



The Emergence of Farmers' Organizations in Myanmar

A Mapping Study

■ STUDY REPORT



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FOOD SECURITY WORKING GROUP / GRET

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Disclaimer

The views expressed herein are not to be taken to reflect the official opinion of any of the LIFT donors, of the AFD and of DANIDA.

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Front picture: a farmers' group testing composting techniques in Ayeyarwaddy Delta. ©Masse, GRET.

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Acronyms

AFA	Asian Farmers Association for Sustainable Rural Development
AFD	Agence Française de Développement
AFFM-IUF	Agriculture and Farmers Federation of Myanmar – International Union of Food Workers
AFFM-FTUM	Agriculture and Farmers Federation of Myanmar – Federation of Trade Union of Myanmar
AsiaDHRRA	Asian Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Asia
CBO	Community-Based Organization
CFS	Committee on World Food Security
CSM	Civil Society Mechanism
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DoA	Department of Agriculture
DRD	Department of Rural Development
FAO	United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization
FO	Farmers’ Organization
FRDO	Farmers’ Rights Development Organization
FSWG	Food Security Working Group
GPI	Green Peasant Institute
GRET	Group of Research and Exchange of Technologies
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labor Office
ITUC	International Trade Union Confederation
IUF	International Union of Food Workers
LIOH	Land In Our Hands
LIFT	Livelihood and Food Security Trust Fund
MAPCO	Myanmar Agriculture Public Corporation
MFA	Myanmar Farmers’ Association
MFVP	Myanmar Flowers, Fruit and Vegetable Producers and Exporters Association
MLFRD	Ministry of Livestock, Fishery and Rural Development
MoAI	Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation
MPU	Magway Peasant Union

Food Security Working Group - GRET

MRF	Myanmar Rice Federation
MTCP2	Medium Term Cooperation Program with Farmers' Organization in Asia and the Pacific Region Phase 2 (MTCP2)
MyanDHRRA	Myanmar Development of Human Resources in Rural Asia
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OAFDG	Organic Agriculture Farmers Development Group
PO	Producers' Organization
RPO	Rural Producers' Organization
UMFCCI	Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry
WFP	World Food Programme
WUG	Water User Group

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study is a joint work of the Food Security Working Group (FSWG) and GRET. It aimed at assessing the current dynamics of farmers' organisations in Myanmar.

Context and presentation of the study

Agriculture is of central importance in Myanmar as source of livelihoods for about 70% of population who live in rural areas. Some 29% of rural households live below the poverty line.

Farmers' organizations have appeared at a fast pace since 2012. There have been several drivers for this emergence:

- A release of some bans and threats to allow farmers to conduct joint activities and facilitated the re-appearance of previously underground organizations.
- A movement in land investment by large corporations in sub-urban areas, following the liberalization of the economy. This has pushed farmers to organize protests to claim their land.
- The opening of the economy led to the emergence of collective business oriented initiatives by farmers.

Farmers' organizations in the diversity of their forms are instrumental to agricultural development. They can play roles in several sectors: policy advocacy, delivery of services to farmers, enforcement of farmers' rights, farmers' education, business development, etc. The recognition of the potential role of FOs in agricultural development is still low in Myanmar as farmers' organizations are new actors with still little credibility to most stakeholders.

In order to understand the Myanmar situation and to compare it to other countries, the research work followed three directions:

- A review of the national and international literature on FOs;
- Interviews conducted by GRET research team of key informants and national FOs;
- Interviews in the regions and states of a sample of local FOs based on a shared framework, conducted by 12 FSWG member organizations. The data was then consolidated and analyzed by the research team.

A research committee was mobilized to confirm the hypothesis and the research methodology, as well as to give their comments to the main findings and the report. FSWG coordination team has facilitated the overall research, especially the data collection in the regions and states and the various workshops and meetings held in Yangon. The research work was conducted between May and July 2015.

The findings and the accuracy of the study are clearly limited by its modest means.

- The data presented and analyzed here relied on the discourse from FO leaders collected during in-depth interviews, but without the possibility to triangulate with other members of the organizations.

- The reliance on FSWG members to conduct large parts of data collection created variability in the data. This variability gave also an interesting idea of the perception of FOs by these of local stakeholders.
- The coverage of the mapping is not exhaustive, surveys only took place in 11 states and regions (out of 14). Even in these regions, the choice was made to rely on a sample of organizations. However it was not possible during the course of the study to estimate the number of FOs existing in Myanmar and in these regions and states. As a result, it is not possible to assess the representativeness of the sample used for the study.
- The limited time of the research team was dedicated to meet as many FOs as possible, so few other stakeholders (government, donors, international NGOs) could be interviewed. Instead, data from literature was mobilized.

The typology exercise

In total, 77 organizations have been surveyed by the research team and FSWG member organizations. Among them the data collected showed that 69 can be considered as farmers' organizations, other being classified as support organizations. The data analysis led to develop a typology with 5 categories of farmers' organizations (FO) that applies for the current situation in Myanmar:

- Local farmers union
- Local technico-economic FO
- Federation of farmers unions
- National economic FO
- Mixed FO

The most prominent type found in the survey is the local farmers' union, focusing especially on land tenure rights and land-related conflicts (compensations, grabbing).

Local technico-economic FOs have also emerged following to the liberalization of the economy (new economic opportunities) and of the society (more freedom to cooperate).

At higher geographical levels (region/state and country), federations of farmers unions and national economic FOs are enjoying an increased visibility. However, they still suffer from weak structuring which prevent them from appearing as legitimate stakeholders in the public debate and in their relation to governments.

A definition of farmers' organizations for Myanmar

Experiences around the world, and especially in Asia, show that genuine farmers' organizations have been instrumental in the economic development of the countries, in the expression of farmers' rights and in reducing poverty in rural areas. The first section of the report draws the attention of Myanmar readers to some evidence from international literature on such roles and importance of farmers' organizations.

The main hypothesis of the research was a lack of understanding on farmers' organizations among the different stakeholders in Myanmar (government, donors, NGOs and FOs themselves). The different interviews and data collection have confirmed this hypothesis.

First, we can define farmers' organizations as membership-based organizations of smallholders, family farmers and rural producers – including pastoralists, artisanal fishers, landless people and indigenous people – that are structured at different levels, from grass-roots, to regional, national, international levels.

An important element is that the creation of FOs cannot be imposed from the top. The bottom-up structuring ensures that the interests and needs of members-farmers are taken into account in the actions of the organization. This structuring also provides the legitimacy for FOs to represent the interest of farmers. Without internal democracy and capacity for every grass-roots member to express itself, the legitimacy of the organization is reduced, as well as its capacity to reduce power imbalances.

Second, it's important to comprehend individual farmers' organization through different dimensions: members, functions, resources, status and networks. This extensive comprehension is particularly important for organizations that intend to work or collaborate with individual FOs. The world of development aid has plenty experiences of genuine FOs that transform into artificial manager-oriented organizations due to misconceived external support.

Thriving local farmers' organizations

The research has shown that local farmers' organizations are widely spread around the country. All these local FOs are different, and among this diversity we've discerned two broad categories:

- Local farmers' unions
- Local technico-economic FOs

These two types of FOs have emerged despite a relative lack of interest from the government and from the main development partners until recently. Local FOs are addressing the most immediate needs of smallholder farmers, i.e. getting information to secure their rights (especially land tenure rights) and getting knowledge to improve their farming practices (advisory services).

When they can access more resources we've observed that local FOs tend to develop more professional service such as input provision, seed production, collecting marketing or financial services.

Another type was considered separately: mixed farmers organizations. This type, a handful cases in the sample, combines both social and economic functions. FOs of this category are mostly existing at local level (village), but two of them also tend to get structured at township and regional levels. Studying them more in-depth could give some ideas for the evolution of the more specialized types of FOs.

Challenges in structuring FOs at regional and national levels

Farmers organizations also exist at more highly structured levels (region/state and country levels). Similarly to the local FOs, we've differentiated two categories that reflect the different purposes of these FOs:

- Federation of farmers' unions
- National economic FOs

However a shared feature of these FOs is their difficulty to truly represent grass-roots farmers and their relative disconnection from local organizations. As a result, the representation of smallholder farmers to the national level is still very limited.

A weak representation of smallholder farmers at national level increases the chances to have policies that dismiss the interests of this category of the population. Smallholder farmers represent the majority of the population, taking into account their interests is essential to reduce poverty and enable this population to invest in its activity and develop the overall economy. International accounts indicate that policies that "forget" smallholder farmers lead the whole country to drawdown

or in few cases to a very unequal economic development. A strong and genuine representation of smallholder farmers at national level is a safeguard to policies that don't forget them. The emergence of such representation will take time because it should be built on strong foundations.

The study develops a set of **recommendations** targeting development partners (NGOs, donors and other stakeholders) interested in supporting FOs:

- Document the role of farmers' organizations in providing economic and social services to farmers;
- Mobilize experiences from neighboring countries;
- Keep flexibility when dealing with farmers' organizations;
- Work on services delivery and organizational development together;
- Facilitate bottom-up structuring by stimulating grass-roots initiatives;
- Create arenas for concertation with FOs.

FSWG, according to its mandate as a platform on food security and rural development, could be a key actor regarding the support to FOs. A series of actions is suggested to FSWG:

- Broad consultation to develop FSWG vision on FOs;
- Mobilizing FOs to become members of the group;
- Creating a platform of exchanges among member FOs;
- Raising awareness of other stakeholders through dialogue;
- Elaborating and sharing practical guidelines/tools sheets for the FOs (on governance, management, services, etc.), based on the experience of the member organizations.

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

1. Introduction

Agriculture is of central importance in Myanmar, with a prevalence of family farmers. According to World Bank figures, agriculture accounts for 43% of the GDP, which is the largest share of GDP among ASEAN members. The sector generates 54% of total employment and is source of livelihoods for about 70% of population who live in rural areas. Some 29% of rural households live below the poverty line¹.

Farmers' organizations have appeared at a fast pace since 2012. There have been several drivers for this emergence:

- A release of some bans and threats to allow farmers to conduct joint activities and facilitated the re-appearance of previously underground organizations.
- A movement in land investment by large corporations in sub-urban areas, following the liberalization of the economy. This has pushed farmers to organize protests to claim their land.
- The opening of the economy led to the emergence of collective business oriented initiatives by farmers.

