing of applying them. The DoA offered a five-day training course in seeds and pesticides in Bogale, in conjunction with Oxfam staff. Oxfam's project also facilitated the engagement and support of the Department of Industrial Crops Development. Their Cotton and Sericulture Extension and Technical Development agency provided training on good agricultural practices, plant protection, harvesting techniques, and pre- and post-harvest management, to the farmers of two target villages (Oxfam 2/2012, p. 9).

Most IPs also attend the monthly township coordination meetings, which are called by the township administrator, and attended by all organisations working in the town, as well as local line departments. These meetings are purely administrative and for reporting purposes, however, and do not address substantive issues encountered in the LIFT projects.

Generally speaking, most IPs have limited interaction with government officials or one other, with the exception of attending the above-mentioned obligatory meetings and occasional project site visits, for which the IPs typically have to pay government staff to travel to. A few IPs have no relationship with government agencies. This is a holdover from the past when unregistered NGOs kept a very low profile.

Stronger and more formal partnerships with the government should be encouraged. This would take the form of government staff providing extension services to farmers, while the IP projects provide the necessary complementary inputs. Government officers, however, should receive appropriate training before engaging with farmers.

## 9.2 Delta II Coordination with government agencies<sup>18</sup>

For the present, all IPs seemed to have established regular relations with the local (village level) and regional (township) administrators, although technical consultations with line departments are less common. Interactions with state and central government, however, are basically procedural, such as obtaining permission to travel to, and implement activities in, a given area, rather than a more technically oriented interaction for technology transfer and capacity building. The exception appears to be IRRI. Their staff worked quite closely with both DAR and DoA, with the former providing seeds and support on rice breeding, and the latter sharing documents on meteorology, especially rainfall and temperature, as well as salt intrusion maps that were useful in site selection for the participatory varietal selection trials.

There are clearly opportunities to work closer with government officials during 2013–14. Some IP projects and activities, however, are more relevant for immediate and direct collaborations with the government than others. In Bogale Township, there is only one government veterinarian, and WHH has been working with him. He has contributed to training the network of village Animal Health Workers (AHWs). WHH implements its veterinary service through two staff members, although one recently left. In WHH villages visited, it was clear that the veterinary services project was under stress. One solution may be to put the government veterinarians in charge (maybe with a funded assistant). Such a model would also serve as an example for government officials to consider for public funding.

### **A Dedicated Animal Health Worker**

In February 2011, WHH trained an Animal Health Worker to offer rudimentary care of the animals. At first, the health worker was able to offer vaccines and curative medicines for free. But now vaccinations must be purchased in Yangon, which requires travel time and costs. Free medical supplies are also more limited, but the health worker can buy medicine for 1,500 kyat in the market (enough for three pigs). The AHW charges 200–500 kyat plus the cost of the medicine. Last year, he treated 40 sick pigs in his and neighbouring villages. Only 4 of the 40 pigs died, but the AHW believes that without any intervention most would have died.

“The villagers are still not convinced to pay for vaccines. I gave vaccines to 12 pigs that later died of other diseases, so they think it does not work. I am waiting for the whole village to agree to cover the costs of my trip to Yangon for vaccines (which need to be carried back on ice)”.

The transition to post-donor financial sustainability for AHWs is problematic and given little thought in intervention design by donors. Consequently, in other WHH villages the animal health workers have stopped or left.

Many NGOs, including World Vision, ActionAid, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), have trained village AHWs. But when the project is finished, the health workers are left on their own. A useful specialisation service would be for one IP to work with the government to develop an AHW network across all Delta villages. With a view to sustainability, a low-cost AHW support system could be implemented.

<sup>18</sup> Coordination and cooperation among Delta II IPs is covered in the Delta II chapter below.

Thus, the typical AHW might receive updated training and a visit from the township veterinarian once a year. A page in the proposed Farmer's Magazine could be devoted to animal health, and training materials could be offered on DVDs. Perhaps Animal Health Workers could text their questions to veterinarians by SMS.

The government is also willing to learn from and work closer with donors. IPs in Labutta reported that local authorities have just started asking for copies of monthly reports, whereas in Bogale, IPs already report monthly to their respective township line departments.

## 10. Working with markets

*Have market linkages been improved? Have IPs worked effectively with the private sector?*

Many IPs were conducting experiments to move up value chains, improve market access and information, and to cooperate with the private sector [FGD5]. Few, however, had impressive results, and almost none worked with businesses to “reach down” to the poor, such as Proximity Designs does with foot pumps. A typical intervention was to buy or upgrade machines, such as rice mills (Mercy Corps), or a bakery (WHH), or a fish paste machine for a village group (ADRA) [FGD3], without a full analysis of the business and its long-term sustainability, or how many shrimp paste machines an area could support. In addition to the above points on local context, sometimes the introduction of certain machinery or certain trainings were wasted on villages where local climate and soil conditions meant they were unsuited to the village. This was seen with the introduction of good agricultural practices by GRET in Bogale [FGD5] and the purchase of a drum-seeder that was never used because of regular flooding problems.

A central problem, as noted in the microfinance section above, is that these are poor areas, and township domestic demand is relatively fixed at prevailing prices, so producing new items already widely sold will probably just replace existing production. The same logic applies to the local procurement of pigs: you are just moving a pig from one household to another. It can be an income transfer, i.e., moving goods from a rich to a poor household, but the number of pigs in the area is unchanged. If the objective was to support livestock development, then a focus on improved breeding, new breeds, and animal health would have been more productive in terms of total numbers. Where activities lead to exports to external markets (e.g., Yangon), or replace imports (such as substituting shrimp powder for MSG, a project supported by ADRA), local displacement does not happen. Activities that profitably introduce completely new products or services are adding net value. The lesson is: working with markets is not easy.

Supporting the manufacturing of A1<sup>19</sup> cooking stoves is another example of product displacement where no real value was added. In the case of Mercy Corps’ stove project there were already numerous shops selling different stove models in Bogale. There was no apparent demand for alternative styles. (If A1 stoves are a sensible purchase from a cost-benefit perspective over the lifetime of a stove, then that sales pitch needs to be made to households. An IP helping existing producers to conduct marketing might have had more impact.) The chance that a village group can succeed in a competitive low-profit margin stove market is low. Even if they do succeed (with free kilns and equipment), it is likely that their sales will displace the sales of existing manufacturers.

Actually, it seems that most A1 stoves are sold to urban households (or NGOs). Rural

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<sup>19</sup> A1 stoves are a particular model of locally made household stoves that have been promoted by donors in Myanmar since the 1990s.

households in the delta use open fires, as access to wood is not a problem (unlike the Dry Zone). The villages we visited near Mawlamyinegyun Township had never heard of A1 stoves, and it is quite possible that they would not buy them when they do.

A recent evaluation had this to say about the A1 stove model promoted by so many IPs:

“The A1 stove model was introduced in the mid-1990s through the Forest Research Institute. It is a kiln fired clay stove. The design has not changed much since its introduction. Both literature, as well as feedback, from NGOs and communities suggests that, despite the kiln firing of the stove, the durability of the stove is often rather limited. This has spoiled the reputation of the product in some areas. Beyond the A1 stove, there are a number of other stove designs. Most of them are also clay or mud based—some of them with metal parts as cladding or grid. Modern firewood stove concepts, such as the rocket stove principles (developed by the Aprovecho Institute), have not yet reached Myanmar. Stoves designs have been focussed on very low-cost solutions, which offer rather small advantages over the 3-stone fire. There are still NGOs insisting that free distributions should continue or at least the stoves should be strongly subsidised. A critical exchange between the practitioners of the various NGOs, the private sector, as well as the research scene and donors, has not (yet) taken place.”

--EUEI PDF Mission Report: Energy Scoping Myanmar 2012; pp. 32-33

Donors should be stimulating markets, not stifling them. Furthermore, LIFT FMO should be facilitating the sort of “critical exchange” mentioned above.

Most IPs have adopted basically a “try this” approach with micro-enterprise support. There is nothing particularly wrong with that, as donors underwrite the risk, and if it works it is often sustainable. In fact, all over the world, most business startups fail. It might be better, however, to take a more participatory approach, such as working with a self-selected group to conduct their own market research, prepare business plans, and do a cost-benefit analysis over the course of 3-6 months.

Self-selecting business activities, on a small scale are, of course, how self-help groups operate. In one village, an enthusiastic self-help group (SHG) of eight members had saved 170,000 kyat with support, but not funding, from WHH. The group had three very clear business ideas for the year: process and sell local roofing materials; buy fabric in Yangon and sell locally; and buy raw inputs to carry out the basic processing of fish paste. All required much labour, but could generate 15-30% net profit in 1-3 months. Their access to affordable credit for the first time enabled them to turn relative underemployment into income-generating activities. On a small scale this works, but there are limits both to the members’ availability and how much the local economy can consume.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Although the most successful WHH self-help group has over \$US3,000 shared between 18 members.

## **Grinding Work: Mercy Corps (Mc) Supports Rice Millers**

Small, locally owned rice mills in Myanmar are typically inefficient, producing low quality rice, characterised by broken grains that cannot be sold commercially. Urged by LIFT's Delta II criteria to 'work with markets', MC in Labutta designed an intervention to work with local millers to upgrade their equipment. Thirty-five mill owners (out of 160 in the area) attended training courses to develop business plans. A technician visited each mill to assess their equipment needs. MC then helped the owners purchase new equipment, paying 75% (US\$122,135) of the cost. In exchange, the owners agreed to charge fixed lower milling fees for the next three years.

Dr. Mying Wai, the director of Mercy Corps' Labutta office, says the rice mills project has been their 'best achievement'. Millers report that they have increased the quantity and quality of the final product. This is an innovative intervention, with the potential for scaling up hundred fold.

Unfortunately, time-series price data of inputs and outputs were not collected consistently from the start, hampering a full analysis of the project. And MC is still collecting data, such as the percentage of broken rice and grain output, to support its success story. The project lacked expert M&E advice from LIFT at the design stage, particularly in terms of 'working with markets' interventions. For example, the three-year contract that sets lower mill fees distorts the evaluation analysis. The refurbished mills will be charging less, making them much more attractive to farmers, distorting a comparison to the control (old) mills. It was felt, however, that this arrangement was necessary to show measureable benefits for the ultimate target group within the LIFT project period.

## 11. Revolving funds and microfinance

*What approaches worked best for provision of credit? For revolving funds?*

Donors and the government have contributed to segmenting the market for credit in Myanmar. They often view microfinance as some form of charity, and charge interest rates between 0.75%-3% per month. At such rates, credit projects typically just cover their costs, and never really grow. When microfinance is treated as charity, lenders are often soft on bad debts, fail to consider inflation in determining interest rates, and are not ambitious about growing funds (see Box below). Consequently, low-interest funds rarely grow and, therefore, meet only a fraction of the demand for credit.

Villagers now expect donor credit to be delivered on such terms, despite also regularly borrowing from moneylenders at 8-10% or more per month. The richer fishermen in Lay Yin Kwin Village, Lay Yin Kwin Village, Labutta Township, Ayeyarwady Division wanted 1,500,000 kyat in business loans and proposed an interest rate of 2.5-3% per month for donor funds. We suggested that the interest rate should be 5% to lenders and they were shocked: "No, no, state-owned bank only charges 1-2%".

As government-registered microfinance providers, IPs cannot legally charge interest rates in excess of 2.5% per month. However, we believe interest rates of 4-5% per month are perfectly reasonable (given inflation at about 1% per month and moneylenders lending at 8-10% or higher), even to poor households. At 4%, revolving funds and microfinance schemes can build capital rapidly, doubling their funds in 18 months and growing four-fold after 36 months.<sup>21</sup> Only after donors have put private moneylenders out of business should lower interest rates be considered.

No IPs, including Pact, gave the impression that they saw crowding out moneylenders as an important criterion of their success. There seems to be no systematic data collected about private lenders. From our visits, it seemed that uncollateralised moneylender rates were 15-30% per month in Labutta, and 5-12% per month around Bogale, and around 15% in Mawlamyinegyun.<sup>22</sup> In one WHH village near Bogale, Pact was lending at 2.5% per month, but the WHH-supported revolving fund of 23 women lent out their small loans at 5%. It may sound counterintuitive, but it is a sensible move to charge a higher interest rate in poorer areas like Labutta, to build up funds that crowd out moneylenders faster. In another village, the WHH self-help group charged only 3% per month, but they increased savings contributions to build the fund: "We started at 200 kyat contributed per week from each member, but it is now 500 kyat per week. If the loans work, we will increase to 1,000 kyat per week".<sup>23</sup>

We got the impression that the frequency and importance of moneylenders may have been exaggerated by some of the beneficiaries we interviewed, presumably

<sup>21</sup> This assumes no operating costs and 100% repayment, so it might in fact take longer.

<sup>22</sup> One Bogale villager said, "With gold as collateral, loans are now only 2% per month compared to 3-5% previously." This and other anecdotes suggested declining real interest rates across the Delta.

<sup>23</sup> They said they borrowed from moneylenders 1-2 times each year, during October/November at 6% per month.

with an eye on obtaining more cheap credit from donors. Rice farmers, in particular, would eventually admit to a set of loan and credit options that kept their pre-season borrowing within about 2-5% per month (with rates higher in Labutta than in Bogale). Moneylenders seem to be increasingly servicing only “desperation” loans, which are high risk and justify high rates, or for weddings or funerals, which can be repaid within one month from funds collected at those events.

Where collective funds were growing, CBOs sometimes spent savings on public goods. In Delta II, WHH banned that option to see if the funds would grow. So far, out of 60 villages, 10 have VDC funds of over US\$60 per member (averaging 72 member households per village), while 15 villages have not yet reached US\$20 per capita. A fund reaching, say, US\$200 per member would transform the economy of a village. The 283 members of 33 WHH self-help groups now average US\$48 per member, including five with over US\$80 per member (one with US\$171, and eight under US\$30 per member).

Growth brings its own problems. Village-based groups lack legal status and bank accounts.<sup>24</sup> When funds are small, they can continually revolve. But when funds grow, so do cash balances, particularly after harvest time. The cash might be stored in a box in one household.<sup>25</sup> Risks increase, as does the likelihood of bad debts. There are fewer obvious business opportunities, and farmers have all the credit they need for the growing season. The largest WHH VDC fund has 10.26 million kyat (US\$12,065) for its 165 members. In such circumstances, we recommend that CBOs and SHGs have a plan to grow quickly to a certain size, say US\$100-150 per member, and then grow 15% per year after that, which should keep the fund positive in real terms.

Once groups build up reserves, excess funds can then be used to assist members of the community or to build up a social protection fund. In Myo Chaung (Thadar/ActionAid) village, the community established a social protection fund in October 2012, with each household contributing 500 kyat per month. It now has 165,000 kyat, after supporting one woman with a problem pregnancy to travel to Mawlamyinegyun Township. The communities of nine other villages under the Thadar Consortium Project have also implemented social protection initiatives, including food for families with no food security (free food and food on credit), emergency health funds for vulnerable people, and livelihoods protection for the poor/poorest of the poor (ActionAid 2/2012, pp. 23-24).

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<sup>24</sup> Having bank accounts brings their own problems. Accounts would need multiple signatures for security, and a physical visit to the township to withdraw funds, not to mention very low interest rates on deposits.

<sup>25</sup> One solution is to build concrete safes in the household. These would have a metal door closed by three padlocks, with one key held by the home owner (and a spare key), and two other padlock keys held by two other household group members. The cash box would be inside the safe.

## Revolving Without a Plan to Grow

LEAD set up three product-specific (pigs, chickens, and vegetables) revolving funds for poor households in Lay Yin Kwin Village in Labutta Township. Typical of such funds, LEAD had a scheme to build up initial capital and provide training while allowing the group members to decide most policy matters. LEAD staff was careful to ensure that they were advisors, not decision makers.

LEAD gave pigs to 22 poor households. The pigs were sourced locally and were six-months old, not piglets—a lesson learned from Delta I, which experienced a high mortality rate. Each animal costs about 90,000 kyat and could be sold for a profit after six months. Recipient households paid only 27,000 kyat, which was treated as an ‘interest payment’ and put into a group revolving fund.

One household member was required to attend the monthly fund meetings. Typically wives were the ones who attended. Each household had to contribute a 500 kyat per month. They could also borrow up to 50,000 kyat at an interest rate of 2% per month. Those who missed meetings or had an outstanding loan were not eligible. The group had to approve the use of funds.

With the proceeds from the pigs, the fund grew to US\$360 in six months. There was no plan, however, for the fund once the capital injections finished. Bad debts were treated leniently. ‘A dog bit one pig and it died’, said a member of the fund. ‘So we extended the repayment period and bought them some piglets’. There was no vision or plan for scaling up business activities. LEAD did not do the math to see if the fund would grow in real terms (i.e., after inflation). Donors failed to explain the benefits of compound interest. For example, a fund that grows 20% per year doubles in just four years. It will grow nine fold in 12 years. An interest rate of 3% per month should achieve real capital growth while also allowing for selected forgiveness of bad debts.

Microfinance is most effective when offered on a self-selecting basis to all villagers. Thus, while Pact’s rhetoric about their targeting may not match the reality, we do not see that as a problem. The most benefit from microfinance will come from loans to landowners, who can use it to increase land productivity and, thereby, overall purchasing power in the township. Targeting the landless with micro-enterprise loans has some, but limited scope, and causes little net gain. (One business started may just be replacing one forced to close, which results in a displacement effect.) There are opportunities for new small businesses, but expansion in that area is limited by weak aggregate demand across the township. We visited one village where duck breeding had been supported. Now they had too many duck eggs, and local area prices had fallen. Nearby villages complained about the over-supply of duck eggs because they forced down prices of their duck eggs, but high transport costs to other areas meant they had to continue with low prices (or reduce supply). Poor households have a limited set of business choices. They function as small businesses dependent on local demand and prices. Promote too many in one area and you soon saturate demand.

## How Much of an ImPact?

The interesting questions about Pact are whether its resource-intensive model is justified, and whether it is growing its funds at present interest rates (2.5% per month – not cumulative, so 30% per year). This seems a high interest rate given inflation is running at about 10% per year.

Pact staff visits each village once every two weeks to collect interest payments, monitor activities, and conduct other tasks, resulting in relatively high administration costs. This is the Grameen Bank model from Bangladesh; but perhaps such intensive oversight and assistance is not necessary in the more literate and educated Myanmar context. Other lending systems in the region—the MADB, moneylenders, CBOs/SHGs, and private businesses—appear to function well without similar oversight.

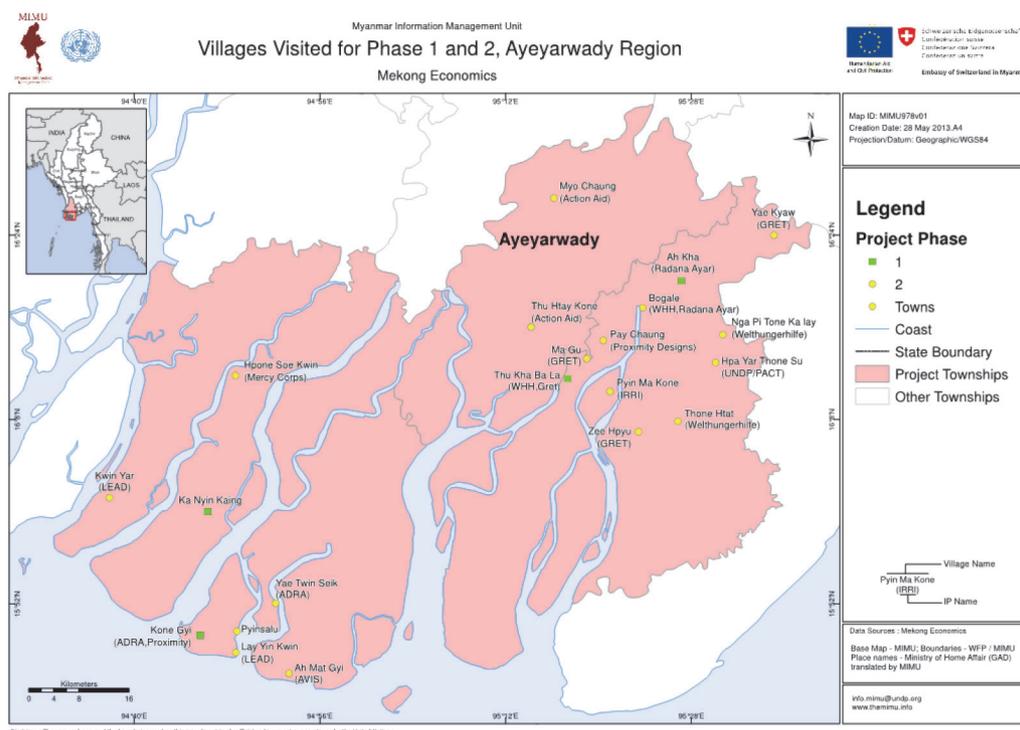
Pact's report on its microfinance programme in the Delta claims that 'private sector agriculture companies are closing down their agriculture loans due to the massive loan default', but we found nothing of the sort. Pact also claims that default risk is a serious concern, but there is no data on this, and no Pact villages that we visited reported it as more than a rare event.

Pact reports provide no insight into its operating costs, profits, or fund growth over time. After 14 years of privileged access to the Myanmar market (and a great deal of funding), Pact has fewer than 400,000 active borrowers. One suspects high operating costs prevent the funds from growing in real terms (i.e., above inflation). Pact operating costs are reportedly 15-18% of the gross loan portfolio, which given 30% per year interest revenue suggests a 10-14% fund growth (assuming a few bad debts). That is well above 2012 inflation rate of 6%, but it's not high enough when inflation is over 10%, which has been true for most of the past decade, and is expected to be the case during 2014-2016.

Pact should consider monthly village visits rather than twice monthly, if, as Pact reports, the loan default rate is presently less than 2%. They should also consider charging higher interest rates in areas where borrowing from moneylenders is frequent and uncollateralized rates exceed 12% per month. However, as mentioned previously, government laws currently preclude this.

LIFT should encourage Pact to review its policies, and LIFT should research 'portfolios of the poor' (i.e., high quality qualitative research about how poor people borrow and save), which would support Pact and the wider microfinance policy debate.

## 12. The LIFT Delta II Programme



### 12.1 On the Delta II Integrated Approach

*Has the integrated approach, as promoted in the Delta II subprogramme, been effective? Why (not) and how could any success be replicated?*

In October 2010, Delta I IPs were invited to submit proposals for new three-year projects to constitute Delta II that focus on economic growth (moving from relief to development post-Cyclone Nargis). Nine IPs were selected because they met these criteria. Consequently LIFT did not have a specific plan for an integrated approach for Delta II, or indeed to impose IP cooperation. There were plans to integrate IP logframes into the LIFT logframe, but with limited results. Regional workshops to agree on common outcome and output indicators did take place, yet there were inconsistencies in the data and a lack of instructive information. We found that the “call for proposals” procurement method makes this difficult. It is a competition, so IPs generally do not cooperate and plan together in the design phase. Cooperation between IPs was discussed and agreed in principle before funding, which IPs subsequently did, to varying degrees. The UNDP and Pact, for example, are jointly cooperating to provide microfinance services in coordination with Mercy Corps in Labutta, and German Agro Action is working in Bogale and Mawlamyinegyun (UNDP, 2/2012, p. 4). IRRI is also working closely with Mercy Corps in Labutta, as well as GRET, WHH, and Proximity Designs in Bogale and Mawlamyinegyun, to provide technologies for smallholder farmers involved in rice-based farming systems (IRRI, 2/2012, p. 3). Similarly, procurement activities could have achieved more if these were guided by

an explicit, structured plan to ensure integration, e.g., connect to an over-arching logframe, prioritise village tracts of the Delta, and make IPs specialise. One over-arching plan could benefit these activities immensely.

During field visits, the MTR teams found little evidence of the implementation of a common strategy or structured common approach among IPs. In fact, there was not even a clear and shared understanding of the term “integrated approach”. Existing practices in coordination, cooperation, and any geographic and thematic complementarities were made *ad hoc*, and synergies realised were incidental.

Integrating only LIFT-funded projects is of limited value in the Ayeyarwady Delta, where so many non-LIFT projects are on-going (LIFT Delta 1 delivered 10% of the US\$200 million spent by donors as of December 2010). Some INGOs operate without LIFT funds, while others have multiple sources. Pact, for example, receives only some of its funding from LIFT, and coordinates somewhat with their (non-LIFT) microfinance providers, such as World Vision and iDE. WHH and GRET work together to share funds from their own budgets, which come from LIFT as well as directly from the European Union. Consequently, there are some instances of overlap and duplication. Integration may be best supported by a Delta-wide sharing of information, such as the service provided by MIMU.

An integrated and cooperative approach must be imposed from above. For Delta III, LIFT could pre-select a group of proven NGOs and give them six months to plan an integrated strategy together based on LIFT’s criteria. A professional facilitator could be recruited to keep that process on schedule. Appropriate costs are already well known, so agreement on a final budget would be negotiated with LIFT. Thus, for example, in one village, Pact could provide microfinance to rice intensifying farmers, while Proximity Designs builds embankments. Another NGO could lead the FFS training, while another targets activity with landless and small acre farmers. An example of multiple IPs carrying out specific tasks within the same village is documented in FGD6. Other NGOs could then specialise in, say, value-added production and marketing, fishing, nutrition, or developing rural energy.

Ideally, LIFT should lead a “township profiling” exercise and identify target villages according to a set of commonly agreed criteria, identify focus areas (clusters of poorer villages, ideally with little prior donor assistance), and then divide these among the area-based IPs. LIFT would then ask IPs delivering complimentary specialised services to submit proposals to cover all of the focus areas, and ideally many more villages. Specialised services typically do not need to be area-based, i.e., focus just on a modest set of villages. Many have economies-of-scale and, with the benefit of information technologies, should cover hundreds of Delta villages. Many, however, are replacing what should be government services, so cooperation and phased handovers should be in project designs. Examples of specialised IP services are listed in the table below.

**Table 3. Specialised services and their impact potential**

Specialised Service	IPs now doing	Scale economics	Scope for IT benefits?	Scope for strong links to government?
Animal Health Workers	WHH	Yes	Some	Yes
Farm Advisory Services (SWOT team)	Proximity Designs	Yes	No (“hands on”)	Yes
Rice variety/method testing	IRRI	No	No	Some
Microfinance	Pact	Yes	Some	No
Rural energy		Yes	Some	No
Market price information	GRET	Yes	Yes	No
Farmer Q&A service	GRET& Rad-anar Ayar	Yes	Some	Yes

NB: In terms of establishing links with the government, Proximity’s farm advisory service and GRET’s farmer Q&A service, although not fully linked yet, have potential.

## 12.2 Cooperation amongst IPs in the Delta

*To what extent did IPs work together in terms of coordination, cooperation, complementarities (geographic and thematic), and synergies in the different townships?*

The degree of collaboration between IPs depended primarily on the personal/professional relationships that emerged between different IPs’ field staff. Operational coordination, being more formalised, seemed to have been satisfactorily achieved through monthly meetings.

Under Delta II, general coordination meetings are conducted monthly for about two hours at the township administration offices of Bogale, Labutta, and Mawlamyinegyun. INGOs, LNGOs, UN agencies, civil society organisations, and government departments join each general coordination meeting, which is headed by the Township General Administration officer. They are mostly administrative reporting meetings, although participants may bring up difficulties in project implementation, such as land issues or village-level administrators not collaborating well.

The Labutta Township Administration Officer is particularly active, including supporting links with line departments, providing suggestions, participating in events, and encouraging village-level administrators to support the implementation of project activities.

LIFT also holds monthly coordination meetings in Bogale (for Bogale and Mawlamyinegyun) and Labutta. The LIFT Delta Programme Coordinator facilitates the meetings. At the meetings, LIFT partners raise issues relating to project implementation, share lessons, and discuss collaborative activities. Through the meetings, LIFT can support its IPs on immediate issues, e.g., reporting, fund transactions, project redesigns, area expansions or overlaps, auditing, and mission visits.

In Labutta Township, there were fewer IPs and little concern with regards to coordination or cooperation. In Lay Yin Kwin village, LEAD staff reported that they do not implement fisheries activities, as the four IPs working there agreed to specialise. Other IPs chose Pact villages, or Pact chose other IP villages, in mutually supporting activities. Around Labutta, no revolving funds we examined had grown in size to threaten the importance of Pact loans.

The sudden withdrawal of EcoDev, leaving ADRA to pick up the pieces, has caused problems [FGD3] [FGD4]. ADRA needs help in reviewing their portfolio and in developing a new plan to the end of the project. Notably, they need professional advice (probably from outside Myanmar) about what to do with the 26 failed shrimp ponds, and to scale down their plans to support shrimp processing groups.

