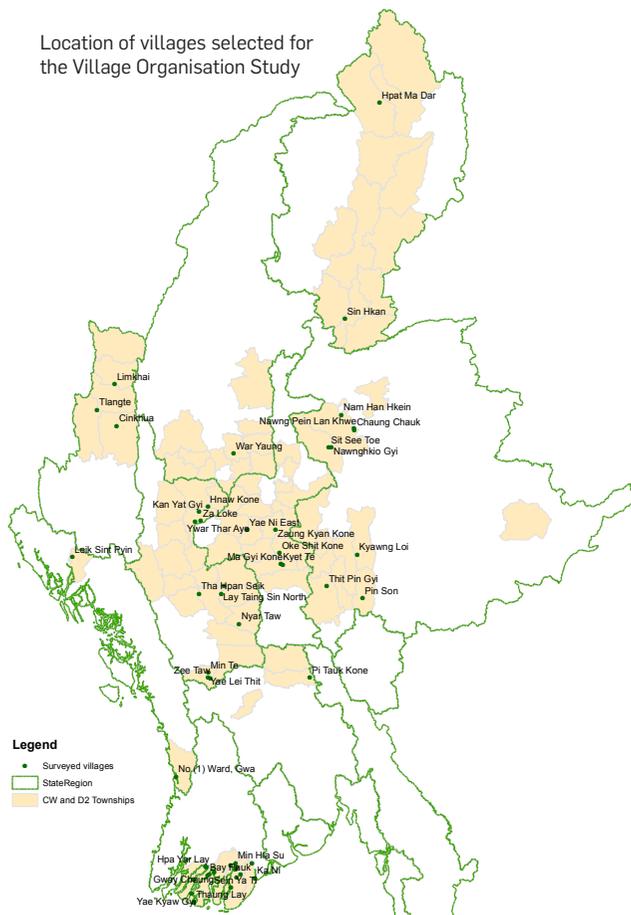


Location of villages selected for the Village Organisation Study



Legend

- Surveyed villages
- State/Region
- CW and DZ Townships

The study found that VO members were predominantly male; among the sample only 31% were women. Despite common IP project intentions to support the poor and vulnerable, many of the VOs did not represent the interests of these groups. The study pointed to various reasons for this.

LIFT supports innovations, and is focused on results and value-for-money. Many of the participatory procedures to build sustainable social capital, requiring much time and resources in each community, may not fit well within a large scale programme such as LIFT. Nevertheless, a number of recommendations are proposed to strengthen VOs and to test ways to reduce dependence on IPs, thereby promoting their sustainability.

THE VILLAGE ORGANISATION STUDY: SUMMARY



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The bottom right section features the LIFT logo (a green map of Myanmar) and a grid of donor logos. The donors include: UKaid (from the British people), European Union, Australian Aid, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC, DANIDA (Denmark), USAID (FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE), Government of the Netherlands, SWEDEN, afd (AGENCY FOR DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION), GRAND DUCHY OF LUXEMBOURG, DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION (New Zealand), and Irish Aid (Government of Ireland).

Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund

BACKGROUND

LIFT is implemented through a variety of implementing partners (IPs) who, by the end of 2014, had supported over 10,000 village organisations (VOs) in the villages where they were implementing LIFT projects. These VOs varied by type. Some represented the whole village community; others were smaller livelihood committees and self-help groups formed around revolving funds. IPs have given various levels and types of support to these VOs. By the end of 2014, IPs had provided 109,925 VO members (including 67,677 women) with management or technical training.

In some cases, the IP projects supported the VOs primarily as a mechanism to deliver assistance to village beneficiaries. In other cases, VO strengthening was a major objective and the principle means by which villagers could drive their own planning and development. In all cases, the VOs supported by IPs have inevitably mediated the benefits reaching households in terms of targeting beneficiaries and distributing benefits. It was therefore important to understand the representativeness of these VOs, and see how fair their decision-making has been in relation to women and the poor and vulnerable.

STUDY METHODS

A two-stage study was designed in early 2014. An initial field research phase, with visits to 50 villages where LIFT is active took place in mid-2014. In each village, research teams conducted focus group discussions and key informant interviews (KIIs) with VO members and a range of other community representatives, including those who were not members of the VO. In a planned final stage of field research, research teams will return to the same 50 villages once the IP projects have ended to assess the evolution and sustainability of the VOs.

The VOs represented in the 50 villages included village development committees, farmer field schools and extension groups, groups administering revolving funds and micro-finance groups, cash-for-work groups, rice bank and seed bank groups, and one forestry group. A vast amount of information was collected from the nearly 300 focus group discussions, providing a rich source of villager perspectives on how selected VOs have been established, how they have contributed to village development, who they have benefited and whether they may continue into the future.

KEY FINDINGS

The potential of these thousands of VOs to contribute to ongoing community development in Myanmar is very significant. However, evidence from this study suggests that not all LIFT projects had directed sufficient attention to social capital formation.

Generally, groups were formed quickly as the necessary vehicles for implementing the short duration LIFT projects.

The study indicated that many groups, despite being newly established, had received minimal capacity development support and many lacked clear rules and regulations on how to govern their activities. Few had clear plans of what they would do following the end of the LIFT project.

However, even those VOs not envisaged to have a lasting role were motivated to be involved in future development efforts for their communities.

VOs have played very central roles in LIFT IP project implementation. They have been the vehicles for identifying beneficiaries of whatever form of support provided, they have organized the implementation of many types of activities, they have managed funds under the various types of savings and loans schemes, and kept records used by IPs in reporting to LIFT and fund contributors. Without these contributions, few of the IP projects would have been possible to implement within the time and resources available. In order to rapidly implement their projects to scale across many villages, some IPs have used a standard, pre-determined approach to VO establishment.

By December 2014



109,925 Village Organisation members had received management or technical training



LIFT is helping to strengthen village organisations to empower their own planning and development

By December 2014



LIFT IPs supported over 10,000 Village organisations