The Food Security Working Group (FSWG), in its mandate of platform for food security and rural development, is naturally interested in this movement of farmers' organizations. GRET, as a development NGO working with smallholder farmers and rural actors since 1995 in Myanmar, is also interested in supporting the emergence of genuine farmers' organizations.

Thanks to respective funding from LIFT, AFD and DANIDA, FSWG and GRET have been able to dedicate resources to conduct this study.

2. Rationale for the study

2.1 A variety of groups, with different mandates, purposes and governance

A brief outlook at the actors that consider themselves as farmers' organizations (FO) shows the wide variety under this term. Some actors seem to arise from political parties, others from labor unions, value chains, NGOs, etc. This variety of origins is combined with a variety of objectives for these organisations, from the pure advocacy on land rights to the export of cash crops. We can also mention the diversity of governance and organization schemes that prevail in these different organizations.

This situation creates vagueness when stakeholders speak about farmers' organizations, preventing their proper recognition.

¹ World Bank, 2014.

2.2 A lack of formalized knowledge on the topic

Despite the growing importance of farmers' organizations in the public sphere, little has been attempted to document their existence. Recent studies ordered by LIFT and others (LIFT, 2013 and Agriterra, 2015) have somehow dealt with FOs, but they didn't aim at drawing a clear picture of the FOs landscape.

2.3 The low consideration of FOs among agriculture stakeholders

Farmers' organizations in the diversity of their forms are instrumental to agricultural development. They can play roles in several sectors: policy advocacy, delivery of services to farmers, enforcement of farmers' rights, farmers' education, business development, etc.

The recognition of the potential role of FOs in agricultural development is still low in Myanmar as farmers' organizations are new actors with still little credibility to most stakeholders. At best they are only considered as ways to access large amount of produce from a group of farmers with approaches that often tend to look like to top-down contract farming.

The gaining of recognition of the role of FOs will go along with the development of these organizations' capacities to actually carry these roles, first at a small scale and eventually at a wider level. This will require also for the FOs to show great capacities for good internal governance and transparency in the representation of grass-roots farmers as a key condition for achieving legitimacy in their policy advocacy work.

2.4 The FSWG's emerging need to assess and coordinate FOs

The FSWG has experienced recently a surge of membership requests from self-claimed farmers' organisations. While the membership was previously coming from NGOs (national and international) and qualified individuals, this new category of candidates poses several questions to the FSWG coordination:

- What are these organizations? Who do they represent?
- What are the specific needs related to farmers organizations in terms of capacity building and coordination?
- What support should be provided by FSWG?

3. Objectives, methodology and limitations of the study

The overall objective is to understand the dynamics of farmers' organisations in Myanmar. More specifically, the mapping intended:

- To develop an approach for assessing farmers' organisation based on the literature.
- To deploy the assessment and build a typology with a national significance.
- To generate shared knowledge of FOs' dynamics and how to strengthen them.

The methodology relied on series of interviews conducted by GRET's research team and by some FSWG member organizations in the regions and states. Interviews aimed at collecting mainly qualitative data on a large number of FOs, according to a framework developed by the research team. The research work was conducted between May and July 2015.

The preparation of the tools and the analysis of the data were made with contributions from the members of the study research committee (see annex 3).

The last step of the research is to present the findings during a broad event that will give a chance to put FOs at the top of the agenda. Stakeholders with similar vision will co-host the workshop with FSWG and GRET.

The findings and the accuracy of the study are clearly limited by its modest means.

- The data presented and analyzed here relied on the discourse from FO leaders collected during in-depth interviews, but without the possibility to triangulate with other members of the organizations.
- The reliance on FSWG members to conduct large parts of data collection created variability in the data. This variability gave also an interesting idea of the perception of FOs by these of local stakeholders.
- The coverage of the mapping is not exhaustive; surveys only took place in 11 states and regions² (out of 14). Even in these regions, the choice was made to rely on a sample of organizations. However it was not possible during the course of the study to estimate the number of FOs existing in Myanmar and in these regions and states. As a result, it is not possible to assess the representativeness of the sample used for the study.
- The limited time of the research team was dedicated to meet as many FOs as possible, so few other stakeholders (government, donors, international NGOs) could be interviewed. Instead, a bibliographic review was carried out.

4. Presentation of the report

The report is organized in four sections. The first section brings general information and concepts on farmers' organizations, in a way that could be useful to the Myanmar rural development context. Indeed, hardly any literature exists on farmers' organizations concepts to Myanmar audience.

The second section draws on the mapping exercise, including a typology of the farmers' organizations found on the ground.

The third section gives a brief overview of the fast-evolving policy and stakeholder's environment with regard to farmers' organizations.

The last section formulates the main conclusions from the above and some recommendations to the development stakeholders.

² Chin, Kayah, Rakhine and Shan (North and South) States, and Ayeyarwaddy, Bago, Magway, Mandalay, Sagaing, Tanintharyi and Yangon Regions.

I. FARMERS' ORGANIZATIONS: CONCEPTS AND BACKGROUND

1. What is a farmers' organization?

The topic of farmers' organizations has been high in the international rural development agenda between the 1990s and the mid-2000s, in a context of withdrawal of the government from the regulation of the economy and the takeover of some of these functions by new stakeholders. Most of the recent works on this topic were published during these years. Since then, farmers' organizations are considered as an integral part of the rural development sector and there are little publications specifically on them.

The UN International Fund for Agriculture and Development (IFAD) is a key international actor in the promotion of farmers' organizations. According to IFAD,

Farmers' organizations are membership-based organizations of smallholders, family farmers and rural producers – including pastoralists, artisanal fishers, landless people and indigenous people – that are structured beyond the grass-roots or community levels, at local, national, regional and global levels. (IFAD, 2010).

In this study work, especially during the data collection phase, the researchers kept on purpose a simple definition of FOs, without going too far in the details of membership, governance and functions. The definition was: “a FO is an organization which is made up of grass-roots farmers and works for the welfare of farmers”.

1.1 Who is concerned?

The definition of IFAD shows the diversity of people that can be concerned by farmers' organizations. As a result, some authors prefer the term of “producers” as it reflects the diversity of the sectors covered by these organizations, even dealing with small scale food processing³ for some authors (Rondot and Collion 2001, Bijman and Wollni 2008). But IFAD prefers the term farmers' organizations as it highlights the importance of the agricultural activity which is the mandate of the international organization.

Different terms are used with often a similar meaning: farmers' organization (IFAD), rural producers' organization (Bosc et al. 2001), agricultural producers' organization (Rondot and Collion 2001), farmer professional association (World Bank, 2006) and farmers' union (AFA, 2014).

The terms will have to be adapted to the Myanmar context with its specificity of landscape and of terminology:

³ In several African countries, the initial processing of cereals is often handled by rural women. The authors include groups of women food processors and other cottage industries under the term producers' organizations.

- The term ‘farmer’ usually translates in Myanmar as *Lail thar mar*, which is excluding some parts of the rural producers such as *Bawk thar mar* in Ayeyarwaddy delta, called landless farmers in English (Bellivare, 2014). Despite the fact that they don’t have paddy fields, *Bawk thar mar* are often relying mostly on farming activities as described above (livestock breeding, fishery, horticulture).
- The term ‘producer’ is currently used in Myanmar but mostly to deal with large scale farmers or other value chain actors. For example, under the Myanmar Rice Federation (MRF), there is one association for farmers and one for producers, which are not inclusive of the same target population.
- The term ‘peasant’ is sometimes used in agrarian studies, and especially in French (*paysan*) and Spanish (*campesino*), instead of ‘farmer’, leading to peasant organization (e.g. La Via Campesina). It is used by some organizations in Myanmar (e.g. Magway Peasant Union) expressing the social, economic and political dimensions of the peasantry. But there is not similar word in Myanmar and the term is only used in the English translation of the FO name.

To avoid creating a bias in English terminology that could not translate into Myanmar, we will keep the term ‘farmer’ for this study. But the debate remains open to find the most suitable word in Myanmar language to fit with the diverse reality of these organizations.

1.2 Which scale?

The second element of IFAD definition is the fact that FOs are *structured beyond the grass-roots or community levels*. To get the title of FO, an organization must be structured at *local, national, regional or global levels*. While the terms “community” and “grass-roots” are never very clear, similarly for “local”, it seems that the IFAD wants to exclude village based organizations from its definition.

The authors Pierre Rondot and Marie-Hélène Collion (2001) make a difference between *traditional* organizations and *formal* or *new* organizations. Traditional forms are mainly regulators of internal relations of the social groups (e.g. families, kinship, villages) while new or formal organizations deal with the relationship between the group and the actors of their environment (markets, traders, suppliers, service providers, local governments, national government, technical agencies, etc.).

In order to decide what is a FO (and so what should be studied here), the dichotomy *traditional* vs. *formal* is more functional than the one *community level* vs. *local level* used by IFAD. We will focus here on formal (or new) farmers’ organizations, leaving aside some more *traditional* organizations such as elders groups or school committee that are also made of farmers but don’t fit into our work.

We see that all groups of farmers that are trying to improve the lives of their members by interacting with their environment are considered as a FO. Farmers’ groups acting at the village level must be considered as FO, along with higher levels of structuring when they exist⁴.

⁴ See Annex 5 for an illustration of what we understand as FO ‘structuring’.

1.3 Which organizational and legal status?

The last element of IFAD definition is the idea of “*membership-based*”, implying that the “members” are these “*smallholders, family farmers and rural producers*”. This idea of membership by farmers is central in the fact that such organizations will defend and promote the interests of the farmers above all.

This criteria means that civil society organizations (CSOs) or NGOs whose membership is not farmer-based are not considered as farmers’ organizations.

It means also that companies or NGOs who intend to organize farmers cannot be categorized as FO. They are ‘supporting organizations’ as we will see below.

Regarding the type of legal status that should follow FOs, according to Bijman and Wollni (2008), a farmers’ organization can be:

an association, a society, a cooperative, a union, a federation, or even a firm that has been established by farmers to promote the interests of farmers.

We see that farmers’ organizations can be of several types. The terms organization is also vague enough to encompass structures that don’t have any registered status. However, in most countries, FOs operate usually under 2 types:

- Associations and labor unions (i.e. not-for-profit organizations)
- Cooperatives (i.e. business organizations owned by their members, without external shareholder)

Then, federation structures (syndicate, apex, etc.) apply to both types, up to the international level (e.g. La Via Campesina or the World Farmers Organisation).