In Bogale, IP cooperation was on-going. IPs [FGD9] reported that they were continuing the almost monthly meetings of the Bogale Agriculture Technical Working Group (BATWG) (established by GRET, with Danida funding before LIFT), in which government officials were reportedly “keen participants” although they had had no meeting in recent months. The BATWG, which includes WHH/GRET, Proximity Designs, and UNDP, meets regularly to discuss technical issues and share information, and also invites speakers from Yangon. In addition, they perform joint assessments on agriculture in Bogale Township, such as the 2011 “Assessment Survey of Rainy Season Rice in Bogale and Mawlamyinegyun Townships”, and also worked with IRRI in implementing its LIFT interventions in the area (IRRI 2/2012, p. 3).

### 12.3 Moving from Humanitarian to Developmental Assistance

*To what extent have the IPs in Delta II managed to shift from a relief and rehabilitation phase to a development approach? What have been so far the strategies of IPs to boost economic development? Can these strategies be qualified as pro-poor? Could these strategies be scaled up at township and regional levels?<sup>26</sup>*

*“If people get used to hand-outs it might destroy markets”.*

- Esther Duflo, Director of MIT Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL)<sup>27</sup>

*“Sometimes NGOs support one village too much and they get lazy”.*

- Bogale Ministry of Planning Officer

Many IP staff mentioned that they had moved from humanitarian to developmental assistance. This, as noted above, led to new challenges in project designs and a more complex impact evaluation story. Some area-based IPs have done well: the example of AVSI is detailed in the box below. AVSI invested widely and heavily in a small area,

<sup>26</sup> The questions about scaling up and pro-poor targeting have been covered in previous sections.

<sup>27</sup> [http://www.ted.com/talks/esther\\_duflo\\_social\\_experiments\\_to\\_fight\\_poverty.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/esther_duflo_social_experiments_to_fight_poverty.html)

but with an eye on sustainability after so many subsidies, and it seems they will succeed. Other IPs, however, were more casual in their treatment of the sustainability of what they were supporting. That is the fundamental challenge of “developmental assistance” – we want it to last, while we accept that humanitarian assistance can have a once-off impact.

GRET has provided a mix of services and some commercial activities under Delta II. The commercial activities included establishing cooperative shops and a hire-purchase scheme for machinery. The shops are borderline sustainable and the net benefit for the village is not obvious. The shops possibly support machinery operations and maintenance and they sell fertiliser at slightly lower prices, but it is hard to see other benefits (and GRET does not measure them). Whether the hire-purchase scheme sustainably improves access to machinery remains to be seen. One GRET service is working with farmers to record and plan their expenditures and revenues to maximise profits over a year. This seems premised on the assumption that farmers are “getting it wrong” without documentation. It is hoped that this experiment is being carefully evaluated.

Ideally, GRET, as with WHH and other area-based IPs, is implementing a set of vaguely related interventions that have sustained impacts. At this stage, however, it seems that few will survive beyond the end of the project (or when the capital investment needs to be made again).

In the desire to meet the “developmental” criterion (and thus get LIFT funding), most IPs designed particular interventions to become commercially viable by the end of the project (or to have sustained revolving funds). MSN proposed commercialising tree nurseries, but they are failing to achieve expected sales. This is understandable because saplings are still provided free by the government. (We visited the Mawlamyinegyun nursery, where they deliver a quota of trees annually to each village at no cost.) Additionally, villagers sometimes grow fruit trees themselves, using seeds bought in township stores.<sup>28</sup> Subsidies have crowded out the possible commercialisation of this sector. As a result, we recommend that MSN be allowed to drop the commercial goals and restructure their project as a public-good activity until the project ends.

## **Gaining Ground**

### **AVSI in Ah Hmat Gyi Village**

Since May 2011, AVSI has been working to assist a self-selected group of 46 farmers in Ah Hmat Gyi Village to learn a new planting method. AVSI has 6 full-time staff running a Farmer Field School, which trains the farmers to move from the broadcasting or transplanting by forks method, to hand transplanting. The latter method is commonly used in other parts of the country. Hand transplanting yields rise to 65 baskets per acre, up from 30 baskets per acre using the broadcasting method and 35 with forks. Yields are even higher (75-80 baskets per acre) when farmers use new seed varieties. Hand transplanting, however, is skilled work. Labourers earn 20-25,000 kyat per acre, compared to 10,000 kyat when using forks;

<sup>28</sup> These are impressive stores with a wide range of products. They are typically run by agriculture university graduates.

chemical fertilisers cost 34,000 kyat per acre. Experienced hand transplanters can earn 4-5,000 kyat a day.

Farmer profits have also increased as a result of other (free) AVSI support, including:

- A new mill, which charges 300 kyat per basket compared to 400 kyat previously, and produces 25% more rice per paddy basket [\$17,650 cost to AVSI];
- Six threshing machines, which produce less waste and process faster [\$2,400 each];
- One large and two smaller paddy storage buildings;
- Six pairs of buffaloes [\$3,600];
- One trailer [\$2,400]; and
- Building embankments to stop flooding, which also controls water levels, making it possible to grow new rice varieties.

The 6 staff and office cost about US\$5,000 a month (US\$180,000 for three years). Total project cost is about \$6,000 per farmer. The opportunity cost is to give each farmer \$300 annually for the next 20 years. We argue that \$6,000 is not a concern so long as it results in a sustained impact on household incomes—sustained for generations, not just for a few years, or for the lifetime of the free machinery. A rigorous impact evaluation study could provide more data on nominal rewards. The valuation of sustained benefit is the key variable in any value-for-money (efficiency) calculation.

Twenty-five of the rice farmers received six-month Pact agricultural loans of US\$240 at 2.5% interest per month. The Myanmar Agriculture Development Bank does not lend to the island, as it is a designated forest area, despite growing rice for two generations. Most farmers need to borrow regularly for their business. A typical deal with private lenders (e.g., local shops or millers) is that for every one basket of rice borrowed at the start of the season to be repaid as two baskets six months later at harvest time.

IPs also provide seeds and fertilisers on credit. There are plans to open a cooperative bank account in Labutta (despite banks offering negative real interest rates).

A particularly worrisome aspect of the AVSI project is that key data are not collected. The agronomist staff measure land productivity that results from the use of new techniques or seeds, but they do not track farmer profits, debts, or even total output by each farmer. (LIFT should do the outcome and impact evaluations, not the IPs.)

When labelling ‘businesses’ as shops, traders, and manufacturers, it should not be forgotten that farmers are also engaged in a business, even if only to get enough food to eat for the whole year. The vision statement for AVSI (and other NGOs) should be simply to ‘increase farmer profits considerably and to make sure profits stay up there for decades after the project is closed’.

A farmer group member had in mind a clear business model. ‘We have five sources of income. When AVSI leaves and a machine breaks down we will do cost-benefit on just that machine and decide to replace it or not, using savings and the other four income sources. Meanwhile we know who to contact and we know the costs for operations and maintenance.’

AVSI is delivering targeted and expensive efforts to lift 46 rice farmers out of

poverty. The question remains whether such an intensive approach is needed to 'break the debt trap'. AVSI seems successful, but without hard results data we are left with questions.

## 12.4 Rice Production and Agricultural extension in the Delta

*To what extents have IPs developed and promoted rice crop intensification practices that could benefit both small-scale farmers and the landless people? What is the status of the innovation introduced during Delta 1: the single-plant transplanting technology?*

*What is the status of the introduction of a double cropping season in the brackish water zone? What is the status of the introduction of improved cropping practices in general, improved post-harvest practices, and improved rice seeds?*

*To what extent have employment opportunities in the rice sector been improved?*

The Ayeyarwady Delta is known as the rice bowl of Myanmar and approximately 80% of the families in this region, primarily farmers, fishermen and farm labourers are engaged in agriculture. There are three distinctive zones in the Delta: the fresh water zone (with a high production potential in the agriculture sector), the intermediate/brackish water zone (that offers limited opportunities in the agriculture sector, as well as opportunities in the fishery sector), and the salty areas (that rely mostly on the fishery sector). Rice is the major crop and there are about five million acres under cultivation in the Ayeyarwady region. The Delta typically produces a monsoon (rain-fed rice) crop, and, in some areas where fresh water is available, a summer (irrigated rice) crop is grown after the monsoon. Rice production in the Ayeyarwady region is vitally important for the production of high-quality fragrant rice for both domestic consumption and export.

### 12.4.1 Extension Education through Farmer Field Schools

LIFT Delta II promotes collaboration between IPs and has an integrated approach in activities like agricultural extension, micro-credit, and the provision of agricultural inputs. As of June 2012, IPs under Delta II work in 893 villages in four townships, reaching 25,426 households.

Many of LIFT's implementing partners in the Delta provide extension education and advisory services to farmers. They offer a variety of approaches: FFSs, farmer extension groups, farmer cooperatives, farm producers enterprises, farmer clubs, farm advisory services, field demonstrations, farm visits, etc. However, there is a lack of collaboration and cooperation among the IP staff that provide this extension education to farmers.

The FFS is one of the most popular approaches in the Ayeyarwady Delta. We had a chance to visit FFS villages and interview FFS graduates of AVSI and WHH/GRET's programmes during our field visit. The table shows the differences between FFSs

organised by AVSI and WHH/GRET. Both FFSs focus on similar learning topics, facilitated by agronomists, entomologists, and other scientists. FFSs were conducted during the monsoon rice-growing season in 2012.

**Table 4. Comparison between Farmer Training Methods**

AVSI - FFS (Labutta)	WHH/GRET - FFS (Bogale)
<b>Conducted two FFS in 2012, with 45 farmers from 7 villages attending, and over 40 signed up for 2013.</b>	Implemented two 3-day pre-FFS trainings. Implemented six FFS in 2012, with 184 farmers from 55 villages attending.
<b>Conducted field demonstrations, field visits twice per month.</b>	Conducted once per month + 3 days pre-school field demonstration, field visit
<p><b><u>Objectives:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>To provide improved agricultural technology and farm business management to farmers</b></li> <li>• <b>To increase rice production and productivity</b></li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Objectives:</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To improve access to up-to-date agricultural technology among farmers</li> <li>2. To increase yield per acre in each household</li> <li>3. To produce quality seed for seed market</li> <li>4. To increase soil fertility by using bio-fertilisers</li> <li>5. To prevent pest and disease damage in paddy fields</li> <li>6. To improve practices for winter crop cultivation</li> <li>7. To produce skilled farmers as local resource persons</li> </ol>
<p><b><u>Learning Topics:</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Seed bed preparation</b></li> <li>2. <b>Land preparation</b></li> <li>3. <b>Transplanting method</b></li> <li>4. <b>Fertiliser application method</b></li> <li>5. <b>Water management</b></li> <li>6. <b>Weed control</b></li> <li>7. <b>Pest and disease control</b></li> <li>8. <b>Roughing</b></li> <li>9. <b>Post-harvest technology</b></li> <li>10. <b>Seed storage technology</b></li> </ol>	<p><b><u>Learning Topics:</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Basic characteristics of various rice varieties; advantages and disadvantages of various cultivation systems</li> <li>2. Soil management, systematic fertiliser application</li> <li>3. Pest control and integrated pest management</li> <li>4. Disease control and integrated disease management</li> <li>5. Modern pesticides, fungicides and their environmental impact</li> <li>6. Rodent control</li> <li>7. Plant nutrient and plant nutrient extraction methods</li> <li>8. Seed technology and weed control</li> <li>9. Post-harvest technology</li> <li>10. Farmer led experiment and experiment design</li> </ol>

FFS education is hands-on and employs a very participatory approach. FFSs allow farmers to openly discuss problems, issues, challenges, and opportunities. Farmers were given the opportunity to get involved in situation analysis, problem solving and decision-making. While at the school and at field demonstration plots, farmers had opportunities to share knowledge with others, and offered comments and suggestions. All training topics are important and FFSs create learning opportunities for farmers throughout the growing season. However there has been little emphasis on farm economics, cost-benefit analysis of new practices, and market information at FFSs.

According to IP reports, over 200 farmers attended and graduated from FFSs under Delta II, however, there is little information about the outcomes for farmers after they attend the trainings. FFSs should not be seen as a one-time educational opportunity. Farmers need constant updating of their knowledge and skills. According to farmers interviewed from AVSI and WHH schools, they learned about new farming techniques, such as seed selection and planting methods. However, farmers rarely mentioned their behaviour change or whether they adopted any of the new practices. Generally speaking, women farmers are more active participants than men in discussions about issues and challenges, and, therefore, should be encouraged to attend FFS in greater numbers.

To measure effectiveness of the FFS approach, an impact assessment study is needed to find out whether (and how many) FFS graduates have changed their behaviour, and adopted new methods and good agricultural practices. For those that adopt new practices, we need to assess their results in terms of changes in productivity, total household farm production, gross margins per acre, and net household farm income.

## Feedback from FFS key farmers/ FFS graduates

### FFS graduates of AVSI, Ah Mat Gyi Village, Labutta Township

We interviewed three key farmers/FFS graduates (two men and one woman) in Ah Mat Gyi Village. Farmers reported that they learned about good agricultural practices and the single-plant transplanting (SPT) method. They understood that yields are much higher using SPT but they are constrained by the lack of skilled labour in the village. Farmers need to transplant at the same time, and there are only five people in the village who can plant using the SPT method. It is labour intensive and farmers have to pay more for hand transplanting. All three farmers reported they tried to grow rice using the SPT method during the 2012 monsoon season but only on three acres, and those were dedicated to seed production. Otherwise, they employed the traditional method of using forks in deep-water areas and broadcasting in upland areas. One farmer said, "The best reward the FFS gave me was the learning opportunity throughout the growing season from land preparation through harvesting and storage".

The production portfolio of three AVSI farmers:

Farmer	SPT	Broadcasting	Fork Trans-planting
<b>Variety grown in monsoon</b>	<i>Paw San Yin</i> <i>Sin Thwe Latt</i>	<i>Ye Ngan Bo</i> <i>Hnan Gar</i>	<i>Paw San Yin</i> <i>Ye Ngan Bo</i> <i>Hnan Gar</i>
<b>1 (14 acres)</b>	3 acres	4 acres	7 acres
<b>2 (16 acres)</b>	3 acres	1 acre	12 acres
<b>3 (8 acres)</b>	3 acres	2 acres	3 acres
<b>Average Yield</b>	80 basket/acre	45 basket/acre	60 basket/acre
<b>Transplanting cost</b>	40000 kyat/acre	0	20000 kyat/acre

Farmers also reported they achieved higher yields with the Paw San Yin rice variety by growing it in sandy soil compared with clay soil. (The salt content remains high in the clay soil for a long time, which reduces the yield.) Farmers prefer to grow the Sin Thwe Latt variety but they don't have access to quality seeds of that variety. They were provided with only one basket per acre by AVSI for seed multiplication, and they have to pay back 1.5 baskets per acre to cooperative farmers at harvesting time. Seeds were stored to redistribute to farmers for the next monsoon season. Many farmers in the village were gradually adopting hand-transplanting methods and SPT.

### FFS graduates from WHH, Ngapi Tone Hle Village, and Bogale Township

We interviewed two key farmers, who attended a WHH/GRET-sponsored FFS in Ngapi Tone Hle Village in Bogale. Both farmed on fewer than 10 acres. Farmers reported that they learned many things at the FFS, and they later tried to share their knowledge and experience with other farmers in their village. One farmer said, "I like the SPT method, but I could not find the skilled labour in our village for SPT. Many young people migrated to Yangon and other cities for construction jobs where they earn more money". Farmers in this village used to transplant rice during the monsoon season by using forks in deep-water areas and direct seeding in upland areas. They hired women from the northern delta (Hinthada, Kyonepyaw, and Zalun townships) to hand transplant as they were skilled in this technique. The other farmer said, "Most farmers in our village adopted hand transplanting. We also don't see a big difference in rice yields between HT and SPT. The heavy rains at harvesting time caused the loss of yield and decrease in rice quality. Another problem we are facing is a lack of access to quality seed."

The production portfolio of two WHH/GRET farmers:

	Monsoon Rice	Summer Rice
<b>Farmer 1</b>	All hand transplanting	<i>Thee Htat Yin</i> (5 acres)
	<i>Paw San</i> (4 acres)	0.5 acre - SPT
	<i>Thee Htat Yin</i> (1 acre)	4.5 acre - broadcasting
<b>Farmer 2</b>	All hand transplanting	<i>Thee Htat Yin</i> (9 acres)
	<i>Paw San</i> (6 acres)	0.5 acre - SPT
	<i>Hnan Gar</i> (2 acres)	3.5 acres - broadcasting
	<i>Thee Htat Yin</i> (1 acre)	5 acres - drum seeder

Some keys to successful FFS implementation include effective communication, state-of-the-art technical information, validating farmer knowledge, and on-farm agro-ecosystem analysis. With such an approach, FFSs will generate great social capital in that they bring neighbours together in intense and highly participatory training exercises, leading to a very tight group at completion. Further strengthening of FFSs can be achieved by:

- Providing farmers with skills and knowledge to make their own decisions, including financial analysis of alternative farming practices, facilitating access to, and use of, market information.
- Offering farmers technical assistance for emergency issues they encounter in their fields, such as pest, insect, and disease-related problems. Many currently do not know whom to turn to for such help. One farmer interviewed reported that he had called Proximity Designs' Farm Advisory Services (FAS) team a few times for help with pest-related problems he was encountering in his rice fields. Unfortunately, no one answered the telephone, and he did not receive the

advice he required.

- Organising more farmer field days and farm visits by different FFSs. This would allow farmers to share knowledge, information, experiences, and success stories. Farmers would get a chance to learn about the similarities and differences of FFS lessons and activities.
- Improving the FFS curricula/training module/lesson plans so that they not only focus on agricultural production technologies, but also on cost-benefit analysis and value addition, farm management, and farm business management.
- Introducing information and communication technology (ICT) into the schools e.g., make and provide CD-ROM materials, including translations of international websites and training videos and materials.
- Promoting farmers' meetings/conferences at the township and regional level. Invite private sector and food-related businesses to the meetings and create opportunities for farmers to have roundtable discussions with the private sector.
- Developing a Farmer Advisory Committee and Farmer Information and Advisory Centres. These could be training centres, so farmers could meet for their monthly Farmer Advisory Committee meetings, during which they would set extension priorities for their specific village tract, and then participate in the specific types of meetings and training courses they wanted or needed.
- Recruiting young active key farmers, including key women farmers, and encourage them to participate in FFS activities.
- Researching the impact of the FFS approach on the adoption of SRI and SPT to document how FFS graduates change their behaviour related to cropping systems. Ascertain how they implement new planting methods and whether they adopt good agricultural practices, and if they share knowledge gleaned from FFSs with other farmers in their village/community.
- Conducting roundtable discussions on the following themes:
  - FFS programme design and development. What happens after to farmers after FFS graduation?
  - How can FFS programmes remain relevant and innovative?

#### **12.4.2 Adoption of SRI, SPT and Hand Transplanting**

Since 2004, GRET has been supporting the introduction and dissemination of a system of rice intensification (SRI). The practice led to the improvement of paddy production at the household level. This success provided the impetus for GRET to also introduce SRI in the Ayeyarwady Delta in the summer season of 2008, which involved taking into consideration the specificity of the area, and the targeting of a different population of farmers.

GRET is of the opinion that the introduction of SRI in the Ayeyarwady Delta has significant potential. It would rely on some adaptive strategies, rather than focusing on all the SRI principles. The introduction of selected SRI principles would lead to significant changes in practices and generally better crop management. It would primarily concern sowing rates, pests and diseases, as well as weed control and fertiliser management. Such improvements would decrease farmers' costs in relation to paddy production, increase their yield, and contribute to an overall improvement in their food security and livelihoods. In the meantime, it is worth mentioning that application of full SRI principles would be highly recommended and suitable for seed selection (purification) and multiplication. Indeed, SRI has already proven to be an efficient tool in participatory plant breeding and seed multiplication.

With such potential for a large-scale increase in the production of rice, the adoption of a system of rice intensification has remained surprisingly slow. The reason, perhaps, is that the approach is very knowledge-intensive and requires careful study and continuous experimentation to find out the most effective combination of practices matching the rice plant with its growing environment, such as changing the spacing between plants, seedling age, planting depth, timing and methods of irrigation and drainage, ability to control water levels, as well as methods of weeding.

The LIFT Baseline Survey, conducted in late 2011 of 800 Delta/Coastal households (656 households from Ayeyarwady, plus 144 households from Rakhine), reported that for the monsoon rice 45% was broadcasted; 1% used drum seeders; and 54% transplanted. It was reported that for the post monsoon rice 82% was broadcasted; 4% used drum seeders; and 14% transplanted.

We interviewed 51 women who grew rice and received agricultural loans from Pact in Phayar Thone Su Village in Bogale. Some women attended field demonstrations organised by the WHH/GAA Farmer Field School, where they received lessons in good agricultural practices, including SPT. Almost 53% of women reported that they employed the HT method, while the remaining 47% said they used broadcasting. The yield averaged 65 baskets per acre from hand transplanting and 45 baskets per acre from broadcasting. In relation to summer rice (post monsoon), all the women grew the *Thee Htat Yin* variety (matures in 115-120 days) using broadcasting, and the average yield was 65 baskets per acre. Farmers reported that they usually don't apply fertilisers to the monsoon rice due to flooding. However, they do use fertilisers on summer rice.

In Phayar Thone Su Village, we also interviewed a man who was a key farmer graduate from WHH/GAA's FFS. He said: "I learned about SRI and SPT at the FFS provided by WHH/GAA. Water management is the key to SRI. I grew one acre using SPT and nine acres by the broadcasting method during the last monsoon season. I produced 120 baskets per acre using SPT and 70 baskets per acre from broadcasting. I hired labourers from the upper Delta townships of Zalun and Danuphyu to carry out the HT, and I paid them 30,000 kyat for one acre."

Farmers are moving cautiously towards adopting HT and SPT. They know that yields are much higher, but so are costs, and the fields require more attention (such as water management). Even when these methods are clearly preferable, it will take some years for them to be widely adopted. For now, farmers would prefer to watch other farmers

experiment, and then try the techniques themselves in small areas, increasing over time. Furthermore, in deep-water areas, farmers can only transplant rice, using forks during the monsoon season.

In Aye Ywar Pay Chaung Village, where Proximity Designs' FAS have been provided for the last two years, we collected data from ten farmers, which illustrates their gradual adoption of new rice planting techniques. During the summer, all were still broadcasting, with only the richest farmer carrying out a little HT and SPT. Three others tried using drum seeders on one acre each. In relation to the monsoon crop, farmers used the hand transplanting method on 35% of their acres, while the rest employed mostly forks.<sup>29</sup> Only two small farmers used HT, while three larger farmers split their land and used both techniques. Four others experimented with one acre of hand transplanting. There was a consensus that HT should prove itself first, before single-plant transplanting is tested, which has less obvious advantages. A cost-benefit analysis might suggest that they should all move to SPT next season, but it is unlikely they could be convinced to do so. Farmers are risk-averse, and prefer to test the methods for themselves, even if it takes longer. Furthermore, many farmers cannot control and manage water levels in their fields. Flooding and stagnant water means they have to reseed. Successful water management is required before moving to transplanting methods.

**Table 5. Broadcasting still dominates summer crop**

<b>SUMMER CROP (acres)</b>					
<b>Farmer</b>	Broadcasting	Drum Seeder	HT (3-4 plants)	SPT (1 plant)	
<b>1</b>	47	0	2	1	
<b>2</b>	9	1	0	0	
<b>3</b>	7	1	0	0	
<b>4</b>	9	0	1	0	
<b>5</b>	15	1	0	0	
<b>6</b>	10	0	0	0	
<b>7</b>	4	0	0	0	
<b>8</b>	10	0	0	0	
<b>9</b>	10	0	0	0	
<b>10</b>	2	0	0	0	
<b>Total</b>	123	3	3	1	

<sup>29</sup> Those using broadcasting for the monsoon crop probably had low-lying land unsuitable for the use of any other method. The relative disinterest in the drum seeder is also interesting.

**Table 6. Fork and HT are common for the monsoon crop**

MONSOON CROP (acres)						
Farmer	Broadcasting	Drum Seeder	HT (3-4 plants)	SPT (1 plant)	Fork	
1	0	0	25	0	25	
2	0	0	5	0	5	
3	1	0	1	0	6	
4	0	0	5	0	5	
5	5	0	1	0	10	
6	0	0	0	0	10	
7	0	0	4	0	0	
8	0	0	1	0	9	
9	1	0	1	0	8	
10	0	0	2	0	0	
<b>Total</b>	7	0	45	0	78	

#### 12.4.3 Rice Variety and Quality Seed Access

In the saline coastal area of the Delta, the local rice variety, *Hnan Gar*, is the seed most commonly used. It is photosensitive with very poor yield, but it has a moderate tolerance for salinity (~4 dSm<sup>-1</sup>) and submergence. Moreover, it is also tolerant to Ufra disease (nematode is a serious problem), and has good dormancy, with short slender grains. Many farmers in the lower Delta prefer to grow *Hnan Gar* for these reasons.

The farmers of Labutta, located in the saline coastal area of the Ayeyarwady Delta, usually grow rice only during the monsoon season. Farmers reported that they grew the *Paw San*, *Ye Ngan Bo*, *Hnan Gar*, and *Let Yone Gyi* varieties. These varieties are suitable for deep-water areas, taking 170-180 days to mature, but they generally produce low yields (40-60 baskets per acre). AVSI provided *Sin Thwe Latt* seed to their cooperative farmers for use in a seed multiplication programme. It is a high-yielding, fast-growing variety, taking 140 days to mature, while also being salt tolerant and resistant to bacterial leaf blight. Farmers prefer to grow *Sin Thwe Latt* but they lack access to quality seed. AVSI provides three baskets of seed to each farmer, which is used on three acres. After harvest time, farmers have to pay back 1.5 baskets per acre of seed to the Farmers' Cooperative, where seeds are stored and distributed during the next growing season.

Farmers interviewed in Hpone Soe Kwin Village in Labutta (Mercy Corp beneficiaries), reported that a farm producer enterprise was formed in their village with seven member farmers in March 2012. Several attended a farm management meeting in Ah Mat Kyi village where they learned about the saltwater seed selection technique, land preparation, and fertiliser application. Farmers reported that they grew different varieties of rice, such as *Paw San Yin*, *Hnan Gar*, *Khun Ne*, *Yezin*, *Saga War*, and *Manaw Thukha*, and usually achieved an average yield of 45 baskets per acre. There are many acres that lie fallow because they do not have salt tolerant rice varieties. Mercy Corps

gave certified *Paw San Yin* seeds for seed production to ten selected farmers in the village with. Each farmer grew a maximum of five acres for seed production, with farmers getting an average yield of 65 baskets per acre—a 20 basket increase on average. Mercy Corps provided a rice barn in the village where farmers could store their seed for the next growing season.

The most common varieties of rice grown in Bogale were *Hnan Gar* and *Paw San Bay Gyar*. A high-yield variety called *Thee Htat Yin* was introduced to Bogale around 1993. In 2009, after Cyclone Nargis, a new high-yield variety called *Sin Thwe Latt* was introduced by local philanthropists, who now form part of Radanar Ayar’s network and board. Radanar Ayar also introduced another high-yield variety namely *Yadanar Toe* in 2010. Only *Thee Htat Yin* is suitable for the summer rice season. *Paw San Bay Gyar*, *Hnan Gar*, *Sin Thwe Latt*, *Yadanar Toe*, and *Khun Ne* are grown in the rainy season. Radanar Ayar is producing certified seeds in 600 acres of participating villages’ fields, and storing and then redistributing seeds to farmers in Bogale Township.

Based on interviewed farmers’ responses, the most common rice varieties grown in Labutta, Bogale and Mawlamyinegyun are summarised as follows:

**Table 7. Rice varieties across the three townships**

Responses of interviewed farmers	Labutta (salt water zone) Single Cropping	Bogale (salt, fresh, brackish water zone) Double Cropping	Mawlamyinegyun (salt, fresh, mixed water zone) Double Cropping
<b>Monsoon Rice</b>	<i>Paw San Yin</i> <i>Paw San Bay Gyar</i> <i>Hnan Gar</i> <i>Ye Ngan Bo</i> <i>Let Yone Gyi</i> <i>Sin Thwe Latt</i> <i>Khun Ne</i> <i>Sagawar</i> <i>Manaw Thu Kha</i> (125-130 days) Yezin varieties (100-120 days)	<i>Paw San Bay Gyar</i> <i>Hnan Gar</i> <i>Sin Thwe Latt</i> <i>Yadanar Toe</i> <i>Khun Ne</i>	<i>Paw San Bay Gar</i> <i>Khun Ne</i> <i>Japanma</i>
<b>Maturity Days</b>	170-180 days	170-180 days	170-180 days
<b>Average Yield</b>	50-70 baskets/acre	60-90 baskets/acre	60-90 baskets/acre
<b>Summer Rice</b>	-	<i>Thee Htat Yin</i>	<i>Thee Htat Yin</i>
<b>Maturity Days</b>	-	(HYV, 115-120 days)	(HYV, 115-120 days)
<b>Average Yield</b>	-	80-100 baskets/acre	80-100 baskets/acre

The LIFT Baseline survey, conducted in late 2011, reported that 82% of farmers used their own seeds for the monsoon crop. According to the responses of farmers interviewed in Bogale, a double cropping system in the brackish water zone was successful. They reported that cropping practices in general, and post-harvest practices in particular, have improved in recent years. The majority of farmers still lack

access to quality seeds suitable for their land. There is also lack of collaboration and cooperation among IPs regarding rice variety selection and access to quality seed.

IRRI implemented different activities, including rice variety trials, nutrient management trials, and weed management, during the 2012 monsoon and 2013 summer cropping seasons. This was done in collaboration with Mercy Corps in Labutta and with WHH and GRET in Bogale and Mawlamyinegyun. In 2012, IRRI also provided training on “participatory adaptive research on stress tolerant rice” and on “post-harvest management for improved quality of rice grain and seed” in both Labutta and Bogale. A total of 109 participants, including farmers, rice millers, and DOA and NGO staff, attended. Farmers are rarely presented with such great opportunities for conducting research activities, and they should be proud of themselves as researchers. It would be interesting to see what impact this training has had on how DOA and NGO staff apply this knowledge in their extension practices.

The farmers interviewed in each village reported that they don’t have access to purified quality seed, with only key farmers/GGS graduates reporting that they had a sufficient supply. Many farmers use their own seed or buy seed from neighbouring farms. There are so many local lines in the villages that farmers can get them easily and cheaply. Examining the IRRI research outcomes, it could be suggested that more seed production farmers should be recruited, and intensive training on seed production technology provided.

**Research Needs:** While key farmers/contact farmers learned about new varieties of rice, there was little information about how farmers used what they learned on their own farms, or how they educate and share their experiences with others. Both quantitative (number of participating farmers/villages/acres/trials) and qualitative (farmers’ perceptions and behaviour change) output information should be collected. IRRI should invite rice researchers from DAR, as well as representatives from regional seed farms and extension workers from DOA at the township level, to visit the farmers’ research activities.

Many IPs responded that they are collaborating well with local government organisations through the monthly coordinators’ meeting, training, field demonstrations, and community events. Some IPs seem to be also in regular contact with DOA and DAR, which provide them with technical assistance in relation to rice production technology, including access to quality rice seed. The government is also seeking to get to know and work more closely with donors. IPs in Labutta reported that local authorities have just started asking for copies of monthly reports, whereas in Bogale, IPs already report monthly to their respective township line departments. Every IP that works in the rice sector should collaborate more with public/government organisations, such as DOA, DAR, and the Agriculture University. There are seven crop research centres and 17 satellite farms under DAR that focus on rice across the country. DAR has released many rice varieties based on different agro-ecosystems, which might provide a good source of quality seeds for the IPs.

**Other Extension Research Needs:** Proximity Designs has been providing farm advisory services in Bogale for about two years. These services are provided by an extremely efficient team of 24 technical field staff members, whose work increased

the productivity, and improved the lives, of 12,122 farm households within a year (Proximity's project progression report was submitted to LIFT in February 2013). Each staff member works with over 500 households, providing information and advisory services to farmers in regards to soil, pest, and disease problems on their farm. The field staff is managed by a plant pathologist based in Bogale, and a senior manager and entomologist based in Yangon. Please see all the programme activities in the table below.

We are very impressed with their quantitative outputs. However, the qualitative impact/outcome of each activity is missing. This represents a future extension research opportunity for YAU graduate students. Furthermore, without any changes, the services are not sustainable. It is unlikely to be profitable without project support, and in the absence of donor funding any extension should be government-supported.

**Table 12.5. Rice varieties across the three townships**

	# villages	# participants	# female participants
<b>Introduction Meeting</b>	422	8,133	1,815
<b>SWSS</b>	395	3,582	392
<b>SWSS Demonstrations</b>	361	6,518	1,235
<b>Green Fertiliser</b>	40	170	7
<b>SWAT Team Cases</b>	175	345	17
<b>Farmer Visits</b>	63	150	6
<b>Farmer Workshops</b>	28	220	61
<b>Key Farmers</b>	25	25	0
<b>Contact Farmers</b>	126	134	4
<b>Drum Seeders</b>	20	23	1
<b>Seed Transportation</b>	38	72	0

#### 12.4.4 Rice farmer access to labour and capital

The shortage of skilled labour for HT was a commonly cited problem. Hand transplanting is much more labour-intensive than the fork or broadcasting method, which was the main "trickle down" impact argument of the IPs. HT, however, is a skilled task. Workers are paid per acre completed, and skilled workers can earn 6-8,000 kyat per day. Unskilled, and, therefore, slower workers, can only earn 3,000 per day—the same as the daily wage paid for using forks or broadcasting. Of course, the higher yields should justify paying even more for HT, but it will take time for farmers to be convinced that the higher up-front investment is justified.

The lack of formal savings and credit services has made it difficult for poor households to manage their seasonal cash flow and expenditures. Some smallholders have to sell their paddy even before harvest at well below the market price to buy inputs. Consequently, discussions with villagers revealed that they usually have to sell most paddies immediately after harvest to pay back debts on time. In the banking vacuum, many private solutions have emerged (see box below).

### **Filling the Financing Gap in the Rice Sector**

In order to create a market for their goods and services, some private businesses extend credit to their customers. In Labutta, the Northern Dragon fertiliser company sells a bag of fertiliser for 26,500 kyat, or 28,000 kyat on credit (pay 50% now, and 50% after harvest). Nearly all sales are on credit terms, for which farmers must bring a letter of recommendation from their village leader, their bank account book (which shows how many acres they own), and registration card. The company also supplies bags wholesale, and entirely on credit to millers, who pass them on to select farmers (repaid after harvest with 2.5 baskets of paddy, which works out to about 8% per month interest). Northern Dragon sold 6,000 bags on credit last season, making them a supplier of nearly US\$100,000 of credit to rice farmers.

In Bogale, mill owners have contributed funds to buy shares of a loan scheme run by Mr. Hla Win. He sells fertiliser and seeds on credit to farmers (2% per month with the loan due post-harvest), and he uses the mill owner funds to make cash loans for the season at 2% month. He lends 40,000 kyat per acre and made 600 loans in 2012. "Moneylenders charge 7-8% per month," he said. "But a few years ago they charged 15-20%."

There are reportedly 60 companies providing financing for rice production in Myanmar, extending an estimated US\$40-\$65 million in loans each harvest season. Those under the umbrella of the Myanmar Rice Industry Association reported an average 95% repayment rate during 2010-2012.

#### **12.4.5 Extension and Research Needs**

In developed countries, and in countries where extension reform has been pursued, a plethora of extension providers now exist, including individuals, non-profit and non-governmental organisations, for-profit private companies, rural producer organisations, and associations of extension specialists, as well as national, state, and municipal extension service providers.

#### **Training Needs: Capacity Building Training and in-service Training**

We had the opportunity to interview field staff from IRRI, GRET, WHH, Radanar Ajar, Proximity Designs, Pact, AVSI, and Mercy Corps, in three townships (Labutta, Bogale and Mawlamyinegyun). Many IP staff reported that they required training on management and M&E. They said they needed capacity building and in-service training to update their knowledge and improve their work performance. They also sometimes feel uncomfortable working with farmers in the field, as they lack a full understand and/or awareness of many issues. (Often we found that reports were written by a person who had not spent any time in the field.) Their specific training needs are in the areas of management, communication, field work journaling and report writing, monitoring and evaluation, cost-benefit analysis, data and information collection (qualitative and quantitative), and information and communications technology (ICT).

## 12.5 Delta III?

LIFT and the LIFT FB should make their strategic decisions about Delta III this year. The first decision is whether it is time to expand beyond the current villages LIFT works in. There are 11,651 villages in the Ayeyarwady region, and LIFT is active in only a few hundred. Admittedly, these villages were those most affected by Cyclone Nargis, but there are other poor areas that have yet to see substantial donor assistance.

What we suggest is that the LIFT FMO work with the regional government and townships to undertake “township profiles”. LIFT should work with local level administrators and technical departments to reach a general agreement on which villages are poorest, and which ones would make the most effective use of development assistance. In other words, a targeting approach which utilises a “participatory” (by local authorities) process to classify and group villages. Such classifications should be made based on agreed criteria such as remoteness, no previous (post-Nargis) assistance, a poor natural resource base, and a lack of economic opportunities. The findings would be shared with all donors by the end of 2013. With the information in hand, the LIFT FB can make the decisions. Our sense is that assistance to Bogale should be scaled down or even ceased, in favour of new clusters of villages.

In discussing the integrated approach of Delta II, above, we made a distinction between area-IPs (e.g., AVSI, WHH, ActionAid, GRET, LEAD, and ADRA) and IP specialised services (e.g., IRRI, Proximity Designs, SWOT, Pact, and GRET). This is a useful device for designing Delta III. As mentioned previously, one approach could be that LIFT defines the target area and works with area IPs to allocate villages IPs that provide specialised services then prepare proposals to cover at least all LIFT villages.

Comparing the area-focused IPs, we were most impressed with the approach and results of ActionAid [FGD13] and LEAD. Their capacity-building approach to villages does not lead to quick disbursements, but it does seem to produce the most impressive sustainable results. The box below outlines the ActionAid approach. LEAD works in a similar capacity, but with a less structured model. What they have in common is that they “cook with the people”, whereas other IPs have a more “menu-driven” approach (see box). We were particularly impressed with the LEAD team in Lay Yin Kwin Village, Lay Yin Kwin Village, Labutta Township, Ayeyarwady Division. The team was analytical about issues and really understood their roles as facilitators and advisors as opposed to being project managers.

## ActionAid as Best Practice

Action Aid Myanmar (AAM) uses a unique approach to development in which little funding is provided to villages in its project areas. Instead, AAM aims to increase the capacities of local groups, and change attitudes and form positive relationships with local government. This self-reliance model enables the village to be the driving force behind its own development by allowing the community to both voice and service its own needs.

The self-reliance model relies on AAM's Fellowship Programme or Change Maker Programme. Fellows are often recent college graduates who work with AAM for a period of two years to facilitate the change process in villages. Both before and during their village placement, fellows are given intensive training in conceptual understanding of development, along with more pragmatic "tools", such as participatory methodology, leadership, CBO formation, and reporting.

To facilitate the self-reliance model, the fellows teach villagers administrative skills and implement formal procedures. As such, projects, plans, and budgets are subject to transparency boards and a social audit. Due to the increased levels of community motivation and empowerment, self-help groups (SHG) begin to be formed. AAM's role is to help coordinate villagers' efforts. In fact, the whole point of the project is for communities to identify their own needs and create their own groups.

The whole process is supported by capacity building initiatives. In total, more than 600 different capacity building initiatives covering 30 topics have been implemented by AMM. To ensure the sustainability of the programme, change makers select community volunteers, who they subsequently closely work with, passing on the knowledge and skills they received during training. AAM has been successful in motivating and organizing communities to take responsibility for their own development. This allows for greater community ownership, buy-in, and ultimately a more sustainable project following its completion.

- Menu driven: Come with a menu of activity choices, discuss them with villagers, and then implement several activities that allow group funds to grow, under donor rules and oversight. Quick disbursement. Village managed by regular staff visits.
- "Cooking with the people": Help people get organised and define their own problems and solutions. Take time and build capacities. Live in the village (LEAD, AVSI, ActionAid), or recruit and train people from the village (ActionAid fellow). Support village change agenda, eventually with funding. Slow disbursement.

Delta III should support expanded roles for ActionAid and LEAD, particularly when new villages are added that have little or no prior donor assistance. AVSI was also impressive (see box above), but with a very resource-intensive approach,<sup>30</sup> which makes scaling-up difficult.

<sup>30</sup> The AVSI approach may prove necessary to allow rice hand transplanting to take off, which is proving more difficult than anticipated. That will be the real test of the AVSI model. ActionAid conducted centralised training, in addition to taking individual farmers from villages for 15 days of HT training. However, this did not cause the desired change. ActionAid may represent best practice, but they are not perfect.

### 13. THE COUNTRYWIDE PROGRAMME

This chapter presents findings about the Countrywide Programme (CWP). Consequently it repeats some of the research questions addressed above (although the Delta II programme also had some research questions only about that programme). This chapter also provides more detail relating to the above “results and impact” summary matrices, and covers some new issues (such as social protection).

The Countrywide Program<sup>31</sup> is distinct from the Delta activities in two fundamental ways. First, the CWP was established after the first Delta activities, and, therefore, is not as entrenched. Because it was not designed as an aid program it didn't have to evolve from humanitarian to development assistance. Second, the CWP is a set of projects rather than an integrated programme. The CWP should be seen as a cluster of complementary projects and activities within a common framework of support and funding, generally focusing on improving the quality of life and economic security of participants under the theme of rural livelihoods and food security for the poor and vulnerable. Many issues, however, such as access to finance (analysed above) are fundamentally the same.

Overall, the CWP is beset with a number of challenges. These include the legacy of the damage of the 2012 drought, insufficient access to farm credit, and, in some areas, labour shortages and subsequent increases in labour costs. The drought resulted in a significant decrease in yields of pigeon peas, pulses, beans, groundnuts, and sesame seeds. One year on, farmers in communities visited are still recovering, having accumulated debt and with fewer fields in production.

The CWP covers a large and diverse area, and caution is needed when generalising about the whole area. For example, in Chin and Shan States, labour shortages have increased wages to 2,500 kyat per day (up from 1,500 last year), whereas in the Dry Zone the landless labour wage has fallen to a low as 700 kyat per day. Many of the households we spoke with said that this increased rate was too difficult to bear. They also lacked access to affordable credit. They would not be able to clear, prepare, and plant fields as in the past so they were choosing to decrease the amount of land under cultivation.

One of the drivers behind the increased labour costs has been the recent government investment in road construction and repair, which was hiring local unskilled labourers at higher rates than farmers can pay. There may also be more sustained causes, such as the rising demand for construction workers in Yangon, and labour-migration to Thailand. While increasing wages brings immediate problems for landowners, the benefits are also immediate for the poorer landless households. If sustained, higher wages will encourage more capital-intensive agricultural practices (mechanisation), which is typically seen in rapidly developing economies.

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<sup>31</sup> The CWP includes the Dry Zone (the low-lying central part of the country, which includes large parts of Mandalay, Magwe, and southern Sagaing regions), the Hilly Areas (upland areas in Kachin, Chin, and Shan States). The Coastal Region, comprising of Rakhine State, was excluded from this MTR.



Myanmar Information Management Unit  
**Villages Visited for Phase 1 and 2**  
 Mekong Economics



Embassy of Switzerland in Myanmar



<p>Map ID: MIMU976v01                  Creation Date: 28 May 2013.A4                  Projection/Datum: Geographic/WGS84</p> <p>info.mimu@undp.org                  www.themimu.info</p>	<p><b>Legend</b></p> <p><b>Project Phase</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 1</li> <li>● 2</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Coast</li> <li>— State Boundary</li> <li>— International Boundary</li> <li>■ Project Townships</li> <li>□ Other Townships</li> </ul> <p>Min Kan (North) (Action Aid)</p> <p>Village Name</p> <p>IP Name</p>	<p>Data Sources : Mekong Economics                  Base Map - MIMU                  Boundaries - WFP/MIMU                  Place names - Ministry of Home Affairs                  (GAD) translated by MIMU</p>
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Disclaimer: The names shown and the boundaries used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

### 13.1 Delays and changes in project implementation

Within the CWP programme, at least half of the IPs faced significant delays in their project implementation. This was the result of numerous factors that included: IPs needing more time than was originally planned for the start-up phase; slow-downs associated with working in partnerships or small consortiums, where joint planning consumed more time and effort than anticipated; management or staffing issues (insufficient number of staff and/or staff with less than required qualifications); and, most importantly, schedules out of synch (or falling out of synch) with the local agriculture cycles. Many activities started late, leaving insufficient time for start-up preparations (community mobilisation, etc.) before the annual monsoon-planting season left no spare time for farmers. Households are too busy at planting time, so some activities were delayed until the end of the monsoon season in 2013.

One telling example of a project delay occurred in the Magwe Division in the Dry Zone.<sup>32</sup> The project planned for a six-month start-up phase to build the capacities of local NGOs through a joint planning process. However, this took more than a year. During this prolonged start-up stage, the sub-IP, Radanar Metta, carried out some community preparation activities, but they did not start project delivery in the villages until December 2012.<sup>33</sup> As this project ends in May 2014, it has only 18 months to complete its activities.

Additional delays were reported because local NGOs had not completed their planning documents for the next year's budget. In respect to these delays, it may be worthwhile for LIFT to consider, at this late stage, accepting the under achievement of some agreed targets. This means cutting losses on targets that cannot be adequately met, and consolidating gains made in other components of the project.

In spite of these delays, activities such as community development, the capacity building of CBOs, and knowledge transfers are progressing. Many IPs emphasise building social capital in communities by supporting local organisations, financial management training of these groups, and strengthening technical competences. Mercy Corps, for example, provided a range of trainings aimed at building the organizational capacity of its local NGO implementing partners. This has already helped two partners win new funding from other sources (Mercy Corps 2/2012, p. 6).

As many CBOs are still new, their potential for playing a role in community development has not yet been fully realized [Case Study 3]. Consideration, for example, could be given towards fully utilizing community-based bargaining power in acquiring necessary inputs (seeds, fertilisers, credit, etc.) through economics of scale. Oxfam and the Network Activities Group (NAG) have begun work in this area, which could lead to support for farmers groups (as being demonstrated by NAG and the Agriculture and Farmers' Federation of Myanmar, and to a lesser extent, the Myanmar Livestock Federation, in the Dry Zone). An example might be to promote (through LIFT) farmers' marketing associations, working towards acquiring inputs and marketing

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<sup>32</sup> This example draws upon the experience of the ActionAid/Thadar Consortium (IP), and Radanar Metta (as the sub-IP).

<sup>33</sup> As documented in their PowerPoint presentation.

outputs on behalf of members, resulting in improved terms of trade for communities and groups.

A future CWP component should also consider how it could support community linkages to microfinance schemes. This might involve promoting a cadre of trainers to support farmers, as well as assisting savings and credit groups in relation to marketing, business development and group purchasing, and business identification planning and management training.

## **13.2 Upland Rice Production and Agriculture**

### **13.2.1 Farmer Field Schools and agricultural training**

To improve food security and generate additional income for the rural poor, many IPs in the CWP support rice intensification initiatives, as well as agricultural support and training in relation to other crops. Although appropriate techniques for rice cultivation in the Dry and Hilly Areas differ from those in the Delta, information is generally distributed in the same way (via the FFSs). Many IPs also conduct paddy seed multiplication projects. Farmers attending FFSs learn prescribed good agricultural practices, including: the use of fewer seeds, building raised seedling beds, and the use of young seedlings (about 20 days old) for transplanting. Good agricultural practices involve using a ratio of one basket of paddy seed per acre, while the traditional broadcasting method requires two to three baskets of seeds per acre.

Overall, FFSs in the CWP were found to effectively disseminate new rice production techniques, as well as teaching best practices for growing other crops. Beneficiaries seemed to be well aware of GAP, and were disseminating the information through their personal networks. There were, however, a few constraints that limited the effectiveness of FFSs. Most notably, many beneficiaries expressed their doubts in the practices taught in the FFS due to numerous failed study plots. For example, in Thapyaywin Village, Naung Cho Township, CESVI supported study plots for winter wheat growing with integrated pest management (IPM). A late start to sowing (caused by delays in site and beneficiary selection), combined with a drought, resulted in very low yields. Consequently, the beneficiaries taking part in this demonstration lost out in terms of both time and money.

Some failures are to be expected. We would not need experiments and demonstrations if we precisely knew what works where. Failures, however, can be minimised, particularly if they are due to poor planning and implementation by the IP.

Crop yields in many other demonstration plots were also minimal due to the fact that IPs selected poor farmers (level 3, according to their wealth-ranking scale) to manage these demonstration plots. Land held by poor farmers is generally marginal, with little if any application of chemical or organic fertilizers in previous years. The drought only compounded the problems. Participating farmers also foresaw a marginal yield, which led them to look for supplementary work away from the farm. Consequently, they spent very little of their time tending to their already underperforming fields. In the future, IPs should not work with poor farmers to manage demonstration plots.

FFSs in Chin State also experienced communications problems. Technical training to

beneficiaries was not provided directly by IP trainers due to language barriers. Instead, training was relayed through local village facilitators, who were not familiar with the technical issues.

In general, FFSs served as effective dissemination tools of improved agricultural techniques. But as was the case in the Delta, adoption of these methods remains highly dependent on the amount of risk that farmers perceive. There will be some risks, such as market price fluctuations and drought, which IPs cannot effectively mitigate. However, getting demonstration plots right (i.e., having better-off farmers manage the plots) is a first step in reducing the perceived risk by farmers, and increasing the adoption of new agricultural practices. Alternatively, direct support to farmers can be given to ensure better management of the demonstrations.

### **13.2.2 Organic Fertilizer**

Adoption of new agricultural practices taught in FFSs is also minimal when they do not adequately address the needs or concerns of farmers. Some activities being promoted by FFSs were not cost-effective for many farmers (similar concerns were raised about IPM methods). Many IPs, including ActionAid, ADRA, and CESVI conducted trainings in compost making. But the majority of farmers the MTR team visited were not carrying on with organic fertilizer composting after the demonstrations. Their explanation was that these activities are costly, time consuming, labour intensive, and consequently not appropriate to their needs. Rather, they prefer purchasing fertiliser on an ad hoc basis.

The MTR team found compost pits, which were formerly used in the trainings, but no beneficiaries were following through with this practice. Villagers explained that the disadvantages of this type of compost making were the lack of necessary inputs in the market, and the foul smell from the compost heaps. Lastly, the main reason expressed for why farmers did not accept the new method was that they already had their own “traditional way of compost-making”. In the Magwe Region, farmers value their compost and apply cow dung in the traditional manner. They dig a large pit near the cowshed and add crop residues, and within 8-10 months the organic compost is ready for next year’s crop. Generally, a farmer in this region has five to seven cows, which produce about 70-80 bullock carts of compost per year (about two tonnes per bullock cart).

The Metta Foundation had success with composting initiatives in Yet Htanphayar Village, Hopone Township, Shan State. In this case, roads are inaccessible to the village in the rainy season, so traders and brokers of chemical fertilizers and pesticides normally cannot reach the village.

### **13.2.3 Introduction of new crops**

As discussed in the Delta section, farmers are risk averse. Taking on loans for crop production entails higher than normal risk. Many factors influence the quality of the yield, while potential crop prices may be unclear. IP projects introducing new crop varieties showed mixed results. Some left farmers worse off, reducing their confidence to try new crops in the future.

In Tungtaung Village, Tonzang Township,<sup>34</sup> LIFT beneficiaries grew peanuts and chilli with loan support from MercyCorps and Ar Yon-Oo. An outbreak of plant disease, paired with the drought, however, reduced farmers' profits to nil. Similarly, Oxfam promoted chickpea and mushroom farming in the 2011 winter, post-monsoon season in Inkone Village, Tharzi Township. The results were mixed, with both successes and failures. Mushrooms, in particular, were selected because of the low investment involved in their production, their short production cycle (15-16 days), as well as the fact that it is a home-based activity, with high current market demand in Meikhtila, Taunggyi, and Mandalay. The majority of farmers failed or produced very small harvests, however, primarily due to the difficulty of accessing mushroom spores in the local area, and the poor production techniques, such as overwatering, using saline water, or exposing them to excessive temperatures (Oxfam 2/2012, p. 16).

The MTR team also documented some cases of success. A study plot in the Inkone Township grew a high yielding variety of corn. FFS members participated in field demonstration days relating to sowing, weeding, and harvesting, with their subsequent use of the new corn variety leading to yields increasing from 15 to 40 baskets per acre.

Testing new techniques and varieties (new to the village or even the township) is risky, but it can result in improved and sustained farmer profits. Testing new things is a better investment by IPs than merely expanding the volume of a present crop (where profit margins will be low). When something new causes higher profits that becomes a sustained achievement, which, of course, can then be copied by other farmers (which ex-post impact evaluations would reveal). There would also be failures, however. Maybe a complete failure (no crop), or just a financial failure (no higher profit). The initial demonstration risk taker should be compensated by the IP if the experiment fails. One "risk minimising" approach could be up-front guarantees of financial (or food) compensation if the experiment fails.

#### 13.2.4 Mechanisation

Like AVSI in the Delta, the Metta Foundation paired FFS with the provision of mechanized equipment to improve upland rice cultivation in its project villages. In the FFS training, GAP for upland rice growing techniques (such as, seed selection for good germination, line-sowing, and improved weeding methods) were emphasised. Compost making, and using plant/fruit extracts and fish amino acid as organic/natural fertilisers, were also included in their training.

The training was paired with the provision of drum seeders and weeding tools. These tools reduce the labour required for line-sowing and weeding operations. (For one acre of upland rice, typically 20 persons are needed for manual line sowing, while for line sowing with a drum-seeder, only four persons are required.) Introducing new technologies such as these, however, reduces workdays for landless and casual labourers dependent upon seasonal employment for their livelihoods.

ADRA/ActionAid similarly distributed farm tools in the townships of Pakokku, Myaing,

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<sup>34</sup> Chin State.

and Seik Phyu, in Magwe, including power tillers and water pumps. Farmers asked for power tillers, in particular, as the use of draught animals, such as cattle, oxen, and buffalo, has been in decline in the Dry Zone, due to the high cost of feed supplies. In the rainy season, a pair of cattle costs 4000 kyat to till an acre in one day. But a power tiller can finish three acres in a single day for only a fraction more in rent. (ADRA/ ActionAid 2/2012, p.12). However, maintenance and replacement of these machines is problematic. As discussed in the Delta section, farmers may simply revert back to old farming methods when the machines breakdown if they cannot afford repairs or replacements (or buying new machines simply does not make economic sense relative to the cost of labour).

### **UPLAND RICE CULTIVATION, INCREASING YIELD, ACREAGE, AND FOOD SECURITY**

Although the effects of introducing mechanized agricultural techniques are generally detrimental to the employment prospects of casual labourers, this can be mitigated when properly paired with the correct training. This was apparent in the MTR team's visit to Metta's rice cultivation project in Htanphayar Village, Hopone Township. First, study plots were created and observed on a regular basis by both FFS participants and non-participants, throughout the growing season. While traditional methods (broadcasting, hand weeding, etc.) produced yields of 3-12 baskets per acre, the methods used by the FFS yielded an average of about 30-40 baskets per acre. The increased yields have also encouraged farmers to expand the area of land farmed. Overall, upland rice cultivation expanded from 32 acres in 2011 to 52 acres in 2012 (increasing the demand for workers). Since that time, all except two households from the village have adopted the new improved techniques of upland rice growing.

Much of the rice grown by the village is for local consumption, rather than the market. As such, the project has also increased food security in the village. Before the project, the majority of farmers had abandoned upland rice farming due to low yields and weed problems. Consequently, farmers would buy rice for 10 -12 months of the year. Following the implementation of the project intervention, farmers bought rice for only 2 months in 2011, and did not need to buy any rice in 2012.

### **13.2.5 Membership organizations – farmer's benefits**

As is the case with the Delta, the production and distribution of quality paddy seed is necessary to increase rice yields. Because of the shortage of such seed, it requires the focused attention of one IP. One such project was observed in Inkone Village, Tharzi Township (Oxfam). Government technicians from DOA provided training on seed production, and pure quality seeds of high yielding varieties<sup>35</sup> were bought from the government seed farms. A group of 17 women received training on rice transplantation and carried out the transplantation for all the fields of project beneficiaries in the village (following the prescribed technique of correct planting, spacing, and so forth). The yields subsequently increased to as high as 100 baskets per acre (up from about 60-70 baskets per acre). The harvested rice seeds were not for

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<sup>35</sup> Manaw Thukha and Sin Thukha.

consumption, but were sold as seed, or kept for the next growing season, as the price of seed is much higher than the grain price. Much of the seed was sold at the market for a higher price than other farmers' seeds. In this instance, farmers were convinced that, with selected seeds and proper plant management practices, yields have significantly improved.

There are several caveats. Quality seed production costs more than regular grain production, and if the harvested rice price falls, it will reduce the incentive to adopt this technology. Additionally, quality seed sowing requires high production costs, requiring an investment in equipment and additional training of labourers in crop management.