Non-registered status is also widely spread when FOs don’t need a legal status to conduct their functions. Usually, institutionalization becomes needed with the increase of functions and/or coverage of the FOs.

In Myanmar the term ‘cooperative’ has not the same acceptance, at least from farmers, than in most countries⁵. Cooperatives are seen as government owned or backed organizations that hardly leave any room to farmers in the governance of the structure (LIFT 2013). But the legal status of cooperatives provides interesting avenues to register farmers’ organizations, especially in comparison with the lack of other possible status (see below).

1.4 Farmers’ organizations: civil society or private sector?

There is no clear cut categories of what are civil society organizations. In general literature and in practice, FOs are considered as one of the components of the civil society. As such, they can be considered as civil society organizations (CSOs). But the fact that FOs defend the interests of a group people who share the same economic position could categorize them as private sector organizations (like a union of small enterprises).

The assimilation of FOs as civil society usually comes from the fact that farmers, especially family farmers, represent the majority of the population in most developing countries. The expression of the participation of FOs to the civil society is their inclusion in the Civil Society Mechanism

⁵ See World Bank 2006 on a similar perception of cooperatives among Chinese farmers.

(CSM) of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), together with international NGOs and other networks⁶.

On the contrary, in Europe and North America where farmers represent only around 5% of the population, FOs seem less considered as part of the civil society and more as defenders of private interests (e.g. the conflicts between FOs and environmental NGOs in Europe). For example, the recent USAID strategic paper on agriculture mentions farmers' organizations under the heading 'private sector' (USAID 2013, page 46).

Although, it's not the topic of this study to analyze the discourses on these concepts but they deserve some clarifications regarding the Myanmar context.

The terms of CSO is widely used in Myanmar to describe what is not from the government or from private enterprises. In the common understanding, at the village level, Community-Based Organization (CBO) is the local expression of CSO and is an integral part of the civil society. Then local NGOs form the more structured level of CSOs, usually operating projects or providing services to a group of villages or to urban communities (see below the extract from Petrie and South 2014).

“Defining civil society

‘Civil society’ is a contested concept: there are many definitions of the term, used in different ideological traditions. Furthermore, the sector itself may be contested (i.e. with multiple civil-society actors who compete for material and/or political resources). This chapter uses a non-prescriptive definition of civil society – actors, voluntary associations and networks operating in the space between the family/clan, the state in its various incarnations, and the for-profit market. This includes but is not limited to non-government organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs – see below). Local civil society in Myanmar includes village-level associations and networks whose members conceive of and undertake their work in ‘traditional’ ways that differ from the western ‘rational-bureaucratic’ approach (see note 3 on p. 88). [...]

The terms (‘local/national’) NGO and CBO are often used interchangeably. However, there are important conceptual and practical differences between the two types of organization. A CBO is used here to mean a grassroots membership organization – based in the community and locally managed – with its members as its main beneficiaries. CBOs usually exist in just one community or a group of adjacent communities. In contrast, NGOs are service providers that work for social, non-profit ends (for the benefit of the community). Staff may be local, national or international but not necessarily drawn from among the beneficiaries. Although NGOs often employ participatory, ‘grassroots’ approaches, they usually work in broader thematic and geographic areas than do CBOs”

Extract from Charles Petrie and Ashley South, Development of Civil Society in Myanmar, in. Gravers and Ytzen (eds), Burma/Myanmar – Where Now?, NIAS Press Copenhagen, 2014 (page 86)

⁶ The CFS is a recently reformed platform that intends to improve the decision making among UN food security related organizations (IFAD, FAO and WFP). The CSM is the way to get CSOs representatives involved in the discussions of the CFS. Farmers' organizations take about half the seats of the CSM.

2. Why strengthening farmers' organizations?

We will elaborate here on the role of family farmers in development⁷. A more general assessment of the role played by family farmers in Myanmar would be an interesting topic of research given the lack of consideration they currently receive.

Strengthening and promoting the organizations of family farmers is often so obvious that the question is not even asked. If we still need to find an answer to this question, it will vary according to the point of view.

- As soon as farmers are allowed to do so, they gather themselves. FO will exist, sometimes even if they are prohibited, so they cannot be ignored.
- FOs provide services to farmers with limited transaction costs, sometimes more efficiently than other actors.
- FOs want to contribute to the improvement of the policy environment. Governments should not dismiss potential legitimate actors that can help to build inclusive policies.
- FOs are needed for the design, implementation and monitoring policies and programmes on agriculture. It guarantees somehow the relevance of such policies and programmes regarding the needs of farmers.
- Investing in FOs is investing in the social capital of the rural population.
- Family farmers are by essence suffering from imbalances of power when they deal individually with their economic partners: input suppliers, credit suppliers and buyers. Collective actions are their most common way to balance the relationship.
- Farm production at small scale is by essence irregular. Buyers and industries need regular supply that can only be provided by FOs who collect produce from their members with limited transaction costs.

Several other answers can be drawn from the long history of farmers' organizations in the world. Maybe the best answer is to study the process of agricultural development in the countries and see the role played by farmers' organizations (Mercoiret et al, 2007).

3. The functions of farmers' organizations

3.1 Different types of functions

The authors in the bibliography differ on how to categorize the key functions of FOs to address the challenges faced by farmers.

Rondot and Collion mention 3 categories (2001):

- Advocacy or policy: Associations or unions perform a representative role, lobby on behalf of members, represent their members' interests in negotiations with government, donors, or the private sector;

⁷ See CIRAD 2015 for the some recent developments on this topic, and all the literatures on the international year of family farming (<http://www.familyfarmingcampaign.net>), and a short summary in the Myanmar context in USAID, 2013 (page 55).

- Economic and technical: Cooperatives or other groups (unions, producer associations, co-operatives, and economic groups) provide services to their members such as: information, facilitating access to inputs and market, credit, support for storage, and processing and marketing services; and
- Local development: Whatever their primary function, POs are frequently requested by their members to support local development processes, and improve the quality of village life. Services expected by the local population are similar to the kinds of public/social service that would be provided by a rural commune (or district) in a decentralized government. These organizations, in fact, often substitute for local government in countries where decentralization has not yet taken place.

Bosc et al. (2001) draw on 5 main types of functions:

- Economic functions include : supply, production, processing, and marketing of goods and services, management of factors of production, e.g. water, land, labour, agricultural equipment; these economic functions correspond to the following lines (i) Natural resource management, (ii) Supporting agricultural production, (iii) Marketing.
- Social functions, benefiting members and/or the local community, including : e.g. cultural, education, training, health, drinking water and mutual support.
- Representation, including: defense of group interests and advocacy at the local, and sometimes regional and national levels (before government, firms etc.).
- Information sharing, communication both internal and towards other actors and capacity building either directly or through contractual arrangements.
- Coordination is a key function since RPOs are in a position to establish linkages both at local and global level and to integrate the functions cited above.

To keep it simple in this work, we'll develop with 2 main types of functions:

- 1) **Economic functions:** they intend to improve the economic position of their farmers' members. Also called technico-economic functions.
- 2) **Social functions:** they intend to improve the social situation of farmers through the expression of farmers' rights, the recognition of farmers' and the situation of rural communities.

There is a strong relation between the functions of the FO and its level of organization (or structuring). Economic functions often need local initiatives: collective marketing, input supply, irrigation water management, credit, so they are handled by local FOs. Advocacy activities usually need a national or regional voice, relying on organizations that are structured at such levels. It is particularly true for issues regarding land reforms, international trade or fiscal policies. However, such national organizations can only weight in the discussion if they have the legitimacy provided by local and regional organizations and its genuine membership. A frequent model is to have local/regional technico-economic FOs who are members of a national network focusing on advocacy issues (Rondot and Collion, 2001).

In the paragraphs below, after detailing both categories of functions, we will see that FOs are often multipurpose and do not limit themselves to one of these types.

The terms 'economic' and 'social' should not be taken as face value. For example, raising awareness on farmers' land rights can be done with a purely economic objective (e.g. ensuring that

farmers can secure the investments in their field), while the provision of input supply can be done with a primary social objective (e.g. targeting the poorest farmers with reduced price).

3.2 Economic functions

Bijman and Wollni (2008) describe such “economic FO” as “*a formal, voluntary membership organisation set up for the economic benefit of agricultural producers (the members) by providing these producers with services that support the farming activities, such as bargaining with customers, providing inputs, providing technical assistance, providing processing and marketing services*”. Some authors include the management of natural resources as one of the economic functions, referring in particular to water user groups (WUG) in irrigation schemes.

Inside the economic FOs, a distinction is often made between two categories:

- FOs that purchase product from their members and/or sell inputs to them. These organizations are often structured as cooperatives to facilitate this business
- FOs that only coordinate the bargaining of their members without getting ownership of their products or inputs. These organisations don’t necessarily need to register as cooperatives and can remain informal or structured as associations.

While the economic functions handled by FOs in Myanmar are very limited, experiences from other countries have shown that FO can provide efficiently a wide range of economic services to their members:

- Input supply
- Credit (and other financial services)
- Processing
- Storage
- Marketing: direct market (purchase from members and sale) or bargaining (no purchase from members)
- Natural resources management (water, land, forest), like water user groups.
- Advisory services (extension, information sharing, etc.) and research
- Agriculture-related infrastructures (dams, dikes, walls, paths, bridges, jetties, etc.)

3.3 Social functions

Other functions, services, activities, managed by FOs are not aiming at an immediate economic impact of the members situations. But they seek to improve the social situation of the members, or the situation of the community as a whole:

- Networking among farmers
- Awareness on farmers’ rights
- Conflict resolution
- Representation of farmers in political or economic arenas
- Coordination with other stakeholders
- Information sharing on social matters

- Advocacy
- Social protection
- Community development activities

3.4 FOs are multipurpose in essence

Family farmers' activities are always conducted to achieve both social and economic objectives⁸. This is a specificity of the family farming in comparison with entrepreneurial agriculture. We can assume that the organizations of family farmers will also pursue both social and economic objectives.

A quotation of Bijman and Wollni (2008) summarize well the fact that FOs are hybrid in their functions:

Often a distinction is made between POs with primarily economic functions and those with primarily political functions. While this distinction in political and economic organisations, and the subdivision of economic organisations into cooperatives and bargaining associations, is useful from an analytical point of view, in practice, particularly in developing countries, these functions are not strictly separated. Many POs are so-called multipurpose organizations, combining economic, political and social functions. They provide inputs and credit as well as processing and marketing services to their members, they offer community services, and they carry out advocacy activities.