### 13.2.6 Community Seed Banks

The provision of quality seed is typically done in conjunction with the establishment of a seed bank. In this way, quality seeds may be collected from subsequent harvests and used again, serving to increase overall access to it. A community seed bank was visited in Kugyi Village, Mahlaing Township (HelpAge/YMCA). Sesame seed, pigeon pea, and paddy were stored. Level 1 (poorest) households were given priority in seed distribution. The beneficiaries repay the capital, with interest, in funds or in-kind to the committee. One basket [a volume unit of measurement] of crop seed is to be paid back with an additional five pyis (1 basket = 16 pyis) worth of interest, thereby increasing the amount year-by-year. That is an implied interest rate of about 30 percent. The seed bank is managed by a committee that sets the rate of interest and is also responsible for storing the seeds for next year's cultivation. Although, a few households could not repay the seeds because of crop loss due to bad weather, the seed bank has been growing steadily, and currently has 165 baskets of rice. It is still too soon to tell if this growth is sustainable and if the rice bank will continue to grow, however, a high level of community participation and interest suggests future sustainability. The committee also has a plan to cover winter crops in the future, such as wheat, chickpea, and peanut.

A similar "seed bank revolving system" was found in Thapyaywin Village, Naung Cho Township (CESVI). Generally speaking, interest rates charged are lower for seed bank members than they are for external farmers in order to encourage community participation and commitment to the system. To support appropriate post-harvest practices, CESVI has also constructed 15 seed bank stores (including seven in Naung Cho), where the community can physically store their seeds using a seed bank management system. Each seed bank store serviced a group of villages. However, we found that, other than those from the host village (i.e., the village with the seed bank store), other villagers were rarely using them due to: the long distances involved in transporting the seeds back to their own villages; a general concern about storing their own resources in other people's villages; and the insufficient capacity of some stores (CESVI 2/2012, p. 18).

Those people that were using the stores were putting their names on their bags of seeds so they could get their own seeds back at a later date, which showed an understandable concern about collectively storing. Many farmers also felt that they

already had good access to good quality rice seeds, or they wanted access to quality corn seeds instead. Overall, the banks were being used at full or near-full capacity, thus fulfilling their purpose.

### 13.2.7 Irrigation for Agriculture

Access to water remains a pressing agricultural issue across the Dry Zone. The arid climate puts a cap on the yield of crops grown on un-irrigated land. The constant threat of drought exposes farmers to additional risks (e.g., the failed demonstration plots discussed previously). IPs, such as Radanar Metta and the Thadar Consortium, have designed programs to provide farmers with pumped irrigation in an effort to maximize yields and decrease risk. In Awzarkone Village, Magwe Township, the Thadar Consortium installed an irrigation system to pump water to nearly 100 acres of upland monsoon fields, allowing these seasonal fields to come into production during the dry period. A committee was formed to manage the pumping activity, as well as the maintenance of equipment, with farmers contributing a small amount of money each to pay for it (ActionAid 2/2012, p. 17).

The MTR team also visited an irrigation system installed in Kugyi Village, Kugyi Kone Village Tract, Mahlaing Township (HelpAge), in which a set of drip pipes were installed and a demonstration plot was setup, supporting a well-off farmer. This seems to contradict HelpAge's stated objectives and strategy in relation to beneficiary targeting. In their own presentation, HelpAge clearly stated that they applied wealth ranking to identify their targeted beneficiaries, and focused their inputs to the middle and lower tiers. They also explained that they then only encouraged the upper, wealthier ranking farmers to participate in training. They were not to receive any financial support or agricultural inputs. However, in this case, the wealthy farmer was clearly receiving funding at a very favourable rate, technical assistance and other material inputs, which contradicts the IP's stated intention.

While this demonstration plot for drip irrigation was successful in increasing yields, it became evident that this technology would primarily benefit better-off farmers. The technology, as it was being demonstrated, was not appropriate for poorer farmers, as they do not have sufficient cash flow to invest in its installation and maintenance. This should have been clear in the design of this activity. In addition, wealthy farmers generally own more fertile land.

Drip irrigation should be understood as an effective tool for increasing the crop yields of relatively wealthy farmers, who are already doing what they do well. This does not necessarily mean that the project does not constitute an effective development intervention. Increasing the quantity and quality of crop yields through modernizing agriculture is a worthwhile objective, but its limited effect on poverty reduction should also be recognised. IPs should clearly state their objectives (i.e., increasing crop production, modernising agriculture, generating employment among the poor or others) and ensure that project activities are designed to achieve them. They should not pretend that they are targeting only the most vulnerable or are completely pro-poor if they are not, and if they genuinely are, they should not pilot projects, such as drip irrigation (even if it is with wealthier farmers), which are unaffordable and,

therefore, not replicable by the poor.

HelpAge interventions were generally well above average in design and impact, but with respect to the drip-feeding, the move from supporting a few rich farmers to many poorer ones remained unclear.

### **Home Gardens Make Quick Wins?**

Several IPs trained villagers to grow small-scale home gardens. By growing small amounts of cash crops to sell at the market, beneficiaries can gain an additional source of income with minimal effort. Vegetable seeds of various crops, such as rosella, water cress, chilli, and onion, as well as seedlings for perennial plants, were provided by ADRA to be grown in home gardens in Thanbo Village, Pakokku Township.

These home gardens are most productive during the monsoon season. All eight households planted the vegetable seeds and seedlings they received during their training. However, only a few plants survived that summer season. One of the beneficiaries interviewed reported success with a range of perennial garden crops, such as lime, drum stick, guava, and mimosa. After attending home garden training, one villager also grew a small plot of dragon fruit with about 30 plants.

In Pa Dauk Nyunt Village, Nat Mauk Township, Magwe, the IP similarly helped households establish home vegetable gardens. However, they were largely unsuccessful due to drought, in combination with the fact that the beneficiaries had to fetch water from a neighbouring village for two months during the summer dry season because their well water was brackish.

HelpAge/YMCA also assisted ten home gardening beneficiaries in Ku Gyi Village, Mahlaing Township, Mandalay, to grow vegetable and fruit trees for personal consumption, as well as for sale. Of the four new varieties introduced, the mango trees did not survive, while other trees, such as Taiwan Papaya, are still too young to produce fruit yet. This activity is currently not being replicated by others in the village, therefore it is unlikely to lead to the IP's "better nutrition" objective, unless the intervention is significantly scaled up.

### **13.2.8 Soil Conservation**

Terraces were developed and promoted in Lailo Village, Teddim Township, by GRET/CORAD, to benefit both small-scale farmers and landless people. Only a small percentage of households, however, could receive support for terrace construction due to the high cost and labour shortages.

Terraces are beneficial for farmers as they increase crop yields and make fieldwork easier. Labour requirements are also reduced and farmers need less crop rotation or leaving land fallow. Weeding and soil stabilization are also easier.

The downside is that building the terraces requires high upfront costs from the farmer in terms of time and money. Farmers we spoke with expressed doubt that the

investment in terracing would pay off. This is due to the poor infrastructure in the area and subsequent low-market demand for cash crops. The MTR team visited a terraced field in Loilain Village, Teddim Township, where ginger was previously grown. The farmer no longer bothered to harvest the ginger due to low market demand.

In addition, the sub-IPs were weak in monitoring the construction and maintenance of the terraces, resulting in some shoddily built terraces that quickly fell into disrepair. Two of the terraces the MTR team visited were hardly distinguishable from a wide sloping field. The IP had accepted these terraces as completed, but it was unclear as to how this could be of much benefit to the farmer, particularly considering the high upfront investment.

In a nearby area, the MTR team visited five more conventional terraces, but pro-poor benefits were again questionable. The development of four of the terraces had been financed years before, and a fifth was purchased and rehabilitated with project funds. This terrace was on the land of a well-off farmer that appreciated the support and was demonstrating good yields.

Overall, project beneficiaries expressed that they did not wish to repeat or extend the terracing project as it required too much manpower and was too costly to support. They saw few benefits compared to the inputs. There was no long-run cost-benefit analysis that could convince us otherwise.

### **13.2.9 Livestock Breeding**

Different IPs use different models for promoting livestock breeding throughout the CWP. In this section, we survey the models visited during fieldwork, leading to general conclusions.

A revolving goat breeding system was shown to be successful in Lailo Village, Teddim Township (GRET/CORAD). In this model, one female goat was provided free to each beneficiary. About two months after having kids the breeding goat was then switched to a new beneficiary. One-third of the goats' price (50,000 - 60,000 kyat) had to be paid to the village "goat committee" by the previous owner after the transfer. In this way, the poor household paid only after getting kid goats, avoiding much of the risk (no kids, no payment). However, there were also reports of poor households being told to take goats on loans that they were subsequently unable to pay back to the VDC.

A pig bank system was observed in Thapyay Win Village, Nuang Cho Township (CESVI – Case Study 2). Five female pigs were provided to the village, and ownership of each pig was shared amongst three households collectively. The cost of the pig feed was approximately 150,000 kyat for each sub-group. After the first batch of piglets, the breeding pig was passed on to the next household to take care of, while responsibility for the sow was also rotated amongst the households. Six weeks after birth, one piglet was given to the pig committee, while the rest were equally distributed among the three households. The committee could then either provide the piglets to another household or sell them, with the proceeds going to the committee fund.

The pig bank had problems, however. Among the five pigs distributed in the village, two pigs died soon after delivery, so CESVI provided the household in question with

another two pigs. Since most beneficiaries were fully occupied with farming, a lack of care was observed and the investments in feed were limited. (Similar examples were found in CESVI's work in the same township in FGD11). The breeding sows looked under-weight and not well developed. We cannot generalise from such a small sample, and reportedly there were other CESVI villages where pig breeding was successful.

To this end, it was also observed that the piglets were in better health than the sow, which was collectively owned and not considered the specific property of any one household. From our interviews and discussion with these owners, it became apparent that the sow was receiving the minimal health care necessary to breed, with the intention to multiply and rotate responsibility to the next "owner". While on paper this was an interesting model, in reality it illustrated the "tragedy of the commons" of a shared resource depleted by individuals acting in accordance with their own self-interest.

In Honar village, Taungyi Township (SSLDO/SWISSAID), 14 beneficiaries were identified as the people most in need in the community. They were selected to be the first batch to be given buffalo. Female buffalos, ranging in price from 280,000 - 320,000 kyat, were provided to the beneficiaries. The other households, who were entitled to receive a buffalo, were told that they would in turn receive buffalos later, based on the revolving principle. So far in this revolving system, one additional buffalo has already been provided to one beneficiary.

Across all the villages covered by this project, a total of 118 buffalos were provided to 106 households in 2012, with 67% of beneficiaries reportedly using them for farm work, and the remaining selecting female buffalos to raise calves as an income-generating activity. Those beneficiaries using the buffalos for farming, reported that the animals allowed them to save on their usual hiring costs, with savings ranging from 35,000 to 100,000 kyat/acre over the course of the season. Other stated benefits included having greater control over the scheduling of land preparation, rather than being dictated by the availability of a buffalo for hire, as well as the use of buffalos as a source of natural fertilizer (manure), and as a means of transporting rice, wood and other materials. For those selecting female buffalos, 27% have already delivered one calf, with these currently being kept and reared by beneficiary households.

In addition to buffalos, SWISSAID also provided knowledge training in relation to the vaccination and care of the animals. However, during monitoring visits, they observed that the new skills were not being consistently applied, with a sample survey similarly finding that only 79% of buffalos were receiving their regular (every six months) vaccinations. To date, five of the buffalos provided by SWISSAID have died due to disease. (SWA 2/2012, pp. 9-10)

Financial support for cow breeding was provided to the beneficiaries by some IPs. A total of 35 households in Tungaung Village, Tonzang Township (Mercy Corp and Ar Yone-Oo), received cows bought from Yazagyo Village, Sagaing Township (a four-day walk from the village). One animal died in transit. The price of the animals ranged from about 150,000 – 200,000 kyat, which is to be repaid within two years at an interest rate of 1% per year. Beneficiaries reported that cow breeding was successful and five calves have been born to date.

Goat and cow breeding businesses were successful in Inkone Village, Thazi Township, with financial support from Oxfam. Fifty-four households were provided with goats and 20 households given cows (which cost Oxfam approximately 75,000 kyat per household). The committee members and field facilitators had bought the goats and cows locally with Oxfam funds, and they were distributed through a lottery system. About 25% of the young goats died. In spite of the deaths, the consensus in the communities was that the project had generally achieved satisfactory results, although some beneficiaries were a little unsure about how much raising the cows would cost, and how much income they would generate from them. Generally speaking, however, the active participation and inclusiveness of the whole village was evident. Many villagers were members of the CBO Management and Organisation committee.

CESVI funded collective chicken breeding in Thapyay Win Village, Naung Cho Township. One group consisted of three households collectively raising 18 local-breed chickens, with an investment of 3,000 kyat per hen. Chickens were kept in a semi-enclosed cage at night. When the young chicks were four- to five-months old, they were given to new owners. If there was no household that wished to participate, the committee would sell them off. The beneficiaries said the collective system was innovative, and they found the chicken raising business was going well. Vaccinations were supported at the necessary intervals.

Livestock breeding is a very risky business, which can lead to net losses. The above examples show that the variation in returns from livestock breeding is large and dramatic. Some household members, for example, fed their pigs for seven months and got nothing; others saw their pigs die or fail to breed. These were not rare events. It seems to be the income-generating activity of choice for IPs when confronted with a lack of alternatives. However, this notion that livestock represent some form of immediate and easy aid to landless households needs to be reconsidered. A better approach would be to take more time: raise awareness about the demands (time and money) and risks of this activity, and then use a self-selecting mechanism to determine beneficiary households, e.g., compulsory training before being provided with animals. Veterinary support should also be offered.

Livestock breeding requires technical skills and support. Some households failed to give the time or care necessary to raise strong and healthy animals. Mentoring from successful households might be useful. Poor households that prove themselves interested and capable should also be encouraged to scale up in later years.

Procurement is also a problem, with many reports of delivery of sick and underweight pigs. Better procurement can be achieved through quality control in purchasing, e.g., an external consultant to check animal quality, as well as results-based contracting where payment is only made after pigs are weighed two weeks after their arrival. A phased approach would involve trying out new animal breeds in the first year, and then later scaling up those that prove viable.

### **13.2.10 Conclusions about CWP Agriculture and Livestock support**

IPs primarily fund small-scale ventures, but occasionally larger interventions are supported in order to meet local market demand. In such cases, the nature and size of

local markets must be carefully considered. In Lailo Village, Teddim Township (GRET/CORAD), for example, beneficiaries explained that they were not very motivated as the prices of goat's milk and meat fluctuated because goats were being imported from India. Once again, we emphasise the importance of cost-benefit analysis during the planning of any intervention.

Most IPs undertook beneficiary selection before setting up a committee, which then drew lots for the distribution of cows, buffaloes, and goats. Despite these efforts, some households that were entitled were not included, whilst other beneficiaries, who were not eligible for support, received it. Targeting remains a problem for some IPs.

Generally speaking, project activities have greatly improved the livestock sector in intervention villages. Collective pig raising is attractive to beneficiaries, although it has its risks. Projects had a better chance of succeeding when complimented with training aimed at improving community knowledge in relation to it. Specifically, through training, these beneficiaries developed a better understanding of animal production and health. However, there were instances when the training was not effective, and working with the government to develop standard training modules is advisable.

Para-vet training provides much-needed health care to animals in villages, including non- project beneficiaries. Sustainability, which involves establishing the para-vets as a viable business service, however, remains an issue. Only seven of the 21 trainees (of the HelpAge project) are currently using their new skills. Only one has established himself as a para-vet, responsible for taking care of the animal farms in his own village, as well as those in nearby villages.

The outcome of various loan programmes was generally positive, providing direct benefits to households. However, many farmers were reluctant to take loans, as they were concerned about repayment schedules. Most borrowers used regular loans, in addition to agriculture loans, for purchasing pigs and buffalo. If the loans were specialized for livestock, the damage or loss by external factors, such as disease, might be resolved through a related insurance or guarantee of support in the event of such loss (Loitaung Village, Naung Cho Township, UNDP/PACT).

Farmers in the Dry Zone are increasingly worried about climate change and associated crop losses. Consequently, many farmers and farm labourers are interested in diversifying their livelihoods towards livestock production. In Thanbo Village, Pakokku Township (ADRA/ActionAid), for example, more households are currently raising livestock than growing crops. This puts common pastures under pressure, while the increased supply pushes local market prices down.

### 13.3 Farm credit and micro-loans

Throughout the CWP, there was a general need for additional credit so that farmers had adequate funds to invest in their farming, or for the landless to buy livestock. Revolving funds and microcredit schemes currently have loan limits ranging from 50,000 kyat<sup>36</sup> to 100,000 kyat per loan. The investment is too small, however to

<sup>36</sup> Micro-credit loans of 80,000 kyat for pig-rearing. Payback terms are 3,680 Kyat every two weeks (3,200 principal + 480 interest) over 12 months. Loans are carried for 11 months. Their debt will be cleared the last month.

substantially impact agricultural production. While these amounts may be better attuned to the landless with their higher credit risk, many small farmers would like larger loans so they can make investments that have long-term impacts.

Currently, these small amounts help farmers purchase fertilisers and seeds, as well as small livestock. But as one farmer explained to us: “Ar Yon-oo (the local implementing partner) will lend us money to buy seeds, but I can already afford to buy seeds. What I need is support to hire labour to clear my fields, help with harvesting, or to be able to prepare slopes to increase production.”

IPs rarely worked together. Unlike what was reported in the Delta, we found little evidence of IPs delivering services that complemented the work of the others. In some locations, where there was some overlap, there was little coordination. For example, two organisations were providing loans for livestock in the same village.

The MTR team observed that clients were well aware of the interest rates and how they were calculated. IP staff members were typically able to explain the types of loans, and the terms and conditions that beneficiaries can choose. For example, in some loans schemes, if a client wants to repay the agricultural loan before it is due, there is an option to choose a short-term business loan.

Another option observed by the MTR team was for beneficiaries<sup>37</sup> to take a “health” loan, with its lower interest rates, and use it for non-health issues. This strategy was seen as a short-term coping strategy to manage general household funds.

Among the PACT microfinance-supported villages in Shan State and Magwe [FGD12/FGD14] that the MTR team visited, clients were able to pay back their loans and interest without difficulties. Often, these beneficiaries reported that they had other sources for loans with affordable interest rates, including from the Myanmar Agricultural Development Bank. The government has also relaxed its agricultural policy, i.e., the rural communities can now grow any kind of crop, which helps the clients to repay on time.

### **13.4 linkages to markets**

Current IP efforts across the LIFT CWP to strengthen linkages to markets are limited. Many IPs have not defined how they can best work with markets, or indeed how their interventions impact existing markets, e.g., reducing prices and “crowding out” existing suppliers.

Most IPs and sub-IPs have achieved only minimum success in working with and linking their project activities to local and regional markets. Those promoting appropriate income-generating activities need to fully consider the local market demand and prevailing prices. Few had worked with existing private businesses in the villages that the MTR team visited, with the exception of ADRA and Oxfam. Activities typically lacked an understanding or analysis of the local markets, or full consideration of value chains to ensure that proposed activities were appropriate and feasible.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> This was evident in the region of Naung Cho, Northern Shan State.

<sup>38</sup> Oxfam has scheduled these activities to commence in the next few months, which raises the question of how this critical activity can be initiated effectively in the final year of the project.

In some areas, tremendous effort has been placed on providing training in specific trades, so that beneficiaries might have the opportunity to establish small businesses or find employment with these new skills. But without understanding what the market requires, and which skills are needed, training has often led to an oversupply of particular skills in a local area.

ADRA undertook perhaps one of the largest efforts to train villagers in small business skills and employment opportunities. The objective was to train 1,920 individuals in vocational sectors in one area of the Dry Zone.<sup>39</sup> This included teaching food preservation and processing skills (920 trainees),<sup>40</sup> clothing manufacturing (501 trainees), auto mechanic skills (251 trainees), carpentry (112 trainees), and small enterprise and management skills (698 trainees). The training led to employment but trainees sometimes compete with one another in a limited local market.

Take the example of sewing training: in one village, 18 women received training to become seamstresses, but only three went on to establish a joint partnership and open a small shop. These three women have benefited from both the training, and the related loan to buy their sewing machines and other equipment. Their books show them to have made a profit of about 50,000 kyat per person after six months of operation. They explained, however, that they would face problems if some of the other 18 trainees decided to also open a competing sewing shop. The local market could not sustain additional seamstresses, and the efforts to train so many in such a small area were taken without due consideration of local demand for such services. Of the new trainees, some had explained that they now do some small private sewing, or use the skills in their homes. Some were considering to migrate to Yangon, Thailand or Singapore, in search of work as semi-skilled labourers in textile factories.

Support to jaggery syrup collectors and buyers was successful.<sup>41</sup> Traditionally, producers have had little understanding of the market. They sold poor quality syrup sporadically to local buyers, either directly or through a middleman or a wholesaler. Currently, efforts have been made to increase the value of their syrup by providing a purer product, free of impurities and contamination. This would allow producers to negotiate a higher price. There are also plans in place to give producers reliable scales. These efforts have led to a reported increase of about 30% in the price producers receive.

In Chin State, villagers have limited access to markets. The lack of affordable transport and the poor state of roads increases travel times. As a result, agricultural goods are mainly sold to local markets, with many farmers producing the same range of goods

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<sup>39</sup> See: ADRA/ActonAid PowerPoint Presentation on Output 2. Four Vocations and Small Enterprise Management. 11 March 2013.

<sup>40</sup> The cost-benefit analysis that was carried out on these food processors showed that the total effort of this enterprise lead to an income of about 7,000 kyats per participant (see Annex 6, Case studies). This was a surprisingly low return on a considerable investment by the beneficiaries and the IP. This amount was on par with the beneficiaries' earlier income as casual labourers. While their quality of life had clearly improved with this less arduous work, the total financial gains were low, and left doubt as to the sustainability of the efforts over the long-term.

<sup>41</sup> A sugar syrup harvested from toddy palm trees.

- Asset transfer. The most common was in the form of livestock or equipment. Although, in some cases where grazing land was restricted or not publicly available, this did not target the most vulnerable, and often beneficiaries were required to top-up with their own funds.
- Unconditional cash transfers. One example is the Oxfam project in Thazi Township, which gave cash to the “poorest of the poor” who did not have capacity to participate in CfW activities.
- Village social funds. Several villages (those under HAI/YMCA and DPDO, among others) used some of the project inputs, usually profits from communal IGAs or earnings from loan repayments, to create a small fund that was used to support the most vulnerable. It would be of value to closely monitor the performance and impact of these funds.
- Community-based care. A simple concept whereby volunteers each undertook weekly home visits to six vulnerable people to help with household chores and to provide company. (One example is the HAI/YMCA project in Mahlaing Township.) The health committee explained: “Before the project, some disabled and older people did need help, but despite being taught as children to value and care for older people, the community never took action (other than during festivals). Then, there becomes a type of shame for not doing so. The project was what we needed to act; it gave us more sympathy for the vulnerable people and an understanding of their special needs.”

Most IPs defined their CfW activities as “social protection”, despite their being very temporary and more accurately defined as public goods delivery projects. CfW thereby becomes an easy solution to delivering “social protection”, and as such CfW distracts attention from the more complex problem of how to sustainably help the most vulnerable households. How to help the poorest of the poor? They do not have land, and maybe even not enough surplus food to raise a pig. Are there any short-term solutions to have sustained impact? If not, or few, then focus should shift to longer-term solutions, such as ensuring that their children are not malnourished and complete their schooling.

at competitive prices. In this region, it is also common for produce to be sold locally in nearby villages, house-to-house. Working with markets should still be promoted in such areas where possible, but scope for production increases is limited by physical constraints. Consequently, IPs should focus more on activities, such as food security, until these areas have better access to markets. Or they may consider focusing on products that are less perishable, of higher value, and cheaper to transport.

### 13.5 Social Protection

*Social protection traditionally refers to a set of benefits to provide security against socially recognised vulnerability or deprivation. These conditions can include poverty, old age, disability, work injury, unemployment, and others.<sup>42</sup> Benefits can be from the*

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<sup>42</sup> So targeting, which has been covered elsewhere in this report, is obviously of paramount importance, and, as the literature would suggest, it is indeed among the most problematic aspect of social protec-

*state, civil society, community/household, or private sectors.*

This MTR provides independent evidence that LIFT should review its approach to social protection.<sup>43</sup> Cash-for-work programs were not fully conceptualized as a development and social protection mechanism. This was apparent during the MTR in several ways:

- Specific mechanisms were lacking to ensure that the CfW beneficiaries were the most vulnerable persons. Typically, however, self-selection takes place (see Case Study 1) and most who want work can get work.
- CfW was mostly used to fund public projects, namely to build village infrastructure. But on some occasions, it went toward led to direct benefits for project “demonstration farmers” (e.g. to build farmers’ rice terraces or transplant rice on private land). Even though these landowners were often required to pay some of the labour costs, the subsidies going to (non-poor) “demonstration farmers” were often large.
- Almost all beneficiaries interviewed used their extra CfW-generated income for daily needs, such as food and school fees. As one beneficiary in Inkone Village, Thazi Township, put it, “We never hold money in our hands”. It is not a mechanism to promote savings. (Similar examples found in Case Study 1).
- CfW projects are once-offs and not sustainable. As such, they have more in common with humanitarian assistance than development.

Other types of community-based social protection measures were promoted by IPs<sup>44</sup> While potentially valuable for demonstration purposes, they do not constitute a social protection programme within the overall LIFT programme.<sup>45</sup> These included:

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tion initiatives.

<sup>43</sup> Output 4: Village/local infrastructure developed to support livelihoods and food security, while providing employment for the poorest and most food insecure households (particularly through CfW).

<sup>44</sup> Of course other, non-project-related mutual assistance within the communities takes place according to traditional cultural practices.

<sup>45</sup> As rightly pointed out in the CWP logical framework, only if there are sufficient IP activities towards planned social protection activities that have some opportunity for significant and sustainable outcomes, should a new output be added that specifically addresses social protection.

## 14. Learning Lessons and The LIFT FMO Role

*To what extent have IPs and FMO been able to capture and document lessons learned? And how have they been integrated?*

The primary method for the LIFT Programme and M&E teams to collect lessons learned is through the regular field visits they conduct to IP sites. Though these visits are primarily to assess performance, they also focus on what works and doesn't work—information that could be used by other IPs. Each IP project receives two visits per year from the programme team, and one visit per year from the M&E team.

Additionally, IPs are invited to a wider meeting with the M&E team in Yangon once a year, plus up to 12 regional meetings (4 LIFT regions, 3 times per year). Ad hoc meetings with IPs take place in Yangon, or in the field, if technical assistance has been requested by the IP.

At the national level, LIFT successfully held two national knowledge-sharing forums for all IPs and stakeholders in Yangon in 2011 and in Nay Pyi Taw in 2012. The latter was the first high-level agricultural development forum jointly organised between government ministries and the LIFT fund, and was attended by more than 300 participants from government (including six union ministers), UN agencies, development partners, and civil society.

These visits and the lessons learned are documented by LIFT. The M&E team maintains two databases that hold IP performance information. They include field visit reports, documentation of lessons learned, and six-month progress reports. The first is a database that is used to report to various stakeholders on the LIFT programme. The second is a more formalised information management system (IMS) database that accurately records all IP performance documentation and provides a searchable function.

However, no formal mechanism exists for discussing and sharing lessons learned by IPs, especially in the CWP. In the Delta, some discussions have taken place, as the Delta Coordinator has been more able to gather IPs together in meetings. However, progress in coordinating IP work through this method remains slow. The CWP does not have a comparable coordinator position because it does not make sense to merge the diversity of the Countrywide projects into one group.

LIFT states that part of the difficulty in sharing lessons between IPs is the variety of activities carried out by them. This makes the transferability of lessons between IPs more limited, although various workshops and annual get-togethers have been useful.

It was also evident that the need to quickly produce proposals for approval by LIFT meant that IPs initially produced sub-standard logframes. LIFT reportedly wanted to work with IPs to develop a common, consistent and quality set of logframes and implementation plans but faced some difficulty as IPs believed they had already had their proposals approved. Workshops were nevertheless carried out with IPs to explain the LIFT logframe, and to develop common sub-programme logframes for both the

Delta II and Countrywide sub-programmes. In this way, it became clearer to the IPs which LIFT logframe indicator they were contributing to – but substantive changes were few, and the overall M&E system failed (there was, for example, no indicators database available for this MTR).

LIFT donors have found the lack of quantitative data for some of their most important outputs, such as agricultural production, to be frustrating. They would like greater quantitative focus in future IP reporting, including IP final evaluations. Large quantitative studies go some way to address this need. The new Tat Lan Nutrition Survey, the Value for Money survey and the Household Income and Expenditure Survey, along with the 2013 mid-term household survey, represent such efforts.

*What has been learned about the FMO relationships with local and with international IPs?*

The working relationship between local and international IPs and LIFT includes scheduled reporting by the IPs, periodic field visits by the FMO staff, and workshops. Prior to implementation, each IP project design gets support to help it reach a standard that can be approved by the FB. This involves assistance in the design logic, budget, logframe, and M&E plans. Specific support and guidance is also provided during later field visits. Frequent informal meetings are held with IPs, and program and M&E staff, to address issues as they emerge and to negotiate contract variations that are required as the project designs need to be changed or improved.

Generally, the overall capacity of the IPs ranges from very mature to others that are less so. To this end, a principle aspect of the LIFT/IP relationship has been to strengthen capacity. Given the challenge resulting from their diversity, it is questioned if these approaches adequately address the broad divergence of IP capacity. A needs assessment might be called for to address more specifically the requirements of the IPs to perform optimally.

In the Delta II sub-programme, LIFT is also attempting to support better coordination and cooperation between partners, as was evident in the attempts to prepare their two sub-logframes developed with the IPs in that region. Again, this was done primarily through a series of workshops engaging IP partners in the process of drafting these documents. Additionally, LIFT has hired a regional coordinator to support communication and coordination amongst the IPs.

In the CWP, LIFT fully appreciates that coordination is much weaker across the region, perhaps due to the greater diversity of activities, and actual physical dispersal across a larger region, resulting in fewer opportunities for IPs to come together to exchange experiences and provide mutual support. In the Countrywide Programme, more IPs work in isolation from one another compared to the Delta. They are often unaware of what other IPs are doing in their area. The team saw situations where IPs were not even aware of what another IP was doing in the same village, at least to any degree that might lead to cooperation and coordination.

When the LIFT programme started, there was strong pressure on IPs to become

operational and for them to “get some things happening”. As a result, the approval process led to many poor quality IP logframes. In many cases, this led to the belief between LIFT and the IPs that these would then be revisited, with LIFT providing additional support. This was partially addressed by bringing the IPs together in a series of workshops to discuss the overall approaches and to draft the three (sub-program) logframes—two for the Delta and one for the CWP.

LIFT has also developed and modified the IP reporting requirements. The most recent modification led to a number of IPs complaining about additional reporting requirements, although LIFT argues that this was a simplification producing a more coherent template and easy aggregation of data. Nevertheless, some IPs were dissatisfied with this change being initiated after reporting had already begun using the older format.

### 14.1 Why “results” matter

LIFT is acknowledged for being a multi-donor fund where donors come together, thereby avoiding duplication and increasing information sharing:

“Given the fact that Myanmar is likely to become a “donor darling”, the risks are high for duplication and high disbursement pressure. However, LIFT has shown that effective donor collaboration mechanisms do work in Myanmar.”

*- Microfinance in Myanmar, World Bank. p.29*

LIFT, however, can be more than that. An apex structure can direct and shape the nature of the IPs underneath. In Delta II, the most important “shaping” was the shift to developmental assistance. That move has also made M&E important, particularly in understanding what results are being achieved, and what will have a sustained impact. Stronger integration between and cooperation among IPs was another change, but less profound. A more systematic planning approach can produce better results, for example, distinguishing more clearly between area-based and specialized IPs and activities.

LIFT has the capacity to support high quality research, and synthesize information and lessons across many IPs, and thereby better inform national policy debates. A single IP simply does not have the staff or funds to do such activities. LIFT can also design and deliver capacity building to ensure better project designs and impact evaluations for future programs.

LIFT is delivering a small share of total donor funds supporting rural development in Myanmar. It will soon be a smaller share when the loans of multi-lateral donor agencies start to increase (e.g. the World Bank National Community-Driven Development project – one project - may soon increase to US\$300m). Today, however, LIFT is in a unique position because it can inform those who follow about “what works” in rural development. This includes the government departments as their budgets increase. LIFT can pilot test ideas—with strong M&E, including control groups—and it can establish information-sharing mechanisms that can be sustained well after LIFT is

closed.

As noted above, M&E becomes more important when development becomes the objective. Table 9 below shows that the move from humanitarian assistance also makes M&E more complicated. M&E for humanitarian interventions can be rather basic, though it should still take account of issues such as displacement effects. Local demonstrations (“let’s try what some other villages in the Delta are doing”) and public infrastructure projects, requires relatively easy M&E. It gets much more complicated when one has explicit experiments for scale, or starts working with markets. For the former, LIFT must rigorously prove its long-term impact, and for the latter, it must carefully consider the net impact of what is being proposed.

**Table 9: Typology of types of IP interventions**

Types of interventions:	Examples	M&E requirements*
<b>Humanitarian</b>	Give free livestock, seeds, etc.; food-for-work.	Ensure outputs delivered. Sustainability not a priority concern.
<b>Local demonstrations</b>	Vegetable gardens, bean second crop, hand transplanting.	Sustainability expected. Monitoring sufficient** (case study CBA/RRI).
<b>Public infrastructure</b>	Free construction of village pond, roads, jetties, etc.	Sustainability crucial. Monitoring sufficient** (with O&M intervention as needed).
<b>Experiments for scale</b>	IRRI new varieties, non-native livestock, Vietnamese mangroves.	Potential to upscale. Sustainability crucial. Rigorous CBA/RRI essential for every intervention.
<b>Working with markets</b>	Rice mill equipment, market information strengthening, cooking stoves, shrimp paste.	Potential for scaling up by private sector. Sustainability crucial. Rigorous CBA/RRI essential for every intervention.

\* In terms of lower-level, activity-specific M&E (i.e., not poverty impact).

\*\* Including monitoring several years after project completion.

Aside from IRRI testing, no Delta II activities had high-quality impact evaluation designs. To produce them means starting with detailed baseline data, and then monitoring the results of both the treatment group and a carefully selected control group. Scaling up is an exciting idea, but also a worry: small mistakes become huge ones when applied to thousands of villages. For that reason, from the outset, LIFT must identify proposed IP activities with the potential for scaling up and make sure that they get the M&E support they need.

## 14.2 Making LIFT and LIFT IPs more results-focused

The main justification for LIFT is its coordination role: to herd an otherwise uncoordinated set of NGO activities in particular directions, such as moving from humanitarian to developmental assistance, and expanding across particular geographic areas. While doing so, LIFT tries to facilitate cooperation across IPs, and to support them in various ways. The coordination and implementation tasks undertaken by LIFT are alone enough to justify its existence, but there is scope to pay more attention to results and becoming an “information hub”.

By “results”, we mean the outcomes of particular IP interventions, ideally sometime after the projects have been completed (sustained impact). This should be

distinguished from “higher-level” impact objectives, i.e., poverty reduction, livelihood improvements, targeting poorest of the poor, and food security, which are covered by the baseline and impact survey work.

Donors and LIFT are giving increasing attention to understanding and measuring results. This MTR report focuses on understanding results as they are emerging after 1-2 years of IPs implementing projects. Yet urging IPs to become more “results focused” is not enough. They have contracts that specify payment according to completing activities (outputs). Future contracts could be different to shift incentives to reward sustained outcomes. Our view is that IPs should be paid in full for delivering what they promised (outputs), but with an end-of-project bonus based on measured result indicators. Of 1,000 pigs delivered, how many pigs were there at the end of the project? Of 278 water pumps built, how many are fully operational at the end of the project?

Even better would be another bonus based on a post-evaluation survey two years later. If a post-evaluation scores sustained impact highly (e.g. over 1,500 pigs, or 250 operational water pumps, etc.), then the implementing IP should receive 20% of the previous total project value as a reward – cash, to spend on any project activity they like. Thus we reward “outcome performers” by trusting them with extra funding to spend where they determine will have high impact. If audited annually, such organisations just need to report where the 20% was spent – no detailed financial accountability necessary.

While the OCED-DAC criteria of “relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability” are a valid framework,<sup>46</sup> it does not give a sense of the relative importance of these criteria. In the long run, sustainability is by far the most important criteria; not just 20% of the story. A relevant, efficient, effective water pump that breaks down, and is never used again after one year, is 5% as valuable as one that is operated and maintained for 20 years. We recommend post-evaluations after two years, and linking those to IP cash bonuses.

LIFT can also become more “results focused” by restructuring its M&E priorities and activities (discussed below). In particular, it should develop expertise in intervention-specific evaluation frameworks, and help the IPs “get evaluation right” from the start.

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<sup>46</sup> <http://www.oecd.org/development/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>

LIFT has introduced several positive innovations over the past year. The new six-month reporting format is less work and more “results focused”, asking specifically about lessons learned, replication, coordination with the government and the private sector, cost effectiveness, and even sustainability.<sup>47</sup> It was launched through regional training workshops, with follow-up assistance offered by phone.

It is useful to consider the question: “Why, and for whom, do we do M&E”? We recommend developing something like a LIFT M&E mission or purpose statement, towards developing a longer-term impact vision, and then consider how given resources should be allocated.

In priority order, here is what an M&E system should deliver:

1. High quality intervention-specific evaluations to prove the case for scaling up some “winners” (and learning lessons from failures).
2. High quality baseline and impact evaluations to determine attributable impact on livelihoods, food security, etc.
3. A programme of qualitative research that deepens understanding of complex issues, and testing of participatory monitoring on selected interventions.
4. A multi-faceted communications strategy to promote the QSEM, baseline study, annual reports, and LIFT’s evaluations additional support needs to be provided to ensure wide sharing of the above three outputs.
5. Reporting to those who fund LIFT on disbursement and output progress, and implementation issues.
6. Monitoring IP implementation of inputs and outputs to ensure consistency with contracts (and to understand and support useful changes).

The argument for quality intervention-specific evaluations is explained by example in the sub-chapter above. That example implies more results-focused design work for the LIFT M&E Team.<sup>48</sup>

One perennial problem for end-of-project evaluations is that sustainability is only a hypothesis at the end of a project. We need to come back years later to prove or disprove it. It is rarely done, however, because donors (and, therefore, those they fund) in reality move number 5 in the list above (progress reporting) as number 1 in their priorities. That must change. A start would be if the LIFT Board made their own priority ranking of the above six objectives of LIFT M&E.

### 14.3 The Baseline and Impact surveys

The household baseline and impact surveys should suffice for reporting on higher-level outcome indicators for all IPs. The subjective “self-evaluations” by IP beneficiaries are of little analytical value: the beneficiaries know what to report. The data

<sup>47</sup> Although we would replace “sustained the life” with “sustained beyond the life” to: How will the benefits of your project be sustained over the life of your project?

<sup>48</sup> We also draw your attention to Poor Economics (A. Banerjee and E. Duflo, 2012), and what David Dam-berger has to say about learning from failures: [http://www.ted.com/talks/david\\_damberger\\_what\\_happens\\_when\\_an\\_ngo\\_admits\\_failure.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/david_damberger_what_happens_when_an_ngo_admits_failure.html).

reveals more about biases than truth. The LIFT baseline survey asked some similar “respondent perspective” questions, which should also be deleted (respondent views and perceptions can be collected qualitatively). For example, 45% of Delta/Coastal households said that casual work opportunities had decreased during 2010-2011 (10% said increased), while of those who employed labourers, only 3% said they had employed fewer (15% said “employed more”).<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, the subjectivity and poor quality of typical IP impact surveys make them little more than a “tick-a-box” exercise. They lack control groups and data cannot be compared to other IP villages. LIFT impact evaluation guidelines apparently address these issues, but it is better to centralise such evaluations than to have many IP-specific ones. LIFT should entirely remove the task of higher-level outcome reporting from the IPs, and use the impact evaluation database to tell the impact story of individual IPs.

The present LIFT baseline control group is made up of only 800 households (2,400 treatment households) and, lacking a sample frame, IPs were asked to select “similar” villages.<sup>50</sup> Despite possible biases, the descriptive results suggest a close match between the control and treatment groups. One problem, however, is that the non-LIFT control households were beneficiaries of other (not LIFT) donor projects. Thus, the baseline reports says that while 21% of LIFT households reported receiving a loan from a “low interest” micro-finance organization in the last year, 15% of treatment households also received such loans. The “control” group is therefore more like “fewer donor inputs” rather than an ideal “without inputs” control group. Research to develop “township profiles” (see Section 15.4) could help to identify a more robust control group for a final evaluation survey (UNDP are doing some work in this area).

#### 14.4 The Role for Qualitative Research

Qualitative research has, thus far, mostly been limited to brief “success story” case studies. These are useful yet the MTR team recommends that greater attention be given to the qualitative aspect that supplements the six-month reports and quantitative surveys. These could include:

- Tracking the precise business activities of 20-40 rice farmers over one year to gain insight into detailed costs, revenues, and reasons behind their decisions.
- Case studies to understand the full costs and benefits, and attributable impact, of interventions.
- Extension videos about relevant educational issues, such as why some people failed and others succeeded with IGAs, or similar videos that present the benefits of pig vaccinations, for example.

Qualitative research can also be part of activity evaluations. For example, measuring the impact of vegetable gardens is presently done by asking the value of sales, without accounting for home consumption. Case studies, based on diaries kept by a small

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<sup>49</sup> Sixty-six per cent said their debts had increased (11% decreased), and 44% said their household incomes had fallen (15% increased) during 2010-2011. Yet those we asked in the field readily admitted that 2011 was better than 2010 and certainly by 2013, debts (and moneylender interest rates) had fallen, and household incomes had risen compared to 2010.

<sup>50</sup> For statistical analytical purposes, the control group should be as large as the treatment group.

number of vegetable growers, would provide insight into the real value of this activity.

The only IP conducting participatory M&E (beyond collecting data for IP reporting) was IRRI, which we felt was the least relevant for such an organisation and its development goals. Indeed, if IRRI were focused on their technical task of maximizing farmer incomes through small area tests, and then widely disseminating findings (and supporting seed supplies), then surely pure research is sufficient. Other IPs, however, would do well to adopt participatory M&E approaches, which are well known to increase ownership and support replication and sustainability.<sup>51</sup>

The animal health worker intervention could have benefited from participatory monitoring. Villagers could have built their own baseline data about pig illnesses and deaths, and tracked, over time, if village-wide pig health improved after vaccinations. They could have compared themselves to one or two nearby villages that did not vaccinate. They would then be able to calculate and appreciate the value of preventative vaccinations, and, therefore, do what was necessary to maintain the system. They could then visit other villages to explain their findings.

Participatory monitoring can include each village reporting basic activity data through designated “M&E” persons using SMS. Thus, each village could report every three months on a small set of things, such as:<sup>52</sup>

- Water pumps and other machinery still operating;
- Number of pigs treated with curative medicines;
- Acres under PT/SPT (i.e. multiple and single-plant transplanting);
- Value of revolving funds; and
- Seed/rice bank stocks.

LIFT could also be of great service by sponsoring high-quality (expensive) value-chain studies, starting with rice, and then considering shrimp, catfish, and fruit trees. These would be national, with regional studies, and would benefit the private sector as well as LIFT IPs. Detailed professional studies would inform project choices, intervention designs, as well as policy dialogue and trade liberalization.

#### **14.5 Making LIFT an “Information Hub”**

The changing political economy of Myanmar allows a reconsideration of the strategy and purpose of LIFT. We do not, however, recommend that LIFT becomes a policy dialogue focal point. That should come through formal structures, such as centralized donor-government working groups, and through the long-term strengthening of national organisations (research centres and universities), as well as multilateral agencies (particularly the World Bank) and targeted programmes (e.g., Pyoe Pin, Oxfam). LIFT should be an “information hub” that feeds all of these, including the government, with results and high quality research about the realities of rural

<sup>51</sup> See Annex for a list of references, including a Village Earth training course.

<sup>52</sup> Ideally, reporting across all Delta villages working with donors, with a database uploaded to the LIFT website for all donors to use. M&E reporters would need a little quality auditing, and could be paid a small fee by topping up their phone card credits.

development in Myanmar. LIFT could, for example, consider developing producer linkages with the extension services at the township departments of MAS and the Livestock Breeding and Veterinary Department (LBVD).

The “LIFT hub” would look to farmers, as well as to donors and government. LIFT, for example, could approach the Yezin Agricultural University to support them in producing and delivering a regular farmers’ magazine and create educational DVDs. With further anticipated reforms, new media, including the use of national and local radio, should also be considered as a vehicle for LIFT’s dissemination of information to farmers and rural households.

The vast majority of agricultural producers received little, if any, farming support and/or advice over the past year. Considering the vacuum of agricultural extension support, most rural producers still rely on those familiar, traditional, yet often inefficient, methods of farming. IPs, such as ESCAP, IRRI and WFP, are supporting some specific information needs, but there is much scope to make information services a higher priority in future LIFT programmes.

#### **14.6 Establish partnerships with supporting institutions**

A number of government research institutions and some private sector trade organisations, including international organisations and/or national institutions, such as the Myanmar Livestock Federation, the Agriculture and Farmer Federation of Myanmar (AFFM), and the Myanmar Rice Industry Association (MRIA), are a wealth of local knowledge and practice. This knowledge needs to be fully accessed, supported and linked specifically to project activities and their beneficiaries.

More specifically, this could be linked to the training of extension workers, which could include providing them with information on new seed varieties, supporting their research on production, as well as increasing their understanding of market standards.

Particularly in the case of the national institutions, trainings could be provided to these institutions, as well as limited financial support to fund relevant research.

#### **14.7 Next Steps for LIFT**

The strategic directions for LIFT should be decided by LIFT FB and FMO during 2013. This requires answers to two key questions:

1. What should be the structure and geographic focus of a Delta III and a future CWP (e.g., should they now be state/region-specific?), and will they support some or none of the present villages? (This allows one year for the IPs to plan new projects and implement any village exit strategies.)
2. Will LIFT M&E stay focused on LIFT IP reporting to donors or expand into some form of rural development information hub with a research programme?

Given answers to the above and a prioritized vision of the purpose of LIFT M&E, consideration can be given as to which LIFT M&E tasks should be centralized and which decentralized, and what capacity building and technical assistance should LIFT

offer the IPs. As discussed above, the burden of reporting on “higher level” indicators should be removed from the IPs. Replacing that, however, should be a strengthening of IP intervention-specific evaluation frameworks (for new interventions). Substantial training should be supported for any IP that is preparing proposals in subjects such as participatory M&E, cost-benefit analysis, results-based management, etc. Some training can be subcontracted and delivered in-country,<sup>53</sup> and some can be offered through the internet.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> The Yangon Institute of Economics, the Burnett Institute, and MDF (<http://www.mdf.nl/home/>) are all able to deliver courses upon request. Training should be practical applications, such as learning about market intervention designs by working on ideas for Delta III proposals, or producing the logframes and intervention-specific M&E frameworks for the Delta III proposals.

<sup>54</sup> Coursera.com offers some courses, as does <http://villageearth.org/training-and-consulting/online>. Such training has large-scale economies, although accreditation has remained elusive due to the problem of examination quality controls. One idea is a “DFID University”, where DFID funds vocational development courses delivered by various organisations through a website, with those wanting accreditation towards a degree taking exams in, say, British Council offices around the developing world.

## 15. Recommendations

### 15.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we present the recommendations of the LIFT MTR team. All of the recommendations are related to the content of the previous chapter. Most flow directly from our findings, although some are what we argue seem like “good ideas” based on our analysis, and on our understanding of problems and constraints. After feedback on the first draft report by the LIFT FMO, we have deleted or changed a few recommendations based on new facts, but we kept most, including some where feedback labelled them as “unlikely” or “impractical”: they may well be, but we believe they deserve a wider reading before being crossed off.

There are 44 recommendations, which are sorted by five types as follows:

S = Strategic considerations	[11 recommendations]
P = LIFT Policy changes	[15 recommendations]
T = Tenders (competitive or otherwise)	[10 recommendations]
D = Documents the LIFT could produce	[4 recommendations]
R = Research recommendations	[4 recommendations]

“Strategic” recommendations relate to broad considerations of LIFT goals and the future shape of possible programmes. These differ from “policy” recommendations, which are mostly ideas for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the existing Delta 2 and Countrywide programmes. “Tenders” are recommended activities that LIFT FMO could effectively outsource, either to strengthen the existing programmes (building fish ponds, developing veterinary services, etc.), or to more generally build capacities and improve the flow of farmer-relevant information. The final recommendation types are documents that LIFT FMO could produce internally (“D”), or proposed research activities to be outsourced (“R”). This classification is merely an analytical device to enable focused discussion of sub-sets of the 44 recommendations, and we should not be too concerned if a “P” might be an “S”, or visa-versa.

We have also flagged (“ticked”) which recommendations are “most relevant” to IPs, LIFT FMO, the LIFT Fund Board, or some combination of these key stakeholders.

### 15.2 Strategic Recommendations

As discussed in the previous chapter, we feel that LIFT can best express its core objective as “sustained poverty alleviation” [Recommendation 1]. Household surveys, linked to poverty scorecards [R12, 13], can give us a reasonable measure of the poverty alleviation achievement attributable to LIFT. We add “sustainable” to emphasise the importance of having results last over time. That time may be arbitrarily defined as 2, 3, or 5 years after programme closure, and measured by way of a post-evaluation study. This could be linked to a bonus payment to successful IPs [R7]. Placing explicit emphasis on longer-term impact should feed into project designs and impact measurement (e.g., the long-term impact of public infrastructure upgrading, such as

ponds, become more important relative to the short-run impact of CfW incomes).

Most other strategic recommendations are about possible features of any future programmes [R11]. Now that working with government is encouraged, future countrywide programmes should probably be state-specific (working with state/regional governments) [R4]. It is also time to make executive decisions about which IPs are to be encouraged to have a much bigger (and more explicitly coordinated) role in future programmes [R3]. A large programme, scaling up “good practice” [R6], with only eight IPs would be fine. These should be a balance between area-based (multiple activities in a set of villages) and specialised services (one activity across hundreds of villages) [R2].

LIFT (and hence the LIFT Board) also needs to change its consideration of time: humanitarian relief must be quick; development should be done more carefully and slowly. Projects are too small, and so few resources are invested in careful design or evaluation. Designs should include detailed financial and impact analysis, including high quality logframes, but also cost-benefit analysis, theories of change, and other analytical tools – all linked to a well-defined M&E system. LIFT staff would work with a few selected IPs to develop such projects over at least six months. Minimum project size should be US\$4million, and projects should be implemented over at least four years.

We have avoided the temptation to prescribe exactly how LIFT should work with the government. This should probably be a participatory bottom-up process (such as asking IPs and government agencies for ideas). Providing meaningful insight into the needs of particular government agencies is beyond the scope of a short MTR process. LIFT FMO is going to have to study, in the context of so many other donor initiatives, what are the most effective interventions for LIFT to pursue. We have made one exception, however, in that we see a clear role for LIFT to work with relevant agencies, such as the Agriculture Universities to strength the flow of information to farmers (and IPs) [R28, 32]. This supplements other “information hub” recommendations [R8, 9].

### 15.3 Policy Recommendations

Wealth ranking is weak at identifying the poorest households or determining project impact. It should be replaced by “flexible poverty scorecards” (see Annex for details) [R12]. Indeed, beyond the scorecards, all IPs should be excused from trying to report on “high level” impact indicators (e.g., poverty reduction or improved livelihoods) [R26]. LIFT FMO should take on the overall impact measurement through the large-scale household surveys [R13], but with greater attention to sample selection [R25], and linking to the national Integrated Households Living Conditions Survey (IHLCS) in a way that databases could be combined for analysis.

In this policy section, we make a general call for more emphasis on training activities through LIFT [R14]. Given the situation of Myanmar today, LIFT should be a conduit for learn-by-doing capacity building. Thus, for example, the design phase for a new programme, working with maybe eight IPs, should be seen as an opportunity for integrating design training, as well as a job to get done, before implementation can commence. In this context, it would be reasonable if, say, 10% of all LIFT funds

were devoted to capacity building activities with IPs, government officials, and other relevant and interested individuals.

The following Table presents some practical ideas for capacity building activities to be tendered. A private firm could deliver a series of courses [R27], they or another firm could give hands-on help about how to work with markets and design results-focused projects [R35], and establish strong project M&E systems [R36]. An international study tour [R31] is another appropriate capacity building activity at this stage of Myanmar's development.

The improved donor-government working relationship was one of two recent exogenous shocks identified in this MTR (the other being the IT revolution). To accommodate this change, we recommend that a financial window be established to promote IPs working with local government partners [R15]. IPs should also be formally asked how they would like to restructure their projects given this change [R18], as should those facing serious implementation delays [R23]. Information links to government and the wider community can also be strengthened [R17]. LIFT FMO already does this with main reports, but there are a considerable number of other interesting documents that could be shared (e.g., IP value-chain studies). Finally, we recommend that the government be invited to conduct its own evaluation of LIFT in 2015 [R16].

The previous chapter noted that most LIFT activities were with non-poor households, while also acknowledging that the scope for direct support to poor households (almost all being landless) was limited. Thus, the pro-poor impact of a LIFT dollar invested is mainly, and understandably, indirectly through supported land-owning non-poor households. That indirect impact, however, is poorly measured so we cannot conclude quantitatively about the flow-on effects to landless households. We have the same concern with respect to "demonstration activities" [R20, R21]. In the field, the demonstrations we visited were clearly with the relatively richer farmers (e.g., drip-feed irrigation), as they contributed some capital and shared risks. That is fine, but project designs should plan beyond the demonstration to measure indirect benefits to poor households, and how the activity (if a success) will be replicated to reach poor households [R24].

#### **15.4 Tenders and Research**

Aside from the capacity building activities mentioned above, other tenders include working with the Yangon Agriculture University [R28, R32] with a view to establish a sustainable flow of useful information reaching farmers. IPs presently lack the technical experts to provide the detailed information and ideas that farmers would like. Supporting the university to fill that vacuum (as a specialised nationwide service) makes sense.

We recommend a tender to produce "Township Profiles" to guide planning for a future Delta III programme (and to assist the government) [R33, R11]. The Myanmar Information Management Unit (MIMU) could be involved in this activity, with a consulting team.

Finally, there is a set of recommendations about specific LIFT IPs or activities: Mangrove Service Network [R19]; shrimp ponds [R29]; and the Bogale technical working group [R30]. We also suggest that LIFT source IPs willing and able to specialise in some areas: veterinary services [R34]; livestock [R40]; and increasing the supply of quality rice seeds [R42].

We recommend that LIFT support the production a number of minor publications to improve the synthesis and sharing of LIFT lessons learned and good practices. Topics could include “safeguards” [R37], testing and the M&E of new crops [R38], good practices for revolving funds [R39], and raising livestock [R40]. There are many more such brief and focused information products that the LIFT FMO could produce, but starting with the four above is sufficient. LIFT could also support technical and financial research of IP activities by the Agriculture University [R41], and specifically into the rice seed market [R42]. We also recommend that LIFT fund some more sociological studies about social protection systems and options [R43], and research into methods to support behavioural change [R44]. Such research, conducted in conjunction with the Agriculture University, could focus on specific sets of interventions for drawing out good practices.

## **16. CONCLUDING COMMENT**

Taken together, the recommendations in this report imply a fundamental change in the way LIFT operates. Only the LIFT Fund Board can initiate such a programme of change, and in doing so must give clear guidance and support. The present LIFT model is convenient for donors wishing to disburse funds quickly and with little risk to contemporary Myanmar, but the LIFT model is also a legacy of the humanitarian aid period in Myanmar: many small short-term projects, working with numerous different IPs, and therefore LIFT remains perennially cursed with poor project designs, weak M&E systems, and a lack of an outcomes focus.

## 17. Annexes

### Annex 1: Terms of Reference

#### TOR for the Mid-Term Review of LIFT's Delta II and Countrywide Programme

##### 1. Background

LIFT is a multi-donor fund that aims to address food insecurity and income poverty in Myanmar. Its goal is to sustainably increase the incomes of two-million target beneficiaries and make progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goal 1.<sup>55</sup> LIFT is funded by Australia, Denmark, the European Union, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. LIFT was established in 2009. It will remain operational until at least 2016.

LIFT is implemented through a variety of local partners that submit project proposals that support the LIFT purpose in the areas targeted. UNOPS was selected by the donors to be the LIFT Fund Manager. The LIFT Fund Management Office (FMO) is responsible for monitoring and evaluation.

LIFT started operations in 2010 with the Delta I programme, shortly after Cyclone Nargis. Twenty-two IPs implemented one-year projects mainly focused on rehabilitation and recovery in the Ayeyarwady Delta, the region that was hit hardest by the cyclone. Delta I ended in 2011 and a final evaluation was undertaken in that year.

In October 2010, Delta I implementing partners were invited to submit concept notes for three-year projects focusing on economic growth, ranging from relief to development. Nine IPs were selected for funding.<sup>56</sup> Participating IPs signed contracts between mid-2011 and mid-2012, amounting to US\$18.2 million. Of these IPs, seven started their three-year projects between May and August of 2011 and two commenced work in January/ February of 2012. Two additional IPs started work during this time period but were funded under a different LIFT-modality. In terms of programmes, however, they are part of Delta II and will be part of the mid-term review.