This hybrid essence of farmers' organizations resonates with the fact that they can be categorized under both civil society organizations and private sector (see II.1.4).

FOs can be specialized in one crop for example, but more often they undertake activities in multiple agricultural commodity sub-sectors, in economic activities from production through to processing and marketing, and in activities in social sectors (health, education) alongside other community-based organisations and local governments. The multi-sectoral nature of FOs is indeed rooted in the complex livelihoods of their member (Rondot and Collion, 2001).

4. Conditions for strong farmers' organizations

As we can imagine, FOs are as diverse as the farmers who compose them. There is no single blueprint for the establishment of well-working FOs. Researchers even point out that one recurring element at the level of individual FOs is the succession of crisis and periods of development and growth. FOs who are able to go through crisis without losing their mobilization capacity are the ones who can maintain on the long term (Bosc et al., 2001).

At FO level, the main condition for a strong organization is a clear view of the shared interest by individual members and how the organization will benefit to them. In other words, each member should find its own interest in being part of the FO. These interests can be economic, but not only as farmers' needs are not limited to the economy. For the FO to work well, the individual interests of the members should go into the same direction. This direction will be the strategy of the FO. A FO whose members have contradictory interests will tend split into several organizations that will more effectively defend their members' interests.

⁸ CIRAD, 2015

If we look beyond the paths of individual organizations, we see that there is a wide range of conditions that can facilitate the emergence of strong FOs. However, there is no direct relationship, only a set of factors that usually explain the development of such FOs. For the World Bank, Pierre-Marie Bosc and other researchers have tried to list the factors, after the analysis of 19 case studies from Asia, Africa, North and South America and Europe (see box below). The elements they give are particularly enlightening for the Myanmar context.

Inter-related factors behind strong and successful FOs (or RPOs⁹)

- A political context that favors RPOs or that is neutral towards associations in rural development. This concerns the freedom to organize and to express opinions, a legal framework for organisation to take collective action in economic or advocacy issues and most of all recognition from governments be it legal, explicit in agricultural policy documents or implicit;
- The possibility for RPOs to access resources and mobilize skills for capacity-building and collective action. These resources are material, intellectual and financial support. The quality of these resources is often crucial, along with confidence between RPOs and support agency staff;
- The long-term commitment of donors, support agencies and RPOs appears to be a crucial issue in many cases. Success stories show partnerships established and implemented in the long run, negotiated - but not imposed from outside - on a medium-term basis; early interruption of a support program may ruin investment in capacity-building;
- The availability or the joint construction of technical, economical or organizational solutions adapted to the problems faced by the members; RPOs are in fact more efficient when they can have access to technical proposals (through research and extension) which they can then improve, adapt and diffuse;
- The existence of a strong leadership and its ability to build up and defend a project for the organisation, and to present a future in which the members can identify themselves;
- Internal management capacity and accountability procedures towards the membership.

Extract from Bosc P-M, Eychienne D., Hussein K, Losch B., Mercoiret M-R., Rondot P., Macintosh-Walker S., The Role of Rural Producers Organisations (RPOs) in the World Bank Rural Development Strategy – Background study, MAE, CIRAD, DFID, ODI, 2001

⁹ RPO stands for Rural Producers' Organization. It has a similar meaning to the one of FO as used in this report.

II. FARMERS' ORGANIZATIONS LANDSCAPE IN MYANMAR

1. The mapping exercise

1.1 Methodology considerations

The limited time and resources available for the study forced the researchers to rely on secondary sources of information. This is particularly true at two levels:

- Collecting data on FOs from leaders without enquiring lay members and non-members;
- Assessing the policy framework through resource persons and literature, without dealing directly with policy makers.

This constraint will bring some misrepresentations in the report. However, efforts to share as widely as possible the preliminary results and to get a validation from the research committee are aiming at limiting the potential inaccuracies.

One of the purposes of this study is to show that it is possible to get a relatively good understanding of the FOs with limited time and means¹⁰. The annex 4 details the data collection framework used during the study and provides short guidance. This simple frame could be used by interested stakeholders to assess the FOs they intend to work with.

In total, 77 organizations have been surveyed. The table below shows the location (state/region) of each organization, based on the place where the interview took place, and its geographical coverage. Out of these 77 organizations, the typology developed below shows that only 69 are actually considered as farmers' organizations based on the data collected. With more precise data some other organizations would have probably been considered as more community oriented groups or others types of civil society group.

¹⁰ Going deeper in the understanding of FOs' situation in Myanmar would require a coordination process, facilitated from the grass-roots level up to the national.

Table 1- The distribution of surveyed organizations and their coverage

Region and State	Total	National level	Region/ State level	Township level	Village level
Chin	9			1	8
Kayah	7			2	5
Rakhine	29		1	2	26*
Ayeyarwaddy	8		1	3	4
Northern Shan	7				7
Southern Shan	3				3
Magway	4	1	1	1	1
Sagaing	2		1		1
Tanintharyi	1			1	
Mandalay	2		1	1	
Bago	1				1
Yangon	4	4			
Total	77	5	5	11	56

** A large number of village-based groups were surveyed in Rakhine State during the research. The quality of the data collected makes it difficult to analyze them precisely so they could not be included in the typology exercise.*

1.2 Little awareness and confusions about FOs

One of the rationales of the study was immediately verified during the data collection phase. Despite the two days training for the surveyors (FSWG members), there was no clear understanding from them on what is a farmers' organization, leading to have included in the mapping study a variety of groups that differ from FOs: NGO projects and youth/peace groups that don't define themselves as FOs.

The debriefing session with surveyors has shown two dimensions that were not clear among the group:

- Can we consider a group of farmers at the village level as a FO?
- Are FO necessarily made only of farmers? Leading to the issue of organizations that serve farmers but whose leaders are not farmers. Such situation occurring at all levels (from village to national) as we will see in the typology.

Even though there was no survey on the perception of FOs among the development stakeholders staff, these discourses held by staff from development organizations show well the existing confusions on farmers' organizations.

1.3 Isolation of FOs

Farmers' organizations are scattered and disconnected from each other. The absence of shared understanding of FOs makes it difficult for these organizations to know others of their kind. Even the networks that start to be structured at a national level don't interact with each other, or sometimes their local branches are not aware of their vertical structuring.

The mapping exercise experienced this isolation through the difficulty to identify the organizations to survey. The knowledge from the surveyors was needed to select some FOs. But we can expect that the choice of FOs surveyed follows the proximity of the resource persons contacted and of the surveyors.

1.4 A small number of FOs

The mapping exercise could not draw any figure on the total number of FOs in the country or in the regions and states surveyed. Discussions with farmers show that the majority of them are not member of any FOs, even though we cannot estimate any ratio of member/nonmember.

A different approach to a mapping exercise would be to elaborate a mapping from a sample number of villages with extensive interviews of farmers and then going up to the different levels of structuring for the FOs existing there. Such approach would give a picture of the actual situation of FOs from the ground, and not from the perception of FO leaders. It could be used as a baseline survey to monitor the development of FOs in the country or in specific regions.

2. A typology of farmers' organizations in Myanmar

A typology is an exercise that intends to classify several objects into a small number of types according to common characteristics. The purpose of making a typology here is to identify the key features that would detail the definition of farmers' organizations. A typology helps the reader to get a quick understanding of what are those farmers' organizations, what is their diversity. It can also help to develop actions and interventions that will target specific type of FOs.

Such exercise is always subjective. In this case, the definition of the each type has been discussed in detail and adjusted during the debriefing session with the research committee and the surveyors in order to end up with types as clear as possible to the reader.

The typology is a picture of the current situation of the FOs studied. It doesn't necessarily apply to all FOs that currently exist in Myanmar. But above all, as it is a picture it is not dynamic. FOs are rapidly changing and their types also. So this typology should not be considered as definitive categories but only as a snapshot of the current situation.

The establishment of a typology had to consider the kind of information that could be collected during interviews conducted by surveyors that were not specialists of the topic.

The most discriminating elements collected from the surveyors about FOs were:

- Level of structuring (national, region/state, township, village)
- Claimed number of members
- Claimed purpose of the FO
- Background/history (for some FOs)
- Services/functions

- Resources (financial and non-financial)

Some further elements were included in the survey: leadership, networks and alliances, membership fees, governance, future plan. Those are not included in the typology below as the data couldn't be used in a comparative way but could be interested to further study when dealing with some FOs in particular.

The table below summarizes the main elements of the five types of FOs identified. Some narrative details are provided after the table together with the main challenges and prospects.

For each type, some short case studies will be presented to get a better understanding of the history, organizational set up and activities of these FOs. These are included in annex 1.

Table 2: Five broad types of farmers' organizations in Myanmar

Type	Structuring	Institution (status and origin)	Purpose	Membership	Main functions and services	Resources
TYPE A - Local farmer union <i>≈50% of FOs in the sample</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Township or village level - Informal, based on conflicts occurrence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - From awareness meetings in land grabbing affected areas - Can be linked with political/social movements - Registered as labor union or no registration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To defend the rights of the farmers - To balance the relationship with the powerful (locals or outsiders) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - About 30 to 1500 members - Ownership varies based on events (conflicts) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information sharing and awareness on rights (land, labor) - Conflict solving (intermediation) - Protests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - From members - Technical partnership with other orgs
TYPE B - Local technico-economic FO <i>≈20%</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Township or village level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - From NGO project or innovative farmers - Registered as association or no registration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Economic improvement of their members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - About 200-500 members - Strong ownership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Technical advice (among members + external support) - Input supply and marketing services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - From members - Technical partnership with other orgs
TYPE C - Federation of farmers unions <i>≈15%</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strong national level - Limited linkages with sub-national levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - From individual activists (previously underground orgs) - Can be linked with political movements - Registered as labor union federation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Defense of the farmers' rights - <i>Economic promotion of small farmers</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ~10,000 to 100,000 - Limited involvement in the governance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Awareness on farmers rights - Training on farmers organization and unionism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Donation of patron / leaders - Volunteers - International partners (ILO)

Type	Structuring	Institution (status and origin)	Purpose	Membership	Main functions and services	Resources
TYPE D - National economic FO ≈5%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strong national level - Punctual affiliated regional organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Under private sector bodies (UMFCCI, MRF) or no registration - Initiatives by private sectors individuals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Integration of farmers in the value chain for overall economic development - <i>Economic promotion of small farmers</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ~10,000 to 100,000 - Limited involvement in the governance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inputs supply - Market linkages - Advisory services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Donation of patron / leaders - Private sector sponsorship - Incomes from services
TYPE E - Mixed FO ≈10%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local level (village, township) - Various levels of structuring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - From NGO projects or other initiatives - Registered as association or no registration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Both social and economic development of local communities - Farmers are central 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Between 20 and 200 members - Small orgs with stronger ownership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mix of economic and social services: - Technical training - Awareness on farmers' rights - Community development activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - From previous NGO projects (revolving funds, transfers) - Financial and technical partnership with other orgs (e.g. Paung Ku)

2.1 Local FOs

Two types of FO: ‘**local farmer union**’ and ‘**local technico-economic FO**’ are included in this category. The shared features of these two types are developed, and then their specificities. Case studies illustrating each type of FO can be found in annex 1.