The projects of Delta II are in the same geographical area as Delta I but cover fewer townships. The projects focus on improving the following sectors: agriculture, aquaculture, and economic infrastructure. The supported sectors vary between the two sub-programmes and according to agro-ecological zones.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> MDG 1: Reduce by half the proportion of people living on less than \$1.25 a day; achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people; reduce by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.

<sup>56</sup> One sub-programme in Bogale and Mawlamyinegyun townships; one sub-programme is in Labutta township.

<sup>57</sup> There are three distinctive zones in the Delta: the fresh water zone (with a higher production potential in the agriculture sector), the intermediate/ brackish water zone (that offer moderate opportunities in the agriculture sector but more opportunities in the fishery sector), and the salty areas (that relies mostly on the fishing sector).

Delta II promotes collaboration between IPs and has an integrated approach in areas such as agricultural extension, microcredit, and provision of agricultural inputs. As of 2013 IPs under Delta II work in 893 villages divided over four townships, reaching 25,426 households.

The Countrywide Programme (CWP) has 16 IPs working across three agro-ecological regions, and a budget of US\$36.5 million. The three agro-ecological regions the CWP is active in include:<sup>58</sup> the Dry Zone (11 IPs), the Hilly Areas (7 IPs) and the Coastal Areas (2 IPs). The first of the three-year projects in the CWP started in November 2010; the last project will continue until June 2014. The CWP projects are focused on agriculture, fisheries, economic development, social protection, and civil society strengthening. However, the projects operate on a stand-alone basis.

As of 2013 the CWP involved 1,985 villages distributed over 69 townships in three regions. IPs under the Countrywide Programme are working with 111,729 households. A majority of the IP projects in Delta II and the CWP will have passed their halfway mark by the end of 2013. All projects will have implemented activities during at least one monsoon season.

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## 2. Objectives

The FMO has commissioned an external Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the Delta II and CWP. The objectives of the review are:

- A. To assess the progress made halfway through the project;
- B. To assess the approach used by the different IPs in each of the two sub-programmes;
- C. To determine whether the IPs are on track to achieve the expected results and impact; and
- D. To improve LIFT's programmes and make recommendations based on the identification of best practices and lessons learned on design and implementation at the level of the beneficiaries, the IPs, the sub-programmes and the FMO, and recommend how to best integrate them.

The objectives of the MTR are process oriented. They look at the projects' operations, focusing on the "who, what, when, and how" of the activities and outputs. The MTR considers the evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency (and sustainability and impact where appropriate). The review will raise questions about the performance of the IPs, the integration of their approaches, the coordination and the role of the FMO in programme support, and monitoring and evaluation.

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<sup>58</sup> Some IP projects cover more than one agro-ecological zone.

### 3. Evaluation questions

The evaluation questions define the key issues that will be explored during the MTR. The general evaluation questions are:<sup>59</sup>

- Have the IP projects been implemented as scheduled, and how well? What have been the achievements/results so far? Are IPs on track to demonstrate impact at the end of the project cycle?
- Has the target audience been reached? Was the selection of villages and households appropriate?
- Have any external factors influenced the project delivery? Which ones and how? Are the project objectives still valid?
- What interventions are working best to increase crop and livestock production? To improve income-generating activities? To support fisheries and aquaculture? To strengthen local organisations for future livelihoods interventions? To support social protection? To support sustainable management of natural resources?
- What approaches worked best for provision of credit? For revolving funds?
- How were the collaborations between, and the coordination with, other IPs? Have any synergies been developed?
- What was the quality of the design of projects and the quality of the project components?
- In what way have they engaged with the local and regional authorities? What would be the options to develop and strengthen this relationship?
- To what extent have IPs and the FMO been able to capture and document lessons learned? And how have they been integrated?
- What has been learned about the FMO relationships with local and with international IPs?

The Delta II sub-programmes questions are:

- Has the integrated approach, as promoted in the Delta II subprogram, been effective? Why (not) and how could successes be replicated? To what extent did IPs work together in terms of coordination, cooperation, complementarities (geographic and thematic), and synergies in the different townships?
- To what extent have the IPs in Delta II managed to shift from a relief and rehabilitation phase to a development approach? What have been so far the strategies of IPs to boost economic development? Can these strategies be qualified as pro-poor? Could these strategies be scaled up at township and regional levels?

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<sup>59</sup> This is an indicative list of evaluation questions.

- To what extent have IPs been able to develop coherent and adaptive strategies to boost the economic development in the three distinct zones of the Delta?
- To what extents have IPs developed and promoted rice crop intensification practices that could benefit both small-scale farmers and landless people? What is the status of the innovation, the single-plant transplanting method, introduced during Delta I?
- What is the status of the introduction of a double-cropping season in the brackish water zone?
- What is the status of the introduction of improved cropping practices in general, improved post-harvest practices, and improved rice seeds?
- Have market linkages been improved? To what extent have employment opportunities in the rice sector been improved?

Delta II and the CWP each have their own characteristics. Not all evaluation questions will apply equally to the Delta II and CWP. The final list of evaluation questions and how they are prioritised in each of the interventions (Countrywide and Delta II) will be decided by the team that will conduct the evaluation. The list and prioritisation will take into account the views of LIFT, the IPs, and other relevant stakeholders.

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#### **4. Approach and methods**

The MTR is conducted in two stages:

*Stage 1:* The preparation, carry out, and documentation of six case studies and 19 focus group discussions. This will be completed by a national research organisation or company. The outcomes of Stage 1 will feed into:

*Stage 2:* A desk review, consultations, and interviews with the main actors; regional and national workshops; visits to field sites; and an evaluation report.

The second stage will be conducted by a team of local and international experts ("the team").

a) Desk review

The documents in the desk review will include:

- LIFT's annual and semi-annual progress reports (up to June 2012);
- LIFT IP monitoring reports;
- LIFT's Baseline Survey (2011);
- Guidelines of the call for proposals for countrywide interventions and guidelines for concept notes;

- Note for the Delta II programme;
- Programme matrix for Delta II;
- Delta II and CWP IP project proposals and IP progress reports;
- Evaluation report of Delta I;
- Baseline and monitoring materials of the individual IP's projects prepared by the IPs;
- Report 1 of LIFT's Qualitative Socio-economic Monitoring (QSEM); and
- LIFT, Delta II, and CWP logical frameworks (logframes).

a) Interviews/consultations with the key actors

The team will meet with key actors of the LIFT Donor Consortium and Fund Board, the FMO and the management of (selected) IPs. Further suggestions include having meetings with members of the Food Security Working Group and representatives of the government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar. A list of key actors will be developed by the FMO in consultation with the IPs. The team will determine whom they will meet.

b) Field visits

Over a period of three weeks, the team will make field visits to the major agro-ecological zones covered by Delta II and the CWP, with the exception of the Coastal Zone.<sup>6</sup> The team will be divided into two groups: one group will visit the Delta region for three weeks, while the other team will focus on the Hilly and Dry Zone regions for the same period of time. The field visits will focus on villages and townships where IPs implement projects. They will cover the different types of projects and approaches that are part of Delta II and the CWP, and provide the opportunity for the team to consult and interact with the field team of the IP and with a variety of stakeholders and beneficiaries. The team will develop an appropriate methodology on how to best conduct the fieldwork (field questionnaires, interviews, etc.).

The team is responsible for scheduling the field visits of the two groups. The team leader in close consultation with the FMO and IPs will determine the schedule of visits. The team will make its own travel arrangements to and from, and in the field. But they may ask the IPs to help make practical arrangements for their field visits.

c) Regional workshops and a national workshop

In each of the three regions where field visits will take place, the team will facilitate a one-day workshop with representatives of the IPs, sub-implementing partners, the local authorities, and leaders of CBOs. The workshop will take place *after* the field visit. It will provide an opportunity for the local stakeholders to understand, to discuss and, where possible, to validate the preliminary findings of the team after the field visits and

provide comments and feedback on the process of the MTR. The team will prepare an appropriate design for the workshops. The team is responsible for the organisation and the invitations for the workshops. The IPs will be asked to help the team make the necessary arrangements.

The national workshop will provide a similar opportunity to the stakeholders who are based in Yangon to understand, discuss, and, where possible, validate the preliminary findings of the team after the field visits.

## 1. Focus group discussions (FGDs)

Target group of focus group discussions	
In the Delta region (9)	In the Hilly and Dry Zone region (10)
Two FGDs with both male and female villagers involved in agriculture and live-stock production	Two FGDs with both male and female villagers involved in agriculture and live-stock production
Two FGDs with both male and female villagers involved in fisheries and aquaculture	Two FGDs with both male and female villagers involved in non-agricultural livelihoods
Two FGDs with both male and female villagers involved in non-agricultural livelihoods	Two FGDs with male villagers of the lowest strata; landless involved in agricultural labour
Two FGDs with both male and female villagers of the lowest strata: landless involved in agricultural labour	Two FGDs with female villagers of the lowest strata: landless involved in agricultural labour
One FGD with IP staff members	Two FGDs with IP staff members

These will be used to get more in-depth information on perceptions, insights, attitudes, and experiences of the beneficiaries and the IPs in the different regions in relation to the projects' progress, constraints, lessons learned, and good practices. Nineteen FGDs are scheduled to take place: nine in the villages and township of the Delta region (to cover Delta II) and five FGDs each in the Hilly and Dry Zone regions (to cover CWP). In addition, there will be one FGD with IP staff members in each of the three regions. The table below gives an overview of regions and the target audience of each FGD and the topics to be covered.

LIFT FMO will facilitate the government permission for travel to rural areas.

Table 1: Proposed target groups for FGD in the Delta and Dry and Hilly Zone regions. The FGDs with the villagers will focus on:

- Approach of the projects;

- Role of the village organisation in planning;
- Success and setbacks with the project to date;
- Role of village tract and township officers;
- Changes observed in the village and in the village's organisations;
- Access to credit; and
- Appropriateness of targeting.

In addition, in the Delta region, the FGD with villages will discuss how the integrated approach of IPs has worked. The FGD with selected IP staff members will give attention to:

- a. The process of collaboration with other IPs;
- b. The process of collaboration with the government;
- c. Appropriateness of targeting;
- d. Response of the villages;
- e. Support of the FMO; and
- f. How to capture lessons learned and good practices.

The FGDs will take place in the language of the majority of residents in the village where they take place. They will be carefully and accurately recorded (ideally using the words of the respondents and not re-interpreted), recording differences of opinion and different perspectives provided by the different participants. The locations of the FGDs will be selected from the list of townships and villages where the FGDs for the LIFT baseline survey were held.

The questionnaire and the flow of the FGD will be designed and tested, and facilitators and documenters will receive training beforehand. The outcome of the FGD will help frame the questions during the field visits and the interviews with the key actors.

A national research organisation or company will conduct the focus group discussions. The international team leader of the MTR will provide support in the design and testing of the FGD and decide on the scheduling in consultation with the IPs.

### **Case studies**

This is another tool that will be used by the team to better understand what has happened over the past 18 months in terms of change brought by some of the project interventions. In particular, innovative or successful interventions could make interesting topics for case studies. There will be six case studies prepared by a national research company or organisation. The topics that are suggested include:

- i) the role and effectiveness of social organisations at the village level and at the village tract or township level;
- ii) the application of Farmer Field Schools as an extension method; and

- iii) the terms of credit for farmers and non-farmers and its implications in the Delta region.

The evaluation team, with input from the FMO and IPs, will decide the final list of topics for the case studies and the locations where the studies will be conducted. There will be at least one case study for each of the three regions. The finding should be supported by data gathered through interviews, meetings, and other methods deemed appropriate by the consultants.

The FGDs will be conducted by a national research organisation or company. The international team leader of the MTR will oversee the methodology used in the case study research.

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<sup>6</sup>As only two IPs are active in the Coastal Zone and the projects have only started in 2012 it was decided to leave this zone out of the assessment.

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## **5. Evaluation team**

For Stage 1, the evaluation team will be either a national research company or organisation. They should demonstrate to have:

- a) Experience in designing and conducting FGDs in rural areas in Myanmar;
- b) Experience and expertise in researching and documenting case studies;
- c) Human resources with excellent facilitation and training skills; and
- d) Human resources with excellent documenting skills and ability to write in English.

For Stage 2: the evaluation team will be a team of three international (including the team leader) and three national experts. The time allocation for the team is: 50 person days<sup>60</sup> for the international team leader and 33 person days each for the three other experts. It is suggested that at least two team members are female. Additionally, the members of the team should have:

- a) A Master's degree or PhD in the social sciences, agricultural development/economics, or international development;
- b) At least 10 years of relevant work experience;
- c) At least 15 years demonstrated expertise in project evaluation with focus on process evaluation, qualitative assessment tools, organisational development, poverty analysis, and gender and vulnerability for the team leader;
- d) Experience in evaluating large livelihoods programmes, preferably in Southeast Asia, that have been implemented through trust fund mechanisms;
- e) Knowledge and understanding of pro-poor economic development including microfinance

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<sup>60</sup> The team leader is expected to make two trips to Myanmar for Stage 1 and for Stage 2.

The members of the team that will visit the Delta II sub-programme sites should have Master's degrees in agronomy or agricultural economics, with demonstrable experience in rice production in Southeast Asia.

In addition, all team members should be able to demonstrate:

- a. Familiarity with rural development, food security, livelihoods, and civil society in Southeast Asia;
- b. Familiarity with working modalities of NGOs and UN agencies;
- c. Strong analytical skills and strong group facilitation skills;
- d. Excellent communication and English language report writing skills; and
- e. Ability for field travel in potentially difficult circumstances for at least two weeks.

For Stage 1 and Stage 2: The international team leader of the evaluation team will be responsible for the whole assignment, including the focus group discussions and the case studies. S/he is expected to provide guidance and support to the national research organisation or company in the design and rollout of the focus group discussions.

For contracting purposes, preference will be given to an organisation or company that is able to deliver the entire assignment (Stage 1 and Stage 2) as one package. It will be up to the organisation or company to propose consultants for the team (national and international), as well as a partnership with a national research organisation or company. They are expected to be in line with the criteria and offer an appropriate mix of skills and experience.

The selected company or organisation will need to provide for all required air and ground transport (e.g., van hire or 4WDs) and cover running costs and drivers to move teams to the selected villages. Daily subsistence allowances should be provided to field staff to cover the cost of meals and accommodation etc. The costs of reporting, communications, printing questionnaires, clipboards, stationary etc. will also need to be covered. All insurance will be the responsibility of the selected company or organisation.

## **6. Deliverables**

### **1 Evaluation Report**

The evaluation report summarises the findings and recommendation of the MTR. This report will not contain more than 50 pages, not including annexes. The structure of the reports should reflect:

- ❖ Executive summary;
- ❖ Background;
- ❖ Objectives of the evaluation and key issues investigated;
- ❖ Methods;

- ❖ Findings and conclusions on the key issues investigated;
- ❖ Recommendations: for the LIFT Fund Board, for the LIFT FMO, and for the IPs. The recommendations should be prioritised and spell out practical and feasible actions that should be undertaken; and
- ❖ Annexes (including the report on case studies and focus group discussions (see item “d” below).

The draft version of the report will be submitted by the team leader to the LIFT FMO not more than 15 days after the final debriefing. The LIFT FMO will have 21 days to review the draft and prepare a management response to the report. The final version of the report will be submitted to the LIFT FMO no more than 15 days after receiving the comments and management response. The report will be prepared and submitted in MS Word and shall not exceed a file size of 4 MB.

## 2 Workshops

The team will facilitate three regional workshops: one in the Delta, one in the Dry Zone region, and one in the Hilly region. Representatives of the IPs, the local authorities, and selected leaders of CBOs will participate. The workshops will take place after the field visit, and will provide an opportunity for the local stakeholders to understand, discuss and, where possible, validate the preliminary findings of the team after the field visits and provide comments and feedback on the process of the MTR.

The team will prepare and facilitate a national workshop, which will take place after all the field visits have been completed. As in the regional workshop, this event will give the stakeholders the opportunity to understand, discuss and, wherever possible, validate the preliminary findings.

All the workshops will be documented and a summary of the main discussion points and outcomes will be presented as an annex of the evaluation report.

## 3 Debriefing

The team will prepare and present their main findings and recommendations to the LIFT FMO. The debriefing will provide an opportunity to comment on the process issues related to the evaluation itself. Members of the LIFT Fund Board will be invited to participate in the debriefing.

### Report on case studies and focus group discussions

This report will be an annex to the main evaluation report. It contains the six case studies. Each of the six case studies should not be longer than eight pages. The case study should be structured in such a way that the document reflects the methods used, the context, observation, and the different findings and conclusions. Each case study should start with an executive summary.

#### 4 Focus group discussions

The FGDs will also be documented in this report. The FGD documentation will contain methodology and questions, locations, context (brief village profile), and a one-page summary of the outcomes of each of the FGDs. The report will be prepared and submitted in MS Word.

The questions, the list of participants, location, date and time, and the complete write-up of each of the 19 focus group discussions will be prepared and submitted in MS Word.

### **7. Evaluation time line**

A majority of the projects of Delta II and CWP have already passed the halfway point of the project lifespan. All projects of the two subprograms will have at least one monsoon period of activities behind them by November 2012. To keep the recommendation of the MTR relevant for the IPs for the second half of the project, a fast turnaround time, from starting with preparations to issuing the final report, is necessary.

Below is the proposed schedule.

- October 2012: Final terms of reference prepared and approved and put out to tender.
- October 2012: IPs informed about the MTR.
- November 2012: MTR team selected.
- December 2012: FGD format tested and conducted; case studies undertaken and written up; schedule for field visits prepared.
- February 2013: Fieldwork, interviews, consultations, workshops and debriefing completed.
- March 2013: Draft report delivered.
- April 2013: Final report delivered; action plan for follow-up and implementation of recommendation prepared and disseminated.

For contracting purposes and payment, the following milestones (MS) apply:

- FGD and case studies completed and documented (deliverable *d* and *e*)
- Draft evaluation report completed (deliverable *a*) and final evaluation report completed (deliverable *a*).

### **8. Evaluation management**

The LIFT Fund Director is the commissioning manager of the evaluation.

- LIFT M&E team:

The LIFT M&E officer will take up the role of evaluation manager. The manager is responsible for the organisation of all aspects of the evaluation, including the preparation of the terms of reference and tender documents, evaluation of shortlisted candidates, coordination with the IPs, liaising with the selected MTR team, coordinating with the programme teams, organising initial briefing meetings with the IPs and Fund Board members, and managing all the contracts.

- Evaluation Critical Reference Group:

The Critical Reference Group (CRG) will provide advice on the process of the MTR. This is small group of people that is expected to meet several times during the lifespan of the evaluation. The CRG reviews the terms of reference of the evaluation and provides input on the final evaluation questions, the focus group questions, and the tools applied. The group participates in the briefing of the selected company at the start of the assignment, the debriefing at the end, and reviews the draft report. The CRG is composed of members of the LIFT Fund Board, the FMO, the IPs, and the UNOPS M&E Knowledge Group. The evaluation manager prepares and participates in the meetings of the CRG. A separate term of reference will be provided for the CRG.

- Role of the IPs:

The IPs will be closely involved in the process of the MTR. The evaluation manager will brief them on the process of the evaluation. They will have the opportunity to participate in the prioritisation of the evaluation questions, the setup of the FGD and the selection of topics for the case studies. They will participate in the regional and national workshops, and play a key role in the organisation and conduct of the field trips. The IPs will also play a key role in following up on the recommendations of the MTR.

***Team Composition***

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The MKEM team is composed of six members as presented in the submitted and approved proposal. In discussions with UNOPS, it was agreed that two additional members would assist the team. The first is the international rice and agriculture expert Dr. Khin Mar Cho. The second member brought to the team is Mr. Khin Maung Lwin, who has been providing support to Golden Plains (GP) in the form of training, and assisting with the preparation of fieldwork. He will also provide support and analysis of the case studies and Phase II.

Glen Swanson	<i>Team Leader</i>
Dr. Adam McCarty	<i>International Economist/Microfinance Expert</i>
Ms. Emma Child	<i>International M&amp;E Expert</i>
Mr. Tin Aung Cho	<i>National Team Leader/Livelihoods Expert</i>
Dr. Khin Lay Swe	<i>Agriculture Expert</i>
Mr. Myo Nyunt	<i>Livelihoods Expert</i>
Dr. Khin Mar Cho	<i>Agriculture Expert (seconded through UNOPS)</i>
Kim Maung Lwin	<i>National Social Development Specialist</i>

Annex 3: List of Main Persons Met

***Donor Consortium***

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Ms. Veronique Lorenzo, Counsellor (Head of Operation), European Union

***Fund Board***

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Ms. Anthea Kerr, Livelihoods Advisor, DFID; and Fund Board Chair

Mr. Oliver Maes, Attaché (Cooperation) Food Security, EU, and Fund Board Member

Mr. Khin Maung Lwin, Programme Officer, DFID

***UNOPS/Fund Manager***

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Mr. Andrew Kirkwood, Director, LIFT FMO

Mr. Harald Kreuzer, Programme Officer, LIFT FMO

Mr. Barclay O'Brien, Business Development and Microfinance Officer, LIFT FMO

Mr. Myint Kyaw, Business Development and Microfinance Officer, LIFT FMO

Mr. Kris Hendrix, M&E Officer, LIFT FMO

Ms. Pwint Phyu Soe, M&E Assistant, LIFT FMO

Mr. Ye Winn, M&E Analyst, LIFT FMO

Mr. Aung Than Oo, IT& Database Associate, LIFT FMO

Ms. Yasmin Forbes, Communication Officer, LIFT FMO

Mr. Kyaw Soe Lynn, Communication Assistant, LIFT FMO

Mr. Sein Myint, Programme Analyst, LIFT FMO

Ms. Naw Tin Thet Sann, Social Protection and Gender Officer, LIFT FMO

Ms. Win Win Myint, Agriculture and Livestock Officer, LIFT FMO

Mr. Than Tun, Off-farm Income Generation Officer, LIFT FMO

Ms. Yee Yee Thant, Assistant to Fund Director, LIFT FMO.

## **Implementing Partners (IPs)**

<b>DELTA II</b>	
AAM	ActionAid Myanmar
ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Agency
AVSI	Association of Volunteers in International Service
GRET	Groupe de Recherche et d'Echanges Technologiques
IRRI	International Rice Research Institute
LEAD	League for Education And Development
Mercy Corps	
Proximity Designs	
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WHH	Welthungerhilfe
<b>COUNTRYWIDE PROGRAMME</b>	
ActionAid/Thadar	
ADRA	The Adventist Development and Relief Agency
AYO	Ar Yone Oo
CESVI	Cooperazione E Sviluppo
CORAD	Chin Organisation for Rural Agricultural Development
DPDO	Disabled Persons Development Organisation
EGG	EverGreen Group
GRET	Groupe de Recherche et d'Echanges Technologiques
HAI HelpAge International	
Mercy Corps	
Metta	
NAG	Network Activities Group
Oxfam	Oxford Committee for Famine Relief
Pact	
Proximity Designs	
SSLDO	Southern Shan Local Development Organisation
SWISSAID	
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association
<b>OTHER</b>	
CARE	Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere
Consortium of Dutch NGOs	
EcoDev	
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FSWG	Food Security Working Group
GEN	Gender Equality Network

LWF	Lutheran World Federation
MBCA	Myanmar Business Coalition on AIDS
MERN	Myanmar Environment Rehabilitation-conservation Network
Mingalar Myanmar	
MSN	Mangrove Service Network
Myanmar Ceramic Society	
Paung Daw Oo	
Paung Ku	
Radanar Ayar	
Relief International	
Save the Children	
Social Policy and Poverty Research Group	
Triangle Generation Humanaire	
UN-Habitat	
World Food Programme	
World Vision	

### ***Workshop attendees***

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- Community leaders, beneficiaries, and community members in each of the village localities listed
- Representatives of the government, Nay Pyi Taw
- Ministry of Planning and Foreign Economic Relations Department (FERD)
- Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation
- Department of Agriculture: U Hla Kyaw, Director General
- Department of Agriculture Planning: U Aung Hlaing, Director General, International Relation and Trade
- Department of Water Resources Utilisation
- Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries
- Department of Livestock: Dr. Ohn Kaw, Director and Dr. Aung Gyi, Deputy Director General
- Ministry of Cooperatives
- Maj. Myint Thein, Director
- Additional ministerial support staff whose individual names were not collected

#### Annex 4: List of Documents Consulted

Van Domelen, J. *Reaching the Poor and Vulnerable: Targeting Strategies for Social Funds and other Community-Driven Programmes*. The Social Protection Team Human Development Network World Bank, 2007

*Livelihoods in the Dry Zone of Myanmar: A Pilot Qualitative Social and Economic Monitoring*. LIFT, September 2011

*Qualitative Social and Economic Monitoring Round One Report*, World Bank and Myanmar Development Research, LIFT, 2012

*LIFT Interim Review: September/October 2012*, NIRAS, Denmark

*The Development Study on Sustainable Agricultural and Rural Development for Poverty Reduction Programme in the Central Dry Zone of the Union of Myanmar*: JICA, August 2010

*Qualitative Social-Economic Monitoring Report I (QSEM)*, LIFT, 2011

Kempel, S. *Village Institutions and Leadership in Myanmar: A View from Below* United Nations Development Programme, 2012

*Value Chain of Fishery Products in Labutta Township*, Win Win Kyi, Independent Consultant, 2012

*Improving Livelihoods through Civil Society Strengthening Project Baseline Survey Report on Baseline Survey for LIFT-Funded Project*. SWISSAID, Myanmar, August 2012

Schreiner M., United Nations Development Programme, 2012 <<http://www.mm.undp.org/>> [Accessed May 2013]

LIFT Annual Reports 2010, 2011, and 2013

LIFT logical framework: Delta II and CWP logical frameworks

## Annex 5: Focus Group Discussions

### **List of Focus Group Discussion**

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- [FGD1] Agriculture and Livestock – Delta Region. *Socio-Economic & Environmental Development (SEED)*, (Radanar Ayar) Ah Kha Village, Bo Yaung Village Tract, Bogale Township
- [FGD2] Agriculture and Livestock – Delta Region. *Value Chain Development for Inclusive Economic Growth in Central Bogale/Mawlamyinegyun Townships*, (GRET, Pact) Thu Kha Ba La village, Bogale Township
- [FGD3] Fishery and Aquaculture. *Scale-up Projects* (Adventist Development and Relief Agency – ADRA), Kanyin Kaing Village, Labutta Township
- [FGD4] Fishery and Aquaculture. *Scale-up Projects* (Adventist Development and Relief Agency – ADRA), Kanyin Kaing Village, Labutta Township
- [FGD5] Non-Agricultural Activities – Delta Region. *Value Chain Development for Inclusive Economic Growth in Central Bogale Township* (GRET), Thu Kha Ba La Village, Tit Kwet Village tract, Bogale Township
- [FGD6] Non-Agricultural Activities – Delta Region. *Footpath and Embankments, Agricultural & Livestock and Micro Loans* (Proximity Designs, LEAD, and Pact), Kone Gyi , Kone Gyi Village tract, Labutta Township
- [FGD7] Lowest Strata – Delta Region. *Socio-Economic and Environmental Development (SEED) Project* (Radanar Ayar), Ah Kha Village, Boe Yaung Village tract, Bogale Township
- [FGD8] Lowest Strata – Delta Region. *Cash for Work – Footpath and Embankments* (Proximity Designs), Kone Gyi Village, Labutta Township
- [FGD9] IP Staff – Delta Region. *Focus Group Discussion with IP staff* (attending staff from IRRI, GRET, WHH, Proximity, Radanar Ayar, ActionAid, Thadar, and Pact), Radanar Ayar office, Bogale Township
- [FGD10] Agriculture and Livestock – Dry Zone. *Building Community Resilience for Food Security* (Mercy Corps), Khet Lan Kyin Village, Hlaing Pan Village tract, Pyaw Pwe Township
- [FGD11] Agriculture and Livestock – Northern Shan State. *Socio-Economic and Environmental Development project* (CESVI), Bant Bway Village, Bant Bway Village tract, Naung Cho Township
- [FGD12] Non-Agricultural Activities – Dry Zone. *Pact Global Microfinance Farm Institute Project* (Pact), Kyaung Pan Kone Village, Myit Chae Village tract, Pakokku Township
- [FGD13] Non-Agricultural Activities – Dry Zone. *Livelihood Development Project* (ActionAid, ECLIF International), Min Kan Village, Sisa Par Village tract, Aung Lan Township
- [FGD14] Lowest Strata – Dry Region – *Pact Global Microfinance Farm Institute Project* (Pact), Kyaung Pan Kone Village, Myit Chae Village tract, Pakokku Township
- [FGD15] Lowest Strata – Dry Zone. *Building Community Resilience for Food Security*

(Mercy Corps), Khet Lan Kyin Village, Hlaing Pan Village tract, Pyaw Pwe Township

[FGD16] Lowest Strata – Dry Region. *Livelihood Support Project* (ActionAid, ECLOF International), Min Kan Village, Sisa Par village tract, Aung Lan Township

[FGD17] Lowest Strata – Shan State. *Regular Loans (Pact) & Food Security Improvement and Poverty Alleviation among Vulnerable Rural People* (CESVI), Bant Bway Village, Naung Cho Township

[FGD18] IP Staff – Dry Zone. *Focus Group Discussion with IP staff* (staff from ADR, ECLOF International, Pact, MBCA, Thadar), MBCA office in Pakokku Township

[FGD19] IP Staff – Hilly Zone (Shan State). *Focus Group Discussion with IP staff* (staff from CESVI and Pact), Pact office in Bant Bway, Naung Cho Township

**FGD 1 Agriculture and Livestock – Delta Region**

<b>Location</b>	Ah Kha Village, Bo Yaung Village tract, Bogale Township
<b>Date</b>	19 January 2013
<b>IP Assessed</b>	Radanar Ayar
<b>IP Project Assessed</b>	<i>Socio-Economic and Environmental Development (SEED) Project</i>

This was a group of 15 land-owning farmers, of which two were women.