These two types represent the vast majority of the sample of FOs, around 70%. We can assume that, country-wide, these FOs, despite their lack of visibility from external stakeholders, are the main form of organization for farmers. Among this category, local farmers’ unions are two-third, and local technico-economic economic one third.

Common features

Structuring is at village level, with some FOs joining their efforts at township level to deliver better services to their members.

The number of members per FO is between 30 and 1500. Members seem to have some ownership of the FO, but they are still not so much involved in the governance. Indeed, the organizational development is not a priority for these organizations.

The resources are limited. They mostly come from their members, especially the leaders, and punctually from some partners (projects, individuals).

Type A - Local farmers’ unions

This is the main type of FOs existing in Myanmar, according both to the sample and to discussion with farmers and with resource persons. This type represents about half of the total sample.

These FOs have usually appeared following awareness meetings and trainings in land grabbing and farmers’ rights. Some organizations are linked with previously existing political/social movements.

The term union refers to functions of this FOs, i.e. awareness and mobilization on farmers’ rights, not to their legal status. These organizations have conducted training, claims, protests, and paperwork, on behalf of their members, mostly to get back land that was grabbed in the past years. A detailed illustration of this kind of service (a land-related mobilization in delta village) is provided in a recent report on land tenure issues (GRET, 2014).

The status of these structures is of two types. About half of the FOs of this type has registered under the labor union law, while the other half is unregistered. We can assume that the registration comes from first the awareness of this type (usually given through the union movement leaders) and second from the interest of registration to conduct the FO activities. Regarding the second point, it was reported by some FO that the registration gives more weight and security to the leader when they have to deal with powerful peoples of their communities (large landlords, authorities). Others have claimed that the non-registration was giving more flexibility with regards to the requirements towards the administration.

The overall objective of these FOs is to defend their members’ rights. To do so, they increase the awareness of the farmers on their rights and to reduce the power imbalances within the powerful ones (local patrons, companies, military and administration).

Their functions and activities are mostly on the ‘social’ side as they do not expect direct economic benefit for the members:

- Sharing information on farmers’ rights through trainings and workshops. The resource persons (trainers) can be leaders of the FO or from partner organizations (e.g. Farmers’ Rights Development Organization, Land in Our Hands, International Labor Organization).
- Conflict solving. This means negotiating on behalf of a group of farmers affected by a land grabbing, applying procedures for complaints, following
- Mobilizations and protests¹¹ held to get members opinions taken into account in an adverse environment.

The current context of farmers’ mobilization to defend their rights¹², especially their land rights, has been a driver for the creation of these local farmers’ organizations. They also come from the evolution of the political context that allowed workers (including farmers) to freely organize themselves and hold meetings. However, some limits to free association still exist, making it difficult for these FOs to register and to be recognized in the role of representing farmers locally.

Type B – Local technico-economic FO

This type of FO has appeared based on dynamic farmers who want to address their technical issues on their own. In the sample, most of these initiatives have derived from faith-based groups or NGO projects. They represent around 20% of the sample of FOs, despite the fact that several farmers’ groups interviewed in Rakhine and in theory categorized under this type were left aside from the sample due to the gaps in the data collected.

The purpose for such group of farmers is to improve their economic situation, based on the opportunities they have identified: better marketing for their produce, improved farming practices, better access to inputs, etc.

The farmers of such groups do not necessarily feel that they are part of a “farmers’ organization”. They consider only that they are improving their situation together, by themselves. But if we take a step back, we can see that such organization are definitively a form of FO and are strongly farmers-centered.

As these groups are quite new, they are little concerned by the issues of obtaining a legal status. They may not see the interest of registration. Such interest is usually arising with conflicts that require taking judiciary action (misappropriation of funds, no respect of a contract). Some groups that have been supported by external stakeholders (e.g. Paung Ku) have received awareness and registered on association status. However, such status might not allow the FO to handle lucrative services such as purchase-sale of the members’ produce. Usually, such services are handled by cooperatives organizations but the current environment is blocking for this kind of status.

The services provided by these FOs are clearly on the economic side (see section II), with a strong focus on the technical support as other services usually require a seed capital that most FOs do not

¹¹ “While some of the protests are aimed at past land grabs, others involve fresh cases happening amidst what appears to be a new wave of land grabbing on an unprecedented scale since a new round of government reforms”, (Franco et al, 2015)

¹² See the TNI publication (Franco et al., 2015) for a recent review of the development of civil society and farmers’ mobilizations on land rights.

have. Technical support services take the form of trainings, exchange visits, advisory visits and demonstrations. These activities are handled both by members of FO (i.e. innovative farmers) or by external stakeholders (NGOs).

Some FOs manage other economic services especially collective marketing, input loans, collective storage and microcredit. For the FOs that didn't receive external support for the seed capital, these services remain very basic (e.g. revolving fund), while they are a bit more formalized for FOs that are working with NGOs or national private stakeholders (e.g. MFVP).

The ownership of this type of FOs is very strong. Members feel that the group is part of their farming activity in that it is helping them to increase their incomes. Despite this strong sense of ownership there is little awareness, especially in the most self-contained FOs, on governance issues. As these initiatives are new to Myanmar, even though the members are well aware of possible flaws in their groups they don't see how to prevent them through good governance practices. When rules and regulations are established with the support of external stakeholders, they are usually well accepted by the members (after the always needed adaptation of those rules and regulations).

A rather specific category of FO could in theory be included in this type: Water Users Groups (WUG). These groups provide an economic service to their members by organizing the supply of water inside irrigation schemes. These groups exist in theory in Myanmar in all irrigation schemes, which are mostly located in the dry zone. But in fact such organizations are far from the international definition of WUG: few are really autonomous and maintain an organizational structure and real authority is held by the Water Resources Utilization Department¹³. According to the World Bank, "*WUGs do not function in their traditional form since formal recognition is absent but also because of inadequate social capital as a consequence of prolonged periods of repression*" (2015).

Prospects, challenges and support for types A and B

These two types of farmers' organizations represent the most important level of a strong FO sector. Without local structuring, the whole FO sector will remain an empty shell.

These groups (as they usually don't consider themselves as 'organizations') will scale up their structure when they'll feel that it's needed to provide better services to their members. It's already the case with some of these FOs that are joining their forces at township level to have more weight on farmers' rights recognition or on accessing higher value markets (organic products). To scale up, they will need both resources and guidance from external stakeholders.

But this scaling-up should not be forced. And it must only come along with a strengthening of the existing structures with efforts on governance and improvement of current services.

The scaling out (i.e. horizontal scaling with more FOs at the local level) is also needed as the initiatives are still limited in number. Each farmer should have the chance, if she/he wants, to join an FO that will provide the services that she/he needs.

A key prospect for these two types of FOs will be the combination of both social and economic services. As the number of FO is still very limited, it seems important that the existing FOs could evolve to address other needs of their members. If initial needs were on the social sides, maybe ones those are addressed members feel that they should develop services to improve their econom-

¹³ Gret/SHER, Reformulation mission of Sagaing and Magway Pumped Irrigation Projects, 2013.

ic situation. Similarly, FOs which have developed economic services can feel that they need to address social needs of their members.

Finally, these FOs that have emerged with limited support, now need important investments to develop in order to truly address the needs of their members and of their non-yet member. Such investments will be on the service sides through the provision of technical and material support, but also on organizations and institutional capacity building. Organizational development (OD) is often a misused term in Myanmar, but here it describes well what is needed for these two types of FOs. Such support and investments should be done as much as possible, directly to the ground, without relying on the higher structures that are not yet structured enough (see next section).

Support is also needed to enable the emergence of these local organizations in order to provide services to their members. Exposure of farmers to other initiatives and sharing information on FO managed services would stimulate farmers all over the country to organize themselves where they identify needs and opportunities based on their specific context and objectives.

2.2 National level farmers' organizations

After decades of prohibition and barriers for several forms of associations, especially for farmers, the emerging context at national level is linked with the situation before 2011. By then, there was an authorized organized private sector on one side (type D), and on the other side underground human rights and democracy networks (type C). The latter is now operating openly and has emerged into a complex set of leaders, networks, associations and parties, some being linked with the promotion of farmers' social and economic situation.

The two types of national FOs detailed below have emerged from these two sectors. Despite their differences, we'll see first that they share several features, then their specificities and their future challenges and potential support needed.

Common features

Both types of FOs have a quite strong national structure with staff and office in Yangon. They interact with other stakeholders (government, private sector, donors and media). But we have to notice that these national FOs have limited vertical structuring (see annex 5). Often, there are no clear governance mechanisms to involve the lower levels of the structures and the ownership by grass-roots members is limited.

This gap between a strong national level and weak lower levels comes from the fact that these FOs have been firstly created by national leaders (human rights activists, business leaders). They are providing services to their members but they find challenges to get organized into a more structured FOs with grass-roots organizations that have ownership of the entire structure.

Besides their respective specific objectives (see below for each type), the organizations met claimed to pursue also the economic promotion of smallholder farmers. However, it was not clear which of their current actions and services were really in line with this objective.

The organizations under these two types claim large membership, between 10,000 to 100,000 members, but as mentioned above most of these members seem to have almost no role in the governance.

Type C – Federation of Farmers’ Unions

Some national organizations have emerged since 2011, coming from previously underground trade unions and democracy movements¹⁴. These organizations are formed, in theory, by a large number of local farmers’ unions (type A above) as a result they are operating as a federations. In fact, these national FOs are still struggling to structure themselves. So far, they rely mostly on a handful of leaders that are able to rally local groups and leaders to their organizations. International labor and farmers movements¹⁵ seem also to have some weight in the external recognition of some of these federations.

The landscape of these federations is quickly evolving with organizations renaming themselves and revising regularly their alliances. What we can observe today might be obsolete in six months. It might not be settled before a few years.

The main function of these federations is to promote farmers’ rights. They provide technical support to local farmers’ unions through trainings and workshops. Some FOs that have managed to access resources are able to provide material support to help local FOs to organize themselves (office costs, indemnity for travels, etc.). Another function of these federations is the representation of farmers at the national level. They appear regularly in the media, they are invited by a variety of stakeholders: private sector, international NGOs, development partners, regional governments. But their interactions with the union government seem more limited.

The leaders of these organizations are conscious that local FOs need to handle economic functions as well. However, it’s not clear for them how they can support such local groups in this regard.

Resources of these federations are limited. They are mostly coming from the leaders own funds, from volunteer workers and slightly from international partners (especially ILO). The collection of membership fees is important for these FOs to affirm some financial independence, but they recognize that it cannot cover all the costs needed to support their networks. The challenge is also to be able to collect these fees while most of the claimed members don’t feel much ownership of the FO. As a result, some federations recognize that only 5% of the members are actually paying annual membership fees, which is still an important figure.

Three FOs interviewed during the study can be categorized under this type: AFFM-IUF, AFFM-FTUM and Green Peasant Institute (GPI)¹⁶. From discussion with other stakeholders, it seems that other organisations in Myanmar may belong to this type, both operating as national or regional federations.

Type D – National Economic FOs

The national economic FOs intend firstly to improve the agricultural economy of the country. To do so, they want to improve the integration of agri value chains, especially to push farmers’ into these value chains as they consider farmers to be the weakest link of the chains.

¹⁴ See the video presentation of AFFM-FTUM: Myanmar dignity blossoms, 2015. <https://vimeo.com/109686933>

¹⁵ On labor union side we can mention: the International Union of Food Workers (IUF) and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC). On farmers’ movements we can mention the Asian Farmers Association (AFA)

¹⁶ GPI was included in this type even though it differs slightly due to its focus on Ayeyarwaddy Region.

The leaders/founders come from the business sector and are convinced that farmers should play a bigger role in the value chains. They consider that farmers have difficulties to organize themselves, so outsiders should help the process. In return, the better organization of farmers will benefit to the rest of the sector who will receive more produce or of higher quality.

Their legal status is not clarified yet. Some of local affiliates are registered as associations, but the national organizations are operating under the umbrella of UMFCCI or unregistered.

Structuring at local levels is uneven among regions and townships. While some regions and townships might have developed strong local organizations affiliated to the national networks, others exist almost only on the paper or through their leaders. In theory, the lower level of their structuring could be categorized under type B (local technico-economic FO). Unfortunately, none of their affiliate members could be interviewed during the study.

Their main functions and services are on the economic side: input supply, credit facilitation, market facilitation, seed provision. In these functions, we see that the role of the national FOs is more to facilitate linkages with other stakeholders rather than providing services by themselves.

Two organizations of this type were interviewed: Myanmar Flowers, Fruits and Vegetables Producers and Exporters Associations (MFVP) and Myanmar Farmers Association (MFA). They both manage some important services to farmers while facing some challenges in involving these farmers in the governance of the organizations. They currently operate more as service providers and intermediary agents than as member based organizations.

Another of their function is the representation of farmers in the public debate when dealing with the farming economy (invitation to government meetings, donors workshops, news reports, etc). The organizations appear as the “reasonable” FOs (in opposition to the federations of farmers’ unions, that have a more activist image) and are welcomed to give their opinion, despite the fact that they are not officially registered or have limited representative structure.

Only two FOs of this type have been met but we can assume that others exist, especially in the area of commodity-based organizations (e.g. mushroom growers association, sugar cane growers association, etc.).

Prospects and Challenges for types C and D

The challenge for these organizations is to support the emergence of strong local structures (at village, township and region/state levels) to become the basis of the governance of the national organization.

The legitimacy of these organizations to deal with other stakeholders will come from their representativeness. Such representativeness requires a capacity to get the opinion of every member to be taken into account through the structure of the FO.

Leadership is often a prerequisite for FO to emerge, but it should not lead to top-down structuring. Also the risk is that the organization collapses if the leader withdraws.

The structuring of the national economic FOs will require revising their legal status in order to gain independence from other stakeholders.

Both types will need to open the coverage of their services. On one side Federations of farmers’ unions see already the need for the local groups to provide economic services to their members.

On the other side, national economic FOs are asked by the farmers to go further in the provision of social services (such as information on contractual agreement). The opening to social functions

will come naturally with the increasing role of farmers in the governance and the strategy of these organizations.

Some organizations from both types might also evolve towards supporting organizations (see below), realizing that they are more efficient in stimulating the creation of local FOs than in uniting them with all the governance issues that it brings. In such case, the organizations would become NGO. Even now, it's difficult to say for some of the organizations under this type if they are more an NGO or a FO.

2.3 Type E - Mixed FO

This fifth type could be considered as a mix of the two other types of local FOs (type A and B). This type has been put separately as it proves that the separation between social and economic functions is not systematic. However, it is still rare in the current Myanmar landscape.

One of the specificity of this type is that it has originated from the support of external stakeholders (NGOs, faith-groups). Such organizations brought confidence and ideas to the farmers to organize themselves and to provide a wide range of services to their members. Paung Ku was mentioned by several organizations under this type as one of the initiator, especially in Ayeyarwaddy Region, but they could not be met during the research period.

The functions of these FOs mix economic services, often on the technical side (training, demonstrations, technical information sharing) with social functions (awareness on farmers rights, community mobilization for general interest initiatives).

A difference with type A and B is that mixed FOs have received (and often are still receiving) some financial and technical support. This makes a difference in terms of resources with a capacity to compensate for some costs related to the provision of services (travels, stationary, handouts). Economic services such as revolving funds can also create incomes to enable the FO to cover some expenses.

But the importance of this type should not be overstated. Only a handful of FOs surveyed would belong to this type and it is still difficult to assert it (differences between type A, B and C are very subtle).

There might also be some confusion between this type of FO and CBOs or local NGOs. Organizations could consider that their strategy is to provide services to the entire community and not to upgrade the condition of farmers in particular. Here again the difference is not so obvious, especially at the initial stages. Some of these FOs might be more like community development organizations, without a strategy aiming at farmers. However, their services are similar to that of farmers' owned organizations.

The prospects and challenges for this type of FO are quite similar to the ones of local FOs (type A and B).

3. Supporting organizations

Mentioning supporting organizations appeared to be much needed in the course of the study. There is mix-up among the persons met between the purpose of an organization and the form of the organization. For farmers, and especially family farmers, the form of the organizations makes a big difference. An NGO and a FO can provide the same services at a given moment, but they will

evolve very differently in the long run due to their differences in terms of ownership and governance.

As a result, some of the organizations met during the study are obviously not FOs (and they acknowledge it) but they play an important role in promoting the emergence of local FOs.

Farmers' Rights and Development Organization (FRDO) is an organization based in Magway providing technical support on farmers' rights based on the demand of individual farmers through collective training. Some of these training sessions have led to the formation of local FOs (usually type A farmers' unions) that are then accompanied by FRDO to strengthen their structure and develop the services to their members.

All supporting organizations have their own strategies. Radanar Ayar in Ayeyarwaddy Delta is focusing on economic services managed by small groups of farmers. Paung Ku is helping to build organizations that could be assimilated to CBOs or to mixed FOs (see type E above). International NGOs such as Welthungerhilfe, Action Aid or GRET are also helping farmers groups to develop services for their members, but they are careful in their formalization to avoid misappropriation.

Supporting organisations are helping FOs on:

- Initiating the formation of FOs;
- Getting knowledge and providing technical support on wide range of topics;
- Organizational strengthening;
- Networking with each other;
- Accessing resources (directly or helping for fundraising).

The study has shown that the boundary between FOs and supporting organizations is often elusive. It must be noted that these two categories are not hermetic. Some organizations that have started as FOs could find themselves better in becoming a supporting organization, and the other way around.

4. General findings on FOs

4.1 Geographical distribution

It is difficult to draw conclusions on the geographical distribution of FOs only with a sample when we have no information on the total population of FOs. Moreover, this sample is not neutral as it has been made through the consultation of a limited number of persons and organizations.

A first observation is that the emergence is affecting the whole country. FOs were found in all regions and stated selected and we can assume that the remaining ones also host such organizations. Similar observations are made in a recent study on the emergence of local CSOs all around the country¹⁷.

Regarding the local FOs, we cannot see any tendency for one type or the other per region/state. Both types co-exist. We can only say that, at micro level, local farmers unions tend to appear where farmers feel their rights and power are challenges (land grabbing, difficult negotiations with local patrons, with local administration).

¹⁷ Ja Tum Seng, Matt Desmond and Sandar Myo, *Supporting civil society with LIFT funds*, LIFT, August 2015.

4.2 Disconnection between grass-roots and national levels

The main element of the typology is the relative disconnection between two dynamics: one from the grassroots with farmers organizing themselves at the village level and the other from national leaders who intend to rally large number of existing FOs to their Yangon based initiatives.

Despite the efforts from both sides, it is clear that these two dynamics do not match yet. Local FOs are developing services to their members and building organizations with strong ownership, while national FOs are developing large membership with limited structuring and ownership at the base.

4.3 Lack of external support

Interviews and field investigation have shown that there is a very limited support to FOs. The main aspect of this support is awareness on farmers' rights. Technical support is hardly mentioned, besides some punctual training provided by NGOs or faith-based groups. But there is a clear need expressed in the technical support by most of local FOs interviewed.

In terms of funding, some local FOs have received support to implement livelihood activities and to mobilize the communities on land rights. For national-level FOs, external financial support is coming from the labour rights sector (like ILO) or from the agribusiness sector.

External support on the development of the structures and the systems of FOs is very limited. Some INGOs are providing such support at the local level for village-based FOs (especially of type B), but other types of FOs are not receiving this kind of support and we can see the gaps in the structuring (low involvement of grass-roots farmers in the governance, shared vision, etc.).

While dealing with national-level FOs, the question of structuring is crucial. Without proper structuring from the grass-roots level, these FOs will not be able to reach the legitimacy and the weight that would allow them to promote the position of small holder farmers in the country. Providing heavy support to these national or regional FOs without considering their structuring bears the risk of creating fictional organizations disconnected from the concerns of farmers and unable to address their needs. The large number of FOs that exist *on the paper* only in developing countries shows that past experiences have not always been successful in this regard.