The main village project activities were providing:

- Certified paddy seeds and fertiliser to group members;
- Small grants to cover production costs and the trial of new farming methods;
- A drum seeder and a thresher to the village farmer group; and
- Technical training (seed selection with saltwater treatment, know-how on seed bed preparation, hand transplanting, fertiliser application, and roughing).

**General Findings**

- Farmers gained knowledge and skills on improved cultivation techniques. These included the proper preparation of seed beds, hand transplanting, fertiliser application, and roughing.
- Farmer group members have changed their opinions on what are the key areas for successful production. Their focus is now on the use of proper planting techniques in order to produce higher quality rice.
- There are still major constraints to scaling up the new model of agricultural production. These include the lack of capital to finance sufficient labour costs, the limited availability of skilled labour (given the lack of knowledge of the project's improved farming techniques in the region), and the extent of low-lying field that is unreceptive to new planting methods. The beneficiaries appreciate the positive effects of the project with regard to the higher quality rice production and the higher market prices it demands.
- Farmers are committed to continuing the projects' model of rice production.

**Conclusions and Impact**

The project has served to increase farmers' incomes and improve their livelihoods. They are now practicing a new, more efficient model of rice production and have improved access to high-quality seeds. However, this model of rice production is highly labour intensive and requires skilled

labour to carry out its planting methods. Few labourers are familiar with this new method of production, and farmers lack the necessary funding to hire additional labour. Therefore, scaling-up this model of production is difficult.

The increased need for skilled labour could be viewed as an opportunity rather than a barrier. The project should consider extending the training of new agricultural techniques to landless labourers, helping to provide a source of skilled labour. This could be paired with larger loans to farmers to help pay for larger workforces. Increasing the amount of land under cultivation could produce greater yields. This would increase profits for farmers, allowing them to pay back their larger loans. Moreover, this scheme would see a greater number of landless labourers provided the chance to improve their livelihoods.

**FGD 2 Agriculture and Livestock – Delta Region**

<b>Location</b>	Thu Kha Ba La Village, Tit Kwet Village tract, Bogale Township (Note: no livestock activities were being conducted at the target village)
<b>Date</b>	18 January 2013
<b>IPs Assessed</b>	GRET, Pact
<b>IP Project Assessed</b>	Value Chain Development for Inclusive Economic Growth in Central Bogale/Mawlamyinegyun Townships

This was a group of nine land-owning farmers, of whom six were women.

The main village project activities were:

- Technical training in farming techniques, pest and disease control, seed production, post-harvest technology, and providing greater in-kind support in the form of certified seeds—*Thi Htat Yin* and *Pak Han*);
- Providing farming tools (threshers, a drum-seeder, a puddling machine, and seed storage bags and tanks); and
- Providing new seeds.

**General Findings**

- The committee seems to be functioning well, demonstrating strengthened relationships and a sound platform for learning about spillovers.
- Improvements in farm management, especially the application of technical inputs such as pest control, were reported.
- On the whole, it was felt that the project's support wasn't particularly aligned with the village's needs. Some new techniques being introduced by the project are not appropriate to farming in the target localities due to the scarcity of labour and regular flooding.
- The short-span seed variety used in this project is not appropriate for the region.

**Conclusions and Impact**

The participants felt that much of the project's support was not closely aligned with the real needs of the farmers. The tools provided, except the threshing machine, are not useful. They also only received one threshing machine from the project.

Technical training was offered to too few farmers. They did not appear to share what they had learned with other farmers, limiting the impact of the training in the village. It was also clear that no regular sessions on sharing knowledge among the Community Agro-Economic Development Platform (CAEDP) members occurred. The villagers did not seem to be aware of the purpose and objectives of the project or programme. However, the input shop established by the CAEDP was very much appreciated by the farmers.

### FGD 3 Fishery and Aquaculture

<b>Location</b>	Kanyin Kaing Village, Hlwa Zar Village tract, Labutta Township
<b>Date</b>	January 2013
<b>IP in Village</b>	ADRA (Adventist Development and Relief Agency)
<b>IP project</b>	<i>Scale-up Project</i>

This was a group of nine landless persons, of whom six were women.

The main village project activities were:

- Constructing two aquaculture ponds with one technical training session;
- Trainings in aquaculture, operation and maintenance, and aquaculture product development;
- Storage/processing facility constructed;
- Planting of windbreaker plantations, roadside plantations, and mangrove nurseries;
- Community development/nursery training sessions; and
- Forest user groups (FUGs) established.

#### **General Findings**

- The fishery and aquaculture group was not functioning but they continued to operate their revolving fund of 150,000 kyat, which was established with 17 members who contributed 2,000 kyat each.
- There was evident suspicion and conflict between members and the project staff due to a lack of transparency, and possible abuse of power (e.g., project staff reportedly sold seedlings that belonged to the village nursery). This relates to a subsequent investigation into EcoDev by ADRA and the LIFT FMO.
- The fish and crab ponds did not appear to be successful, and some members have lost their investment. The ponds were rented out to individual farmers to raise shrimps or crabs, but these activities failed. Rents were subsequently not paid.
- The technical skills of the EcoDev staff were reported as inadequate.
- The project suffered from members dropping out. EcoDev left the project and for many months nothing happened while ADRA and the LIFT FMO assessed the situation and decided what to do.

#### **Conclusion and Impact**

The villagers expected larger fish and crab catches as a result of the environmental restoration efforts. There is currently no activity relating to agriculture in the village, but the focus group recommended that future support should also be extended to farmers. This is because if the farmers' businesses improved, there will be more opportunities for the villagers to work as casual labourers to supplement their household incomes. It is clear that the project suffered from inadequate management and technical inputs by EcoDev,

including problems with possible dishonest IP staff, and a generally weak participatory approach. Technical training and follow-up technical support for shrimp raising was also far from sufficient.

## FGD 4 Fishery and aquaculture

<b>Location</b>	Kanyin Kaing Village, Hlwa Zar Village tract, Labutta Township
<b>Date</b>	25 January 2013
<b>IP Assessed</b>	ADRA (Adventist Development and Relief Agency)
<b>IP Project Assessed</b>	<i>Scale-up Project</i>

This was a group of eight landless people, of whom six were women.

The main village project activities were:

- A cash-for-work (CfW) scheme that allowed for the construction of four fish and aquaculture ponds;
- Technical training sessions about fishery management;
- Ponds stocked with 5000 fingerlings and 70 kgs of crabs; and
- Training on aquaculture nursery establishment and constructing a nursery.

### General Findings

- The fishery and aquaculture group stopped functioning but they continued to operate their revolving fund of 150,000 kyat, which was established with 17 village members that contributed 2,000 kyat each.
- There was evident suspicion and conflict between members and the project staff due to a lack of transparency and the abuse of power by EcoDev project staff (e.g., one staff sold seedlings that belonged to the village nursery).
- The EcoDev fish and crab ponds did not appear to be successful.
- The project suffered from village members dropping out during the project.

### Conclusion and Impact

There were no significant impacts on the fishery and aquaculture group. There were some increases in knowledge and skills gained making seasoning powder. In relation to the market group, there were also small gains in income levels evident (gains in income could have been higher had the shrimp paste machine been operational). The villagers expressed particular interest in the project being extended to include farmers as beneficiaries, especially regarding the installation of windbreakers and riverbank controls.

**FGD 5 Non-Agricultural Activities – Delta Region**

<b>Location</b>	Thu Kha Ba La Village, Tit Kwet Village Tract, Bogale Township
<b>Date</b>	18 January 2013
<b>IP</b>	GRET
<b>IP Project</b>	<i>Value Chain Development for Inclusive Economic Growth in Central Bogale Township</i>

This was a group of 10 landless persons, of whom four were women.

The main village project activities were:

- Establish Community Agro-Economic Development Platforms (CAEDPs) and peer support extension in order to provide technical advice and support in agricultural technology, finance management, and market information sources;
- Establish a CAEDP to improve small farmers access to good-quality agricultural inputs that were affordably priced;
- Provide the neediest with agricultural machinery (threshers, drum seeders, and inter-cultivators) by establishing rotating credit groups, so that they can add value to their output; and
- Provide paddy seeds in the form of paddy seed loans.

**General Findings**

- The groups (detailed below) seemed to be functioning well, especially CAEDP, meeting twice monthly, and discussing any progress made and other related issues, and planning future procurement of agricultural machinery.
- Beneficiaries stated that they were able to access the inputs (fertilisers, farming tools, agricultural machinery, and fuel for such machinery, rice bran for animal feed, seasonal goods, and fishing equipment) that they required in the CAEDP store when they needed them and at reasonable prices.
- The thresher group consisted of eight members that took care of the machine that they had been provided with. The rest of the village had access to the threshing machine and didn't have to rely on cows/buffalos and/or trailers, thereby reducing waste, saving time, and improving hygiene.
- The market information group was comprised of three members who completed the training sessions offered by GRET. Their responsibility was to disseminate the latest market information about relevant crops on the village notice board twice a month. The information was provided on a monthly basis by GRET but supplemented through their own efforts, using radio, journals, and newspapers as sources.
- GRET entered in to an agreement with a private company to provide paddy seed loans to farmers. Farmers then used GRET techniques to plant these before paying back these paddy seed loans in-kind. However, the poor quality of the seeds meant there was not enough to provide back to the company,

which had to be financially compensated for their loss. Please see further details below.

### **Conclusions and Impact**

The training provided on farming techniques, such as the GAP system, could not be applied in practice. The land in this area is saturated with water and it cannot be drained to allow for the planting of seedlings. The seeds proved to have a short life span and were not suitable for water-saturated land. Semi-aquatic crops such as paddy are more suitable for such conditions. Moreover, poor farmers could not afford to implement the new farming techniques that they learned about because they were associated with the higher costs of labour and inputs.

Paddy seeds that were provided through a private company were of poor quality and thus could not be replanted in future seasons. This was unfortunate as paddy seeds are much more suited to the surrounding conditions.

GRET has provided a drum seeder and an inter-cultivator but they haven't been used as of yet as only traditional broadcasting methods are currently in practice. This equipment, if it remains unused, should be transferred to other communities who practice GAP.

**FGD 6 Non-Agricultural Activities – Delta Region**

<b>Location</b>	Kone Gyi, Kone Gyi Village tract, Labutta Township
<b>Date</b>	24 January 2013
<b>IPs Assessed</b>	Proximity Designs, LEAD, and Pact
<b>IP Project Assessed</b>	<i>Footpath and Embankments, Agricultural and Livestock, and Micro-credit Loans</i>

This was a group of 10 landless persons, of whom five were women.

The main village project activities were:

- A cash-for-work programme that involved the construction of footpaths and embankments (Proximity Designs);
- Technical assistance and in-kind support for farmers and livestock breeders (LEAD).
- Microcredit provided for farmers, livestock breeders, and other vulnerable groups (Pact).

**General Findings***Proximity Designs cash-for-work project*

- Footpaths and embankments were successfully constructed, with 193 villagers receiving wages for their work. Males did the digging and females carried sand baskets. Each group of workers (four groups) earned 50,000 kyat, which was distributed equally among 50 members. The footpath was finished in March 2012. The footpath has facilitated better interaction and communication between villagers by providing all-weather access between villages and townships, and is also likely used for trade.
- At the same time embankment diggings were carried out to support footpaths. Embankments are useful to prevent saline water entering farms.

*LEAD agriculture and livelihood project*

- A community-based organisation (CBO) was formed for livestock breeders with 21 members and five committee members (two male and three female). LEAD provided customised skill trainings to the CBO.
- The LEAD project provides inputs such as seeds, fertiliser, and pesticides for winter crops. Also provides pigs for 21 households (five women-headed households), and chickens for 23 households (seven women-headed).

### *Pact micro-finance project*

- Pact project beneficiaries and loan sizes were decided based on the advice of the villagers, which was obtained during household visits.
- The loan groups (groups of five members) seem to be functioning well because the groups were formed with a strong sense of shared responsibility to repay loans on time.
- Most of the members ran small grocery shops at home.
- The target beneficiaries are suitable for the Pact programme.
- Their economic conditions have evidently improved.

### **Conclusions and Impact**

Loan repayment rates in the village were high and loans were repaid on time. This enabled the loan-group leaders, when meeting with the Pact project team to repay what they had received. This has allowed for investment in farming and livestock breeding. Some ambitious members expected bigger loans. This would allow them to expand their grocery shops substantially. However, the capital required to do so is about five million kyat.

The increased access to markets in other villages and townships by motorbike is said to have improved product sales. The new embankments have prevented saline water from entering farmland and blighting crops, and increased food and income security. It is also suggested that improved farming techniques and livestock breeding have increased agricultural output.

**FGD 7 Lowest Strata – Delta Region**

<b>Location</b>	Ah Kha Village, Boe Yaung Village tract, Bogale Township
<b>Date</b>	19 January 2013
<b>IP</b>	Radanar Ayar
<b>IP Project</b>	<i>Socio-Economic and Environmental Development (SEED) Project</i>

This was a group of six landless persons, of whom two were women.

The main village project activities were:

- Monthly technical trainings to disseminate new farming practices and the proper use of the new technologies provided by the project. Trainings included good agriculture practices;
- Providing certified seeds to increase productivity;
- Farming grants (100,000 kyat) to help finance land preparation, hire tractors, help with labour costs, etc.; and
- Providing a drum seeder, allowing farmers to grow paddy in lines, resulting in a better yield per acre compared to the traditional broadcasting method.

**General Findings**

- The lowest strata group provides their labour or services on a daily basis. They have a regular flow of income in the sowing season, but not for the off-season. During this period, their work consists of odd jobs, such as home gardening, fence making, embankment repair, fishing, etc. Some of them also earn income by making and selling snacks at the market.
- The lowest strata of villagers have learned new methods to prepare land, control pests, and use natural fertiliser, in addition to post-harvesting techniques.
- Focus group participants expressed a general understanding of the aims of the project. Farmers are direct beneficiaries and receive technical training, goods in-kind, and cash loans. The lowest strata indirectly benefit when working for these farmers.
- Participants suggested that the project should provide them with small loans to support their daily investments that make in relation to snack making, and selling clothes and other goods.

**Conclusions and Impact**

The training provided by the project increased the knowledge of farmers directly, which was passed on to the lowest strata villagers, who worked the land. Micro loans from the project also helped the farmers procure farming investments; however, these loans were not extended to the (landless) lower

strata. The focus group participants did note though that the introduction of labour intensive farming techniques, and the loans provided to them, should provide more farm work opportunities.

Land-owning farmers were the direct beneficiaries of the project activities listed above. They were reportedly benefiting through increased yields per hectare and total volumes. As elsewhere, however, precise before-and-after production data was not collected by the IP, so the gains to beneficiaries could not be measured. Identifying which single activity (e.g., new seeds) was responsible for improved yields was not possible as the beneficiaries were getting an array of assistance.

**FGD 8 Lowest Strata - Delta Region**

<b>Location</b>	Kone Gyi Village, Kone Gyi Village tract, Labutta Township
<b>Date</b>	24 January 2013
<b>IP</b>	Proximity Designs
<b>IP Project</b>	<i>Footpath and Embankments</i>

This was a group of 11 landless persons, of which two were women.

The main village project activities were:

- The Proximity Designs project organised a cash-for-work programme that involved the construction of footpaths and embankments;
- The LEAD project provided technical assistance and in-kind support for farmers and livestock breeders; and
- Pact provided microcredit for farmers, livestock breeders, and other vulnerable groups.

**General Findings**

- The lowest strata group built footpaths and received cash-for-work 20 days on average. They received 600 kyat per foot and could earn 3000 kyat per day. The footpaths are 2500 feet long and run from Htan Pin Kone Village to Aung Lan Ta Mun Village, and Kone Gyi to Htan Pin Kone Village. There were four groups of labourers, each with 50 participants. A group leader disbursed daily wages. The footpaths were completed in March 2012.
- Normally, income for the lowest strata is generated through activities such as fishing, which can earn them 600 kyat per day, and crab trapping, which can earn 1000 to 2000 kyat daily at high tide. (At low tide they have to look for other ways to earn money.) The fish and crab collectors keep 500 kyat in profit and sell their catch at Labutta market.
- During the growing season some landless villagers work for farmers and can earn 2000 to 2500 kyat per day. There are three threshing machines in the village, which provide job opportunities.
- They have been growing winter crops provided by the LEAD project. Pests destroyed some crops, but there were enough successful crops to break even.

**Conclusions and Impact**

The training provided farmers with new farming techniques, such as the good agricultural practices system, which has resulted in greater yields, and has created more job opportunities. Providing pigs and chickens created jobs for landless labourers. Micro-loans from the project also helped farmers invest in their farming operations. At the same time, the poorest in the village benefitted

indirectly through employment on the farms.

The new footpaths resulted in better communications with other villages. The winter crops that were provided were not particularly productive due to poor pest control. Overall, the villagers have experienced an upgrade in their livelihoods.

**FGD 9 IP Staff – Delta Region**

<b>Location</b>	Radanar Ayar office, Bogale, Delta
<b>Date</b>	20 January 2013

This was a group of 19 IP workers from IRRI, GRET, WHH, Proximity Designs, MSN, Radanar Ayar, ActionAid, Thadar, and Pact.

**General Findings**

- There is good coordination among IPs and with the FMO. The IP representatives said they have had a positive relationship with the FMO.
- IPs reported working together on occasion to solve agricultural issues, provide help on surveys, conduct exchange visits, hold monthly meetings, and share reports.
- The group, and thus their IPs, appears committed to serving the local community to improve livelihood security.
- Participants reported that they were very good in collaborating with local government authorities. This was done through monthly meetings (groups of IPs or just single IPs with government officials) and conducting field demonstrations and holding community events.

**Conclusions and Impact**

- IPs are implementing a range of different programmes in Bogale Township, some of which are not complementary.
- IP relationships with the FMO are positive.
- IPs found that capacity building training, held at the start of projects, is useful to ensure that project participants are fully on board. It is also a useful approach to ensure that there is full community participation and that villagers understand the projects being started.
- Where there was limited or no community and field staff participation at the project design stage, the effectiveness of the intervention was hindered.

## FGD 10 Agriculture and Livestock – Dry Zone

<b>Location</b>	Khet Lan Kyin Village, Hlaing Pan Village tract, Pyaw Pwe Township
<b>Date</b>	1 February 2013
<b>IP Assessed</b>	Mercy Corps
<b>IP Project</b>	<i>Building Community Resilience for Food Security</i>

This was a group of 10 landowners and one landless man (one land-owning woman participated).

The main village project activities were:

- Formation of a village development committee (VCD). Community-based organisations (CBOs) were also formed under supervision to manage agricultural and livestock activities.
- Improve resilience to natural disasters: Community economic resilience plans (CERPs) were to be designed and implemented.
- Revolving funds were set up to support farmer groups, and goat and cow breeding groups. All loans were given at 2% interest.
- The project also conducted Farmer Field Schools, covering topics such as land preparation, farming techniques, pest and disease control, and post-harvesting techniques. The project also set up two demonstration plots as hands-on examples to support the training. Livestock training was also provided at the township level.

### General Findings

- By the end of 2012, the project had provided loans, all of which were successfully re-paid.
- Gardening tools and 15 kinds of crop seeds were given to 178 members (but the precise number still actively gardening was not reported by the IP).
- Demonstration plots for onions and beans produced high yields.
- Since the livestock training, no animal has died from disease.
- Due to FFS training, farmers identified and mitigated the effects of crop diseases such as *Pyapoe*, *Poe Lauk*, and *Thi Lone Paukpoe* and pests such as *Pha Lan Phyu* and *Pha Lan Ne*.

### Conclusions and Impact

The project appears to have effectively mobilised agriculture and livestock groups. Inputs have been provided to groups via revolving fund financing, and technical training has helped support activities. The groups are now repaying loans to the revolving funds and using their training to better manage crops

and livestock. Livestock deaths have been dramatically reduced. The early impression is that the project is improving livelihoods.

Focus group participants stated that their community needs better access to education and proper health care facilities. This is, of course, outside the scope of an agriculture and livelihoods project. However, effective coordination between development organisations could ameliorate problems such as this. Development organisations should perhaps have a feedback mechanism, focusing on the scope of this project, but informing others on the needs of each community.

## FGD 11 Agriculture and Livestock – Northern Shan State

<b>Location</b>	Bant Bway Village, Bant Bway Vill tract, Naung Cho
<b>Date</b>	23 January 2013
<b>IP</b>	CESVI
<b>IP Project</b>	<i>Socio-Economic and Environmental Development (SEED) Project</i>

This was a group of 12 persons, four of whom were landless. (Six women participated.)

The main village project activities were:

- 1) Building the capacity of target villages to be able to assess their situations and manage the implementation of the project's livelihood improvement activities;
- 2) Providing support to targeted vulnerable households to help them diversify their agricultural practices;
- 3) Building capacity of targeted vulnerable households by providing training and inputs for alternative income-generating activities; and
- 4) Strengthening the capacity of village groups to be able to manage natural resources in order to support environmental conservation and develop new sources of income.

### General Findings

- The respondents reported they had learned new information and frequently used new agricultural methods and adopted new livestock breeding practices.
- The village has operational rice and wheat seed banks. The project provided 30 rice farmers with certified quality seed at a loan rate of 1.5 baskets per acre. After harvest, farmers returned two baskets per acre to the rice bank. Likewise, six farmers grow wheat in the village, and paid back 4.5 baskets of wheat for every 3 baskets of wheat seed loaned. The project also provided other inputs (e.g., fertiliser) to target farmers.
- Seeds from the seed bank were poor quality and resulted in yields of only 32 baskets per acre.
- The design of the seed bank building was poor. It was made by an architect from another project, and used far too much timber for the building. Also, the floor was poorly designed in that it was almost impossible to clean. No other village copied the building.
- The proposal designated that two or more villages share a seed bank building. But that was rejected by the villagers, who did not trust other villages with their seeds. So the seed bank did not reach as many villages as planned.
- The project included pig breeding. The project provided four pigs to the village. Each pig went to a group of three households. Pig rearing was a failure, because the newly introduced breed would not breed with local pigs. They

were also not suited to the cooler local environment. The beneficiaries sold the project pigs and bought local pigs instead.

### **Conclusions and Impact**

The basic model for CESVI's agricultural and livestock activities is effective. Farmers were included in the planning process and their needs were adequately assessed. The farmers then learned and implemented new farming and livestock management techniques. While the model is valid, it must be adjusted to fit the local context, particularly when it comes to sourcing project inputs. The project must take into account local tastes and preferences for rice. Doing so will ensure local demand at the market for the rice produced.

CESVI must also take into account the climate in which projects are implemented. In this particular instance, pig breeds need to be able to survive the cold weather. This will prevent the loss of farmers' time and money spent on failed projects.

## FGD 12 Non-Agricultural Activities – Dry Zone (All Female)

<b>Location</b>	Kyaung Pan Kone Village, Myit Chae Village tract, Pakokku Township
<b>Date</b>	31 January 2013
<b>IP Assessed</b>	Pact
<b>IP Project Assessed</b>	<i>Global Microfinance Farm Institute Project</i>

This was a group of 10 landless women.

The main village project activities were:

- Organising individuals into savings groups and building their capacity and knowledge to be able to increase savings and invest in income-generating activities. This did not involve vocational training. It is unfortunate that Pact did not providing training. These groups meet regularly, so why not use the opportunity for quick training sessions that could be repeated if necessary?
- Savings group members were eligible for a general loan (maximum loan size of 100,000 kyat), which also had to be used for investing in income-generating activities. Repayments were due every two weeks.
- Additional loans, such as small-scale enterprise loans, agricultural, livestock, health, education, consumer, and vulnerability loans. Some of the loans were bigger in size than the initial general loans. Through this, the project sought to provide capital for building sustainable sources of income as well securing the basic material needs of the borrower and their household.

### **General Findings**

- The eight saving groups, with 40 members in total, appeared to function well.
- Most of the beneficiaries earned a regular income from fish-selling businesses, earning a regular average income of around 2000 kyat per month.
- The target beneficiaries were suitable for Pact's programme.
- The beneficiaries' economic conditions significantly improved.
- Some elders were concerned about how borrowers would be able to repay the loan if their business failed. They believed that this has the potential to create conflict among members of the community.

### **Conclusions and Impact**

Fortnightly loan repayments worked well for the borrowers. As the project was only two months old, it was not possible to assess for sustainability. Some ambitious savings group members expected larger loans so that they could obtain a fishing license but were unable to obtain them. In the immediate period though, beneficiaries' economic conditions improved and they were not struggling to pay back the loans.

### FGD 13 Non-Agriculture - Dry Zone

<b>Location</b>	Min Kan Village, Sisspar Village tract, Aung Lan Township
<b>Date</b>	29 January 2013
<b>IPs in Village</b>	ActionAid (ECLOF)
<b>IP projects</b>	<i>Livelihood Development</i>

This was a focus group of 13 landless workers, of whom 10 were women.

The main activities of the project were:

- **Mobilisation:** Forming a village development committee (VDC) and sub-groups (i.e., small businesses, agriculture, livestock, rice banks, and forest and water resources).
- **Agriculture and livestock:** Provide agricultural training as well as cash loans to be paid back into a revolving fund. Livestock activities also included training in animal healthcare and immunisations.
- **Small business (non-agriculture):** Train villagers in liquid soap making as an income-generating activity. Participants are supported with loans from a revolving fund. Soap making failed, however, because there is no market and there are no raw materials locally available. That such basic intervention planning mistakes can be made, underscores the need for better and more detailed planning and research at the project design phase.
- **Conservation of forest and water resources:** Establish a village woodlot, repair roads, and construct a water pond to improve the quality of health for poor- and low-income households (cash-for-work).

#### General Findings

- A total of 1,200 hardwood trees were planted to promote resource conservation. Each participating family grew 10 trees in their compounds. In the future, these trees will be used for firewood, so villagers will not have to rely so much on the forest for resources.
- The township's forest department authorities collaborated closely with the villagers on this project.
- A VDC was composed of nine members and was found to be functioning and in good order.
- The village wanted to establish a rice bank as soon as possible to promote food security in lean times.

#### Conclusions and Impact

Overall, participants voiced no major concerns or problems with the project. They expressed gratitude for the project and believed its activities improved

the livelihoods of villagers. Furthermore, they believe that the creation of a village development committee, linked to revolving funds, will help to ensure the sustainability of the projects and keep the village unified.

It was also noted that the villagers desired a pharmacy, which they identified as a major need of the village. This was, however, not in the scope of the project.

The project seemed highly participatory and well supported. The VDC seems sustainable, and the Fellow a success.

**FGD 14 Lowest Strata – Dry Region**

<b>Location</b>	Kyaung Pan Kone Village, Myit Chae Village tract, Pakokku Township
<b>Date</b>	31 January 2013
<b>IP</b>	Pact
<b>IP Project</b>	<i>Pact Global Microfinance Farm Institute Project</i>

This was a group of 11 persons, 10 of whom were landless. There were three women in total.

The main village project activities were:

- Organising individuals into savings groups and building their capacity and knowledge to be able to increase savings and invest in income-generating activities. This did not involve vocational training.
- Savings group members were eligible for a general loan (maximum loan size 100,000 kyat), which also had to be used for investing in income-generating activities. Repayments were due every two weeks.
- Offering additional loans, such as small-scale enterprise loans, agricultural, livestock, health, education, consumer, and vulnerability loans. Some of the loans were larger in size than the initial general loans. Through this, the project sought to provide capital for building sustainable sources of income, as well securing the basic material needs of the borrower and their household.