4.4 Room to provide services to farmers

Reports and interviews clearly indicated that farmers still have a very limited access to the services needed to develop their activities, improve their incomes and escape from poverty. This situation has not much changed since the opening of the country. A country strategy document by the UN agency IFAD points out, among the majors issues for agriculture (IFAD, 2014: 33):

- Weak agricultural extension services ;
- Inadequate investments in agricultural research services;
- Lack of access to credit, markets, marketing information, trading skills and input supplies.

Inside the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation (MoAI), the Department of Agriculture (DoA) is in charge of the extension services and is endowed with limited resources. IFAD country strategy document considers as a main threat the fact that DoA might be unable to meet the demand for extension services.

Similar observations are drawn for the Myanmar Agriculture Development Bank (MADB) that cannot meet the demand for agricultural credit, especially for smaller farmers and for credits that do not aim at purchasing inputs.

We've seen in the first section that FOs worldwide have managed to provide efficiently such services to their members. FOs often need act in collaboration or partnership with other stakeholders but they must not be forgotten as an important actor, especially when the government services are unable to meet the demand.

The examples given above, especially for local FOs (type A and B), show that farmers have not waited for instructions or even registration to start delivering services to their members to address their most prominent needs (e.g. financial services in Ayeyarwaddy Delta, input supply near Yangon, advisory services in Magway). It's important to build on these home-grown initiatives by improving their management capacities and their access resources in order to provide such services in the best quality to the largest number of farmers.

III. POLICY AND STAKEHOLDERS' ENVIRONMENT FOR FARMERS' ORGANIZATIONS

Farmers' organizations are not emerging, developing or collapsing out of the blue. They evolve in a context with specific policies and regulations, stakeholders that have strategies and expectations from FOs, economic conditions, etc. This environment will have a conducive or deterring effect for FOs emergence and development, might favor one type of FOs to the detriment of others and so on.

Due to the limited time, this work couldn't study in detail the agricultural policy and the positions of the different stakeholders. However, it seemed important to highlight some elements that came from the different interviews and literature reviews.

1. Legal framework for FOs: associations, unions and cooperatives

Since 1962, the legal framework for civil society organizations and business volunteer association was extremely restraining¹⁸. The late 2000 and early 2010 have experienced a progressive opening of the government towards free associations and labor unions. The situation for cooperatives remains uncertain.

1.1 Associations

Regarding associations, the process for registration was particularly heavy and unsuitable to local organizations¹⁹. A progressive Association Law was passed by the Parliament in July 2015 after consultation of the civil society representatives. Some developments of the by-laws have however raised concerns from civil society groups²⁰.

Given this positive evolution, some FOs met during the research have applied for registration but they didn't get any agreement yet. According to a recent report, the progress of local organizations registration varies according to the region based on the interest of regional government in civil society organizations²¹.

1.2 Unions

Farmers unions do not enjoy a specific status in the Myanmar law. But the law on labour organization²² recognizes to workers, including those from the agricultural sector, the right to create labour unions at various levels:

¹⁸ Steinberg, 1997.

¹⁹ <http://www.irrawaddy.com/burma/csos-mps-draft-progressive-association-registration-law.html>

²⁰ <http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/15644-anger-as-government-restricts-ngo-registration-with-by-law.html>

²¹ Seng, Desmond and Myo (2015) give the example of the Ayeyarwaddy Chief Minister who has been supportive of the engagement of civil society.

²² The Labour Organization Law No. 7/2011.

- Basic labour organization (at village level for farmers)
- Township labour organizations
- Region or state labour organizations
- Labour federation at national level
- Labour confederation gathering several federations

Each level has the obligation to gather at least 10% of the lower level in order to get registered.

For basic and township levels, the registration process goes through the township registration officer at the labor department with a pre-agreement before the final validation from Nay Pyi Taw.

When dealing with agriculture, the persons met have explained that the law applies to persons who own less than 5 acres, with a minimum of 30 persons to form a basic level union. It seems also that all township might not apply the law the same way, with the registration process very easy in some places and on the contrary inaccessible to farmers in others.

The ceiling of 5 acres is a real constraint for farmers' union registration. In some cases, families divided their total acreage among all family members as the union membership is individual.

As explained in the typology, this option of registration is used by some of the locale and national farmers' unions (type A and C). It is helpful to provide some safety for the groups engaged in protests (e.g. they need registration in the official procedure for demonstrations). However, it is not satisfactory for farmers due to the 5 acres ceiling and the absence of specific roles offered to farmers' unions in relation with potential partners (DoA, private sector).

1.3 Cooperatives

Cooperatives have a long history and a difficult legacy in Myanmar. A recent study commissioned by LIFT gives a good overview on the cooperative sector (Ferguson, 2013).

The history of forced cooperatives under the socialist regime has led to the public perception in Myanmar is that cooperatives and government are the same. This cooperative sector has not been dismantled and the ministry counts more than 20,000 existing cooperatives country-wide²³.

The standard definition of a cooperative is 'a farm, business, or other organization which is owned and run jointly by its members, who share the profits or benefits'. However, interviews let understand that the vast majority of these cooperatives are dormant and only come into operation when there is an opportunity (e.g. the Chinese loan by the cooperative ministry).

Interviewees and literature also mention that the cooperative sector (departments, central cooperative society) has currently a strong focus on financial cooperatives, with limited interest on non-financial ones (e.g. collective input supply or marketing groups). It results in a lack of motivation of local departments of the ministry of cooperatives to register farmers' organizations under such status.

²³ Including 5800 agriculture cooperatives and around 10,000 microfinance ones.

2. Role of local governments

Reports acknowledge the fact that some local governments have shown interests in farmers' organizations. In Ayeyarwaddy Region, the regional Minister for Agriculture and the Chief Minister have participated to several forums organized by regional FOs. They have also invited such FOs to take part to consultation on farming and rural developments.

Time limitations of the study couldn't give chance to meet these regional government. It seems that there is some variation based on the region and states, especially individual interests from government members²⁴. For future the development of awareness of FOs and their increased role in service delivery and representation of farmers, local governments could play a key role.

3. National agriculture and rural development policy

The Union Government that took office in 2011 has elaborated a series of strategy documents, frameworks and action plans that highlight the importance of agriculture in the country development: Poverty Alleviation and Rural Development Action Plan (2011), the Framework for Economic and Social Reforms (2013), the National Comprehensive Development Plan (2013), and the Rural Development Strategic Framework (2014)²⁵.

In the background of these developments FAO responded to the request of the Union Government to provide technical support towards the formulation of the agricultural component nation strategy, by establishing a National Action Plan for Agriculture (NAPA) project. A project team including national and international experts has been set up to prepare the various consultations and interim reports towards the elaboration of the final Action Plan. All ministries related to agriculture and rural development are involved in the structure, while the main management is under the department of rural development²⁶.

This NAPA project has started operations in May 2014 with an inception workshop but it faced some difficulties to come up with an interim strategy document agreed by all parties. The most recent national event was held in Nay Pyi Taw on August 2015. Among the presentations given in this workshop some are particularly relevant to our topic²⁷:

- Recommendation for Myanmar from abroad study tour by government officials:
 - "Farmers' organizations are taking active part in planning and implementation of development projects including in the preparation of Natural Disaster Mitigating plans."
 - "The institutions related to farmers and farming have been systematically formed. Government agencies are providing technical and financial assistance to build the capacity of these organizations."
 - "Institutions of farmers, farm women, and youth are quite strong and take active part in planning and implementation of policies and programmes".

²⁴ "Civil society relationship with formal authorities is very location-specific" (Seng et. al, 2015).

²⁵ Asian Development Bank, *Sector assessment: agriculture, natural resources and rural development*, ADB, 2015

²⁶ <http://www.napamyanmar.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/NAPAsstructure.png>

²⁷ <http://www.napamyanmar.org/news/keynotes-august-11-2015/>

- “How can extension, research and education/training be effectively linked and be made responsive to producer needs: increase the voice of the producers and extension services in determining research priorities and training formats”

Despite these interesting comments, in line with the observations of the first section, farmers’ organizations are still absent from policy consideration; they hardly appear in official documents and from most of the government-led projects (FAO, IFAD, World Bank²⁸).

4. IFAD and the MTCP2

While the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) is a key stakeholder at the global level and in several countries for the development of farmers’ organizations (see section I), it remains silent on this issue in its Myanmar country strategy (IFAD, 2014). The only occurrence of farmers’ organizations (also called smallholder organizations) is on the needed vertical integration of value chains in order to support the national and multi-national private sector entities (page 7).

Outside this strategy, one programme funded by IFAD (with funds from the EU) seems of potential interest for FOs: the Medium Term Cooperation Program with Farmers’ Organization in Asia and the Pacific Region Phase 2 (MTCP2)²⁹. This project is managed by the Asian Farmers Association (AFA), with national FOs as implementing partners in every country. The 5-years project has three components:

1. Strengthening FOs and their network, especially in their capacity to deliver services to farmers and the integration of FO into markets;
2. Participation of FOs in the policy process, through advocacy, research and coordination;
3. Improving FOs capacity to provide agricultural development services (i.e. to become programme implementers).

In Myanmar³⁰, the local implementing partner is AFFM-FTUM (see Annex 1 for more details on AFFM-FTUM). The activities and project content differ based on the level of structuring of FOs in the each country. In Myanmar the objective is first to get this national-level FO to structure a network of sub-national “farmers’ unions” before qualifying as a national FO according to AFA standards (AFA, 2014).

The project implementation for most of the activities relies on the creation of national platforms that gather all (or most of) national-level farmers’ organizations:

- For the development of FOs functions (services);
- For the coordination among FOs;
- To create an enabling policy environment for FOs;

²⁸ The World Bank does not mention farmers’ organization in its diagnostic of the Myanmar situation (2014). Similarly, two other recent documents of the World Bank, the country programme framework for 2015-2017 and the 7-year agriculture development support project, overlook farmers’ organizations.

²⁹ MTCP2 website: <http://www.asiapacificfarmersforum.com/>

³⁰ The MTCP1 was not really operational in Myanmar.

- To carry out the national-level programme implementation, under the management of one member of the platform.