**General Findings**

- The majority of households in the lowest strata group had no females living there.
- Generally, males were the only ones to be interested in becoming members.
- The fact that some farmers could only repay loans after collecting income after the harvest period while the lenders required repayment every two weeks meant that some farmers could not become members.
- All members reported that they were able to repay the loans fortnightly.
- In the case of an emergency, the members could borrow money without interest.
- Pact Myanmar has been operating in Kyaung Pan Kone village for just two months. It has therefore not issued all eight kinds of loans yet.
- The respondents noted that the project had more benefits than negatives.
- The livelihoods of the village primarily come from the fishing industry. There were difficulties when proper equipment was not available or when the catch was not sold in its entirety.
- Loans were only issued to the heads of families.

## **Conclusions and Impact**

Fish sellers have benefitted from a significant increase in sales. Sellers can also now sell goods without having to take out daily loans. This means that the money they previously spent paying interest can now be saved.

Loans of 100,000 kyat are said to be too low though to alleviate the problems faced by locals. It was suggested that 200,000 or 300,000 might be more appropriate. Micro-credit, however, appears to be more effective at improving livelihoods than regular loans. Under the credit arrangement, if one borrower could not repay the loan then the other members of the group would have to bear the repayment costs. Villagers believed this might not be viable over longer periods.

**FGD 15 Lowest Strata – Dry Zone**

<b>Location</b>	Khet Lan Kyin Village, Hlaing Pan Village tract, Pyaw Pwe Township
<b>Date</b>	1 February 2013
<b>IP</b>	Mercy Corps
<b>IP Project</b>	<i>Building Community Resilience for Food Security</i>

This was a group of six landless persons, of whom none were women.

The main village project activities were:

- Facilitating the formation of a village development group and committee in August 2012, with 100 group members and 10 committee members. Community-based organisations (CBOs) were also formed under the supervision of VDCs to manage agricultural and livestock activities.
- Designing and implementing community economic resilience plans (CERPs) to improve resilience to natural disasters.
- Setting up revolving funds to support farmer groups, and goat and cow breeding groups. All loans had 2% interest rates. Loan durations varied according to activities.
- The project also conducted FFSs, covering topics such as land preparation, farming techniques, pest and disease control, and post-harvesting techniques. The project also set up two demonstration plots (0.25 and 0.5 acres) to grow onions and beans.
- Livestock training was also provided at the township level.

**General Findings**

- There were more job opportunities for the lowest strata. The lowest strata people were hired at a greater rate by project beneficiaries. Casual labourers earned 2,000 kyat per day by working in the farms, doing such jobs as spraying natural fertilisers (cow and goat dung).
- CBO members took loans from the project as opposed to traditional private moneylenders. In some cases, local moneylenders lowered their interest rates to be more competitive with the revolving funds.
- There has been an increase in the use of fertilisers due to project loans.
- The livestock breeders have higher incomes and are now saving money.
- In general, villagers seem to have a proactive attitude with regards to community mobilisation.

## **Conclusions and Impact**

The project seems to be effectively improving the livelihoods of direct project beneficiaries. Farmer and livestock breeding groups have increased overall agricultural output and incomes. This has led to savings.

The lower strata has also benefited indirectly through the programme. Programme beneficiaries hire the lower strata for additional labour. It is apparent that Mercy Corps has invested a lot in capacity building and community mobilisation in this village, and it has paid off in terms of project effectiveness. There is always much talk about community mobilisation and project buy-in, but factors like this are hard to measure directly. Many projects only give lip service to capacity building. Mercy Corps' work on community capacity building should be assessed more closely and lessons learned should be disseminated and applied by other IPs.

**FGD 16 Lowest Strata – Dry Region**

<b>Location</b>	Min Kan Village, Sisa Par Village tract, Aung Lan Township
<b>Date</b>	29 January 2013
<b>IP</b>	ECLOF/ActionAid
<b>IP Project</b>	<i>Livelihood Support Project</i>

This was a group of 16 landless persons, all of whom were women.

The main village project activities were:

- Facilitating the formation of a village development committee (VDC) and sub-groups overseeing business, agriculture, livestock, a rice bank, and forest and water resources.
- Providing agricultural training and livestock training.
- Cash loans (46,200 kyat per member at 3% interest) to be paid back at the end of the season into a group revolving fund. Likewise, cash loans (53,000 kyat per member at 3% interest) were given for purchasing pigs.
- Train villagers in liquid soap making as an income-generating activity. Participants are supported with loans from a group revolving fund.
- Establishing a village wood lot and constructing a water pond to improve the quality of health for poor and low-income households. The project also supported the building and renovating of roads, using cash-for-work (CfW) schemes.

**General Findings**

- Those from the lower strata have benefited directly from CfW activities. Ponds save the time of (mostly) women collecting potable water. They also contribute to better health. These outcomes, however, are not being measured by IPs and therefore comprehensive cost-benefit analysis is not possible.
- Lower strata participants in CfW activities seem to be satisfied with the project.
- Respondents believe beneficiary selection is fair; however, they also pointed out that they were not allowed to participate in project planning.

**Conclusions and Impact**

The cash-for-work project activities appear to be beneficial. They have provided both a direct source of income to the lower strata through paid labour. It has also been successful in improving the road system and access to clean drinking water. A positive relationship of trust between beneficiaries and project staff was also identified.

Despite this relationship of trust, respondents stated that they were not included in project planning and appeared to have little idea as to how project planning was carried out, or which, if any, villagers were involved.

## FGD 17 Lowest Strata – Shan State

<b>Location</b>	Bant Bway Village, Bant Bway Village tract, Naung Cho Township
<b>Date</b>	29 January 2013
<b>IP</b>	CESVI
<b>IP Project</b>	Food security improvement and poverty alleviation among vulnerable rural people
<b>IP</b>	Pact Myanmar
<b>IP Project</b>	Regular loans

This was a group of six landless persons, all of whom were women.

The main village project activities were:

- Building the capacity of the target village to be able to assess their situation and manage the implementation of livelihood-improvement activities.
- Providing support to targeted vulnerable households to help them diversify their agricultural practices.
- Building capacity of targeted vulnerable households by providing training and inputs for alternative income-generating activities.
- Strengthening the capacity of village groups to be able to manage natural resources in order to support environmental conservation and develop new sources of income.

### General Findings

- The village has 100 households; most are small-scale farmers and casual labourers. The casual labourers have to work for the farmers. The men earn 3,000 kyat per day and women earn 2,000 kyat. Those in the lowest strata normally seek this kind of work.
- Although the project's agricultural and livestock breeding activities are not targeted at the lower strata, they sometimes indirectly benefit. Farmers and livestock breeders participating in the programme reportedly hire casual labour to help with project activities.
- Many of the project's pigs died because they could not survive the cold weather. Local consumers disliked the variety of rice the project provided, resulting in a low market price. These factors made the project less effective, therefore resulting in a smaller increase in demand for casual labour than would have been the case otherwise.

### **Conclusions and Impact**

The project model is effective but not in line with the local context. The breed of pigs and the variety of rice did not suit the local market. These issues made the project less effective, resulting in a smaller increase in demand for casual labour than there should have been.

The project should adjust for the local context. It should supply farmers with a rice variety that demands a high price in the local market, or fund experiments with new varieties that seem to promise higher profits. It should also source pigs that can better survive in the relatively colder Delta climate (and time the distribution of piglets to be just after winter). This will not only increase the incomes of farmers, but it will also help the lower strata by creating more employment opportunities to harvest more produce and help take care of livestock.

## FGD 18 IP Staff – Dry Zone

<b>Location</b>	MBCA office at Pakokku Township, Pakokku District, Magwe Division
<b>Date &amp; Time</b>	1 February 2013

This was a group of seven IP staff: ADRA (2); ECLOF (1); Pact (1); MBCA (1); and Thadar (1).

### General Findings

- Good levels of communication appear to exist between IPs in the region. However, this is rarely used to support one another's projects with relevant technical insights.
- Most are committed to serving the local community to improve livelihood security.
- IP staff presented their projects' strategies well. However, some of them appear to be confused about the division in roles and responsibilities between them and the FMO.

### Conclusions and Impact

- There was occasional miscommunication between head offices and field offices.
- IP projects could have benefited from more comprehensive situational analysis performed by all, or one lead IP, during the design of the projects. LIFT has recognised this and is moving away from calls for proposals to more hands-on programmatic approaches that ensure cooperation and a common strategy (and stronger intervention designs and M&E).
- There was a distinct lack of community and field staff participation during the project design stage. In general, most IPs just proposed to extend what they were doing already.
- Field staff knowledge was limited to that of their own project. This meant that they solely focused on completing activities rather than striving to achieve broader outcomes or impact with other IP staff.

**FGD 19 IP Staff – Hilly (Shan State)**

<b>Location</b>	Pact Myanmar office, Bant Bway, Naung Cho Township
<b>Date</b>	29 January 2013

This was a group of four IP staff: CESVI (2) and Pact Myanmar (2). No staff members from EGG, the other local participating IP, were present.

**General Findings**

- There is generally good coordination between the three IPs. They conduct monthly meetings and share field reports.
- Each of the IPs provides a specific type of service to beneficiaries, therefore avoiding project duplication.
- IPs did not appear to have well-developed, or specific village or beneficiary, selection methods.

**Conclusions and Impact**

The three IPs were collaborating well together. They each focus on providing different services to the community: Pact on micro-finance; CESVI on agricultural and livestock production; and EEG on forest resource use. They hold monthly coordination meetings and share field reports to ensure that their projects have a synergistic effect on improving village livelihoods.

## Annex 6: Case Study Summaries

### **List of case studies**

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[Case Study 1] *Water-pond Construction in Taung Thar, Dry Region: An Assessment of Cash-for-Work Programme* (Proximity Designs), Taung Thar Township, Mandalay (Dry Region)

[Case Study 2] *Pig Rearing Activities in Shan State (Hilly Region): Analysing the Benefit to Communities of Animal-Rearing Projects* (CESVI), Naung Cho and Kyauk Mae townships, Northern Shan State (Hilly Region)

[Case Study 3] *IP Formation of CBOs in Labutta Township: Assessing the Effectiveness of CBO management of LIFT projects* (EcoDev, ADRA), Labutta township (Delta Region)

[Case Study 4] *Farmer Field Schools in the Ayeyarwady: Assessing the Effectiveness of Education Extension Services* (AVSI), Labutta Township and (WHH/GRET) Bogale Township (Delta Region)

[Case Study 5] *Community Efforts to Rehabilitate Mangroves* (EcoDev/ADRA and MSN), Bogale, Mawlamyaing and Yangon Townships (Delta Region)

[Case Study 6] *Water-Pond Renovation* (Proximity Designs, ADRA), Pakokku Township and Taung Tha Township (Dry Region)

### **Case Study 1: Water-pond construction in Taung Thar, Mandalay (Dry Region)**

This case study assessed Proximity Designs' cash-for-work (CfW) scheme in Taung Yoe Zalote Village (Taung Thar Township, Mandalay). This scheme involved the construction of a water pond to help support agricultural and aquacultural activities in the village.

The CfW scheme was targeted at the most vulnerable households in the village as a form of social protection to increase incomes, enhance livelihood opportunities, and protect the livelihood assets.

Qualitative evidence was collected to gain an understanding of the scheme's effectiveness. The scheme appeared to poorly target the most vulnerable, with beneficiary selection led by village elders who didn't understand the concept. There was also a minimal involvement of women in the CfW scheme. Though they will benefit from new water pond, few were employed to construct it. The project needs to explain to the community that the purpose of the project is to provide social protection for the "most vulnerable households", and what that term means.

The completed pond was not used for aquaculture activities. Though it did irrigate nearby vegetables, most of it was used for household purposes.

Though CfW incomes were well used to cover the immediate needs of recipients, few appeared to be using their wages for developmental needs. In this sense, CfW schemes here appeared to be more of a humanitarian intervention than one of development. The cash-for-work programme sometimes included people from other villages to get the work done in time. There was no focus on vulnerable people beyond self-selection. (Upper-income villagers did not participate in CfW).

## **Case Study 2: Pig Rearing Activities in Shan State (Hilly Region)**

Two CESVI-supported project villages in Naung Cho and Kyauk Mae Townships in Northern Shan State were visited to assess CESVI's pig rearing projects. A second phase of visits took place in Naung Cho Township and the village of Thapyay Win. This is reported in Section 3 of this analysis. Section 4 presents a financial analysis of Pact-funded pig rearing in the same township (Loi Taung Village), while the final section presents conclusions based on the three assessments.

The results of the pig rearing projects of both CESVI and Pact were extremely mixed. They have shown the uncertainty and difficulties involved ensuring successful pig rearing aid interventions. Some household members fed their pigs for seven months and earned nothing in return; others saw their pigs die or fail to breed. Others were able to achieve moderate income improvements as a result.

It seems that villagers understand that pig rearing is not always a profitable, but they still see it as having a growing savings book that can be cashed in any time.

IPs were unable to control the quality of large purchases, so some pigs provided were unhealthy. Pigs were also often not suited to the local climate of Northern Shan State. Landless beneficiaries also did not have readily available feed for the pigs. Many pigs provided to beneficiaries either died or did not reproduce, thus completely undermining the income potential of the project. Consequently, providing pigs to landless households should be reconsidered.

A better approach might be to develop a long-term programme of pig rearing assistance: this would raise awareness about the demands (time and money spent by beneficiaries) and risks of this activity. This could involve compulsory training before receiving pigs and assessing recipients at this stage. Other technical support should be included, such as veterinary support. Further, a single training does not provide enough skills. Training should be repeated after a few months to help households overcome the practical problems they face.

Pig breeding requires technical skills and support. Some households were not giving the time nor the care necessary to raise strong and healthy pigs. Mentoring from successful households might be useful. A self-selecting mechanism to determine appropriate beneficiary households should be devised, perhaps involving prolonged commitment to a pre-training course. Poor households that are successfully raising pigs should be encouraged to scale up their pig rearing in later years. A social protection scheme (pig insurance) could mitigate against some of the risk. This would require deeper involvement of IPs working with project villages to assess, identify, and stay in contact with certain households.

Better procurement is needed to ensure the quality and appropriateness of pigs being purchased. Results-based contracting (e.g., full payment after weighing pigs two weeks after arriving at the village) could be considered by IPs (but this may require a premium payment per pig). A phased approach could be employed that would involve testing new pig varieties in the first year, and then scaling up those that proved viable in later years.

### **Case Study 3: IP Formation of CBOs in Labutta Township (Delta Region)**

This report analyses the effectiveness of community-based organisations in managing various projects implemented by LIFT's implementing partners at the village, village tract, and township level. This report presents several case studies of CBOs (management committees) at selected project sites in Labutta Township where field assessments took place. Lessons from other CBOs and IPs were also integrated into this report.

EcoDev and ADRA formed self-help groups (SHGs), forest user groups (FUGs) and collective groups (CGs) at each project target village visited. The variety of CBOs, as well as the projects they have been assigned to in the Labutta Township, allowed a broad analysis of this topic from which several conclusions and recommendations have been drawn about the use of CBOs at these levels.

The self-help group in Kan Nyin Kaing Village has been functioning particularly well. The committee members have been organising monthly meetings, as well as collecting funds for projects currently in progress. The mission also observed that the committee members in Kan Nyin Kaing did not engage in monitoring and evaluation tasks relating to the project.

CBOs in Pyinsalu and Yetwinseik villages did not perform as well. In Pyinsalu, IPs have not managed to form a committee to organise and conduct meetings in the community. Clearly, this has had a negative impact on the inclusion of locals in development projects implemented in the village. In Yetwinseik, there appears to be a semi-functioning committee but no regular group meetings to facilitate the involvement of the community in IP projects.

Based on these observations, this report recommends closer cooperation of IPs with CBOs. To ensure the sustainability of committees and their involvement in IP projects, IPs should provide support and facilitation during and after formation.

It is also recommended for IPs to specify a person within each CBO, during their formation, to carry out M&E tasks. The IP would then support this person by providing training for that committee member. The standardisation of communication (both in methods and schedules) between IPs and CBOs would allow for more effective reporting and early detection of delays or obstacles in project progress in each village.

In addition, the success of charging a monthly contribution from CBO members in Kan Nyin Kaing would suggest that spreading this practice to all CBOs would strengthen the involvement of the communities and members, and thus strengthen each CBO.

#### **Case Study 4: Farmer Field Schools in the Ayeyarwady (Delta Region)**

This case study looked at the practice of Farmer Field Schools (FFSs) as carried out by LIFT IPs. It assessed such training schemes run by AVSI in Labutta Township and WHH/GRET in Bogale Township.

Farmer Field Schools are a relatively new concept in the Delta Region but have achieved significant success in a number of Southeast Asian nations, including Indonesia, Vietnam, and the Philippines. The concept was unfamiliar to stakeholders in the region, and had to be explained to local authorities and committees, causing delays in preparing and implementing the project.

Discussions with the IPs and the participating farmers show that FFS activities were conducted successfully. Farmers appeared keen to share knowledge gained from training sessions and demonstration plot visits. This should increase the impact of knowledge-sharing activities in the FFS. Rather than a standard teacher-student relationship, farmers were able to ask questions about the project, and inform instructors and IP staff about their own issues with the course.

However, a majority of FFS farmer participants were men. Women were wary of participating and IPs did not make sufficient efforts to increase female participation.

Farmer Field Schools could have also benefitted from focusing on issues beyond simple training techniques. Inviting private sector buyers and other market actors would have helped farmers connect with potential buyers. This, along with more strategic communication channels between farmers and IP staff would have allowed for a positive communication network to fuel farmer knowledge and market awareness. Participants also lacked technical assistance and support with their day-to-day farming beyond the scope of the training course.

Quantitative impact assessment is needed to analyse the impact of FFSs on farmers' yields and incomes. This would supplement the qualitative information from farmers and IP staff shown here. In future interventions, FFSs should be encouraged to establish stronger links to the existing government extension service.

### **Case Study 5: Community Efforts to Rehabilitate Mangroves (Delta Region)**

The aim of this case study is to assess the extent to which efforts to rejuvenate the mangroves in the Delta areas of Myanmar have succeeded. The IPs used two different approaches to better manage the mangroves. EcoDev/ADRA sponsored the replanting of mangroves. MSN promoted the manufacture and sale of stoves that use alternative fuel sources in order to reduce the deforestation of the mangroves.

Reforestation efforts were stymied temporarily as a result of misconduct of EcoDev project staff. While ADRA decided to continue efforts, the training of forest user groups had not been successful because it was implemented before the groups had been formally established (only 40% of groups so far). This has meant that there has been limited participation of the groups and thus, local ownership of the project is non-existent. Just over half of the aquaculture ponds had been constructed, however, all of the ponds were poorly designed and could not get enough water. Aquaculture activities failed to augment incomes and improve local livelihoods,.

Mitigation of deforestation through efforts to establish a market for alternative fuel stoves failed for five main reasons. First, the quality of the stoves was inconsistent, bringing into question the quality of training provided to stove makers. Second, the costs of production were high, which meant that profit margins were low or non-existent (given prevailing market prices). Third, many stoves broke or were damaged during transport to market (due to poor quality), which further eroded profit margins. Fourth, demand for the stoves proved to be low, which meant that sales people incurred higher costs from having to stay longer in the market location (and spend more on food and accommodation). Finally, while use of the stoves slowed the demand for wood locally, the high demand for mangrove wood in Yangon continued.

MSN seemed unable to provide proper guidance. At first the villagers marketed the stoves as raw stoves without burning them. Then, after losses, they learned that stoves needed to be baked but forgot that in the rainy season this cannot be done.

It is recommended that ADRA focus on restructuring forest user groups so that they have a true sense of ownership over the project, and focus on remedying the legacy of poor pond designs. MSN is advised to consider the net employment gains/losses in Myanmar that are associated with the “displacement” effects created by the introduction of the fuel-efficient stoves. Furthermore, MSN needs to address market demand for firewood in Yangon and improve quality control of stoves if it is to significantly mitigate deforestation.

## **Case Study 6: Water Pond Renovation**

The aim of this case study is to assess the positive and negative impacts of the two approaches, Fast Track (By Proximity Design) and Community Driven (by ADRA), which were adopted to restore back to their former life-supporting state.

On the whole, both approaches resulted in income generation for local communities via the cash-for-work (CfW) scheme. The ADRA approach created a strong sense of community ownership of the project. The approach was slower and more costly than Proximity Designs' approach because there was a distinct focus on inclusion of community members in capacity building efforts, and because of the higher engineering inputs and the additional features of the ponds, such as fencing, water filters, pipes to the village, etc. Villages cited one of the biggest challenges to sustainability of impact is raising funds for pond maintenance, which was supposed to be the responsibility of the pond management committees.

A detailed cost-benefit analysis of ADRA's and Proximity Design's ponds, conducted two years after their completion (post-evaluation), would be very interesting. We might expect higher returns from the more resource-intensive ADRA approach, but how much higher? There are reportedly some Proximity ponds where water-holding capacity has not improved at all. Proximity implemented the activity without any water engineers and the villagers sometimes mixed earth into the sandy soils without properly sealing the bottom of the pond. Ponds that did not get support from water engineers may fare badly in a post-evaluation.

## Annex 7 Field Schedule and Places Visited

## Delta II

PD	D		Trip	Tasks	Transportation Mode	Attendant
1	22-Feb	Fri	Yangon-Labutta	Meet MC IP	Car	Ad, KMC, TAC, KML, Moe
2	23-Feb	Sat	Labutta-Hpone Soe Kwin	Meet HponeSoe Kwin (MC)	Boat	Ad, KMC, TAC
3	24-Feb	Sun	Labutta	Meet TSP Officials +5 IPs	Car/Boat	Ad, KMC, TAC
4	25-Feb	Mon	Labutta-Pyinsalu	Meet with village chief	Boat	Ad, KMC, TAC
			Pyinsalu-Ye Twin Seik	Overnight		Ad, KMC, TAC
5	26-Feb	Tue	Ye Twin Seik (ADRA)	Meeting ADRA	Boat	Ad, KMC, TAC
			Ye Twin Seik-Ah Mat Gyi	Overnight		Ad, KMC, TAC
6	27-Feb	Wed	Ah Mat Gyi (AVIS)	Meeting AVIS	Boat	Ad, KMC, TAC
			Ah Mat Gyi-KwinYar	Overnight		Ad, KMC, TAC
7	28-Feb	Thu	KwinYar (LEAD)	Meeting LEAD	Boat	Ad, KMC, TAC
			KwinYar-Lay Yin Kwin	Overnight		Ad, KMC, TAC
8	01-Mar	Fri	Lay Yin Kwin-Labutta	Meet TSP Officials	Car/Boat	Ad, KMC, TAC
				Meet 5IPS		Ad, KMC, TAC
9	02-Mar	Sat	Labutta-Yangon	No meeting	Car	Ad, KMC, TAC
						Ad, KMC, TAC
10	03-Mar	Sun	Yangon	Break		Ad, KMC, TAC
11	04-Mar	Mon	Yangon	Break		Ad, KMC, TAC
			Yangon-Bogale	Meet TSP officials		Ad, KMC, TAC
				Meet 2 IPs		
			Bogale-Phayar Thone Su	Meet UNDP/PACT	Boat	Ad, KMC, TAC
			Phayar Thone Su-Ngapi Thone Hle	Overnight		
12	07-Mar	Thu	Ngapi Thone Hle (WHH)	Meeting	Boat	Ad, KMC, TAC
			Ngapi Thone Hle-Bogale	Overnight		

13	08-Mar	Fri	Bogale	Meet TSP officials	Car/Boat	Ad, KMC, TAC
				Meet IPS		
14	09-Mar	Sat	Bogale-Pyin Ma Kone	Meet IRRI	Boat	Ad, KMC, TAC
			Pyin Ma Done-Bogale	Overnight		
15	10-Mar	Sun	Bogale-Aye Ywar Pay Chaung (Proximity)	Meeting	Boat	Ad, KMC, TAC
			Aye Ywar Pay Chaung-Bogale	Overnight		
	11-Mar	Mon	Bogale	Break		Ad, KMC, TAC
16	12-Mar	Tue	Bogale-Thone Htut (WHH)	Meeting	Boat	Ad, KMC, TAC
			Thone Htut-Bogale	Overnight		
17	13-Mar	Wed	Bogale-Ma Gu-Yay Kyaw-Zee Phyu	Meeting	Boat	Ad, KMC, TAC
			Zee Phyu-Bogale	Overnight		
18	14-Mar	Thu	Bogale-Myo Chaung (AA), MawlamyineTsp	Meeting	Boat	Ad, KMC, TAC
			Myo Chaung-Mawlamyine	Overnight		
19	15-Mar	Fri	Mawlamyine-Thu Htay Gone (AA)	Meeting	Boat	Ad, KMC, TAC
			Thu Htay Gone-Mawlamyine	Overnight		
20	16-Mar	Sat	Mawlamyine-Bogale	May be revisit previous village	Boat	Ad, KMC, TAC
21	17-Mar	Sun	Bogale-Yangon		Car	Ad, KMC, TAC
22	18-Mar	Mon	Yangon			
23	19-Mar	Tue	Yangon			
22	20-Mar	Wed	Yangon		Car	G, Ad, KMC, TAC
			Yangon-Bogale			
23	21-Mar	Thu	Workshop at Bogale		Car	G, Ad, KMC, TAC
			Bogale-Yangon			

### Countrywide Programme

PD	D		Trip	Tasks	Transportation Mode	Attendant
1	22-Feb	Fri	Yangon-Kalay-Teddin	Meet GRET	Plane/car	G, E, MN, KLS
2	23-Feb	Sat	Teddin-Lailo-Teddin	Lailo village (beneficiaries of GRET's project)	Car	G, E, MN, KLS
3	24-Feb	Sun	Teddin-Tonzang	Private sector (traders) Teddin, Meet MC	Car	G, E, MN, KLS
4	25-Feb	Mon	Tonzang-Tungtuang – Teddin	Tungtuang village (beneficiaries of MC's project)	Car	G, E, MN, KLS
5	26-Feb	Tue	Teddin-Kalay-Mandalay		Car	G, E, MN, KLS
6	27-Feb	Wed	Mandalay-Thazi	Private sector (traders) Mdy, travel to Thazi (Oxfam)	Car	E, MN, KLS
7	28-Feb	Thu	Thazi (town) (Inn Khone VL)–Meikhtila	Thazi (Inn Khone village) (Oxfam)	Car	E, MN, KLS
8	01-Mar	Fri	Meikhtila–Mahlaing (town)–Meikhtila	Meet with HelpAge (office)	Car	E, MN, KLS
9	02-Mar	Sat	MahlaingTsp (KuuGyi village)–Meikhtila	KuuGyi village (beneficiaries of HelpAge's project)	Car	E, MN, KLS
10	03-Mar	Sun	Meikhtila-PwinOoLwin	Meet IPs staff & private sector (traders)	Car	E, MN, KLS
11	04-Mar	Mon	POL-Naung Cho Township(ThaPyay Win Village)–POL	ThaPyay Win village (beneficiaries of CESVI's project)	Car	E, MN, KLS
12	05-Mar	Tue	POL-Naung Cho Township (LoiTawng village)–POL	LoiTawng village (beneficiaries of UNDP/PACT's project)	Car	E, MN, KLS
						E, MN, KLS
	06-Mar	Wed	Break			G, MN, KLS
	07-Mar	Thu	Break			G, MN, KLS
13	08-Mar	Fri	Mandalay-Heho-Taunggyi	Meet IPs & private sector	Plane/taxi/car	G, MN, KLS

14	09-Mar	Sat	Taunggyi-HoponTsp (Htam Phaya village)-Taunggyi	HtamPhaya (N) VL (beneficiaries of METTA's project)	Car	G, MN, KLS
15	10-Mar	Sun	Taunggyi-HoponTsp (Honar village)-Taunggyi	Honar (beneficiaries of SWISSAID's project)	Car	G, MN, KLS
16	11-Mar	Mon	Taunggyi-Heho-Nyaung U	Meet ADRA, Action Aid	Taxi/plane	G, E, MN, KLS
			Nyaung U-Pokkoku		Car	
17	12-Mar	Tue	Pokkoku (town) (Than Bo village)	Than Bo village	Car	G, E, MN, KLS
18	13-Mar	Wed	Pokkoku-Natmauk	Meet DPDO, Proximity	Car	G, E, MN, KLS
19	14-Mar	Thu	NatmaukTsp (Pa Dauk Nyunt village)	Pa DaukNyunt village	Car	G, E, MN, KLS
20	15-Mar	Fri	Natmauk-Magwe (Aw ZarKone village)-Nyaung U	Meet Action Aid (Thandar) in Magway, AwwZarKone village (beneficiaries of Action Aid's project)	Car	G, E, MN, KLS
	16-Mar	Sat	Break			G, E, MN, TAC
21	17-Mar	Sun	Nyaung U	Workshop preparation		G, E, MN, KLS
22	18-Mar	Mon	Nyaung U	Workshop	Plane/taxi	G, E, MN, KLS