In most countries, these national platforms (also called forum and coalitions in the programme document) have been established at the times of the MTCP1, so it doesn't exist yet in Myanmar. The country being well behind in terms of FOs structuring compared to its neighbors, the prerequisites to create such platform are colossal. The work of the implementing partner for Myanmar (AFFM-FTUM) is very challenging and will have to follow a very inclusive approach to deal with the diversity (and haziness) of the Myanmar FOs sector.

5. LIFT

The Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund (LIFT) is a multi-donor fund established in 2009 to improve the lives and prospects of smallholder farmers and landless people in rural Myanmar. It brings together donors from 12 countries and the European Union.

After several rounds of funding, LIFT fund board finally formalized its strategy in 2014 for 5 years. The strategy document only quotes farmers' organizations once, in order to contribute to the 'step up' objective, one of the three objectives of LIFT approach. The role of FOs in service delivery and in farmers' representation is not mentioned. Civil society strengthening is part of the strategy of LIFT but again, it's not clear whether farmers' organizations are part of the civil society³¹.

However, in the intervention recently funded by LIFT, more focus has been given to FOs.

The most recent LIFT funding opportunity (the Upland programme) was announced in July 2015 and its first component is dedicated to *Farm Advisory Services and Producer Groups*³². One paragraph depicts clearly what is expected from these groups:

*Accessing market opportunities and tackling value chain bottle necks may require the creation of productive interest groups delivering services to their members. Services may include contract farming, extension and information sharing, agricultural service provision, storage and bulking of product, processing, transport, quality assurance, small financial services. The programme will consider organizational and financial support to existing or new producer groups that are established based on a sound business model and clear needs assessment. [...] The institutional model for these groups (e.g. cooperative, informal group, commercial enterprise.) might be varied and adapted to the context and purpose*³³.

This expectation ties in with the description of the local technico-economic FO (type B) described in the typology. An interesting element is that organizational support to the FOs is not forgotten.

Recent projects funded in the Delta have also insisted on strengthening local farmers groups to deliver services (financial, marketing, processing, input supply).

It would be interesting for LIFT to consider in a more strategic way why farmers' owner organizations are more interesting than other stakeholders in providing services. Indeed, there is a potential contradiction between private sector driven agriculture and the promotion of FOs to deliver services to farmers (in order to improve the position of smallholder farmers in the value chain).

³¹ Both reports commissioned by LIFT (2013 and 2015) on civil society organizations are also not specifying what are exactly these organizations, and if FOs are included or not.

³² LIFT, Uplands Programme Framework, LIFT, July 2015.

³³ Ibid. page 8.

A second element of concern is the risk of imposing FOs creation only because it's part of a logical framework but not based on local considerations. In several countries, when FOs become part of the development agendas, we can observe that projects tend to create FOs that are based on pure opportunistic behavior by local communities, so not sustainable at all and not necessary linked to farmers' needs. Such project-led FOs can prevent the emergence of genuine farmers-led initiatives. An important work needs to be done in the awareness of LIFT implementing partners on the need for flexibility and tailored approach in strengthening FOs.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. A definition of farmers' organizations for Myanmar

The main hypothesis of the research was a lack of understanding on farmers' organizations among the different stakeholders in Myanmar (government, donors, NGOs and FOs themselves). The different interviews and data collection have confirmed this hypothesis.

Our conclusion is first to provide few criteria defining a farmers' organization (in opposition to other types of organizations) in Myanmar context.

And second to give more specific criteria that will help to define more precisely and understand each farmers' organization.

What is a farmers' organization, in Myanmar context

Farmers' organizations are membership-based organizations of smallholders, family farmers and rural producers – including pastoralists, artisanal fishers, landless people and indigenous people – that are structured at different levels, from grass-roots, to regional, national, international levels³⁴.

Farmers' organizations are a bottom-up democratic construction. While the upper levels (region/state and national) need to rely on structuring from the grass-roots, the lower levels do not necessarily federate into higher levels. Usually the level of structuring comes from the need of FOs to be associated at the different levels to provide the best service to their members.

The creation of FOs cannot be imposed from the top. This bottom-up structuring ensures that the interests and needs of members-farmers are taken into account in the activities of the organization. This structuring also provides the legitimacy for FOs to represent the interest of farmers. Without internal democracy and capacity for every grass-roots member to express itself, the legitimacy of the organization is reduced, as well as its capacity to reduce power imbalances.

What are the differences among farmers' organizations?

According to the differences observed in the mapping exercise in Myanmar, the main criteria one should look at when dealing with a FO are: Members, Functions, Status, and Networks.

Members

Membership should be studied in different ways:

- Depending of the type of farmers behind the FOs, its objectives will be different. FOs logically tend to defend the interest of the type of farmers they represent.

³⁴ IFAD, 2010.

- The number of members who belong to the FO, by receiving services, electing their representatives or paying membership fees. Might be different from the number claimed by the head of the FO.
- Who are the leaders of the FO, how are power and responsibilities shared among the leaders?

Functions

The primary function of farmers' organizations is to deliver services to their members. Services are of various kinds, some will focus more on economic services, others on more social issues. The combination of social and economic objects is a specificity of farmers' organizations. The question of the resources available to provide such services should also be asked.

Status

They can be of various legal forms: labor union, association, cooperative, or non-registered. Most of existing cooperatives cannot be coined farmers' organizations as they do not operate from the decisions of the membership but receive directions from above. Farmers' organizations are a hybrid type as they belong both to civil society and to the private sector.

Networks and alliances

Networks and alliances of FOs are emerging around the country so it's important for stakeholders where are standing individual FOs in this regard.

2. The situation of farmers' organizations in Myanmar

2.1 Thriving local farmers' organizations

The research has shown that local farmers' organizations are widely spread around the country. All these local FOs are different, and among this diversity we've discerned two broad categories:

- Local farmers' unions
- Local technico-economic FOs

These two types of FOs have emerged despite a relative lack of interest from the government and from the main development partners until recently. Local FOs are addressing the most immediate needs of smallholder farmers, i.e. getting information to secure their rights (especially land tenure rights), getting knowledge to improve their farming practices (advisory services) and to access new market opportunities.

When they can access more resources we've observed that local FOs tend to develop more professional service such as input provision, seed production, collecting marketing or financial services.

2.2 Challenges in structuring FOs at regional and national levels

Farmers organizations also exist at more highly structured levels (region/state and country levels). Similarly to the local FOs, we've differentiated two categories that reflect the different purposes of these FOs:

- Federation of farmers' unions
- National economic FOs

However a shared feature of these FOs is their difficulty to truly represent grass-roots farmers and their relative disconnection from local organizations. As a result, the representation of smallholder farmers to the national level is still very limited.

3. Recommendations to development partners

The recommendations of this study target primarily the development partners: national and international NGOs, donors, multilateral organizations. The authors are convinced that large parts of work needed to support FOs lie in the legal framework and government sector. However, the research team could not study in-depth the government system to elaborate on realistic recommendations in this regard. So the authors have focused on a sector they know more closely: development partners.

3.1 Document the role of farmers' organizations in providing economic and social services to farmers

The recognition of the potential role of FOs in the development of quality services to farmers is still very limited. We've seen through some examples that FOs are able to fill the gaps left by weak service providers (in agricultural advice, financial services, information sharing, etc.).

The current trend is to give to the private sector (i.e agribusiness companies) a predominating role in economic service provision. This could put smallholder farmers at risk by creating dependency towards large powerful stakeholders (in seed, fertilizer, credit provision, and produce purchase). Farmers' organizations are balancing the power relationship and can provide services to their members in a most efficient way.

Documenting experiences and sharing them with decision-makers (government, donors) could contribute to change this trend.

3.2 Mobilize experiences from neighboring countries

Agricultural development in South-East Asia has been largely driven by farmers' organizations, with a diversity of forms, services and coverage that relates to the diversity of local contexts³⁵. International NGOs and research organizations should bring to Myanmar decision-makers evidences on the role played by farmers' organizations in neighboring countries. Some recent initiatives by NAPA (study tours³⁶) and AsiaDhrra already exist but there is a need to intensify such topic to put FOs on top of the policy agenda.

3.3 Keep flexibility when dealing with farmers' organizations

Experiences worldwide have shown that imposing one model to farmers' organizations is bound to fail. Farmers' needs are different from one group of farmers to another and evolve with time, so must be the organizations that address these needs.

The first point is to consider when dealing with emerging FO is: "*what is the problem faced by a group of farmer and is a collective action led by a farmers' organization the most efficient way to address this problem?*". Several experiences of collective marketing or input supply, including in

³⁵ For example, see the report from Bourgeois et al. (2003) on Indonesia.

³⁶ NAPA has conducted a first study tour in South-East Asia for government officials in 2014.

Myanmar, have failed because the management of such service by a FO was not the most efficient way to address the problem faced by farmers.

Supporting organizations should not impose their pre-conception of what must be a FO. Instead, they should try to understand existing initiatives and see how to strengthen them and make them more efficient to address farmers' needs.

Such flexibility requires an important level of facilitation from supporting organizations, which rely on skilled human resources and enough time to understand local context.

3.4 Work on services delivery and organizational development together

The research has shown that services provided by FOs to farmers are still limited, due to the lack of support and short experience. A rise in support to service delivery through FOs has been observed in the very recent period in Myanmar. This support on service provision should consider together the need for supporting the organizational development of FOs. Focusing only on services is leading to purely service provision organizations with a disconnection from their membership base, resulting in something similar to present days Myanmar NGOs.

The founding characteristic of FOs is that interests and the needs of the members are primary drivers of the strategy of the organization. If the strategy becomes driven in priority by the access to resources in order to deliver services (i.e. access to donor funding) then the power is not anymore in the hands of the members.

So, when supporting organizations are working with FOs to get services delivered to their members, they should systematically work as well as on organizational development, with particular effort on governance and structuring.

3.5 Facilitate bottom-up structuring by stimulating grass-roots initiatives

Currently in Myanmar, FOs at national level come from initiatives at national level and have little foundation in grass-roots farmers' groups. This situation is acknowledged by the national FOs' leaders and they can only regret the lack of bottom-up structuring that would ensure the proper involvement of local farmers in the organizations.

The rise we have observed in local initiatives is an opportunity to get the process turned upside down with genuine local groups federating progressively at upper levels. This structuring at higher geographical levels should come from the decision of the local groups to gather some functions if they find it an efficient way to improve the services to members. It should not be imposed by external stakeholders (e.g. in order to have one FO at national level to speak to instead of several more local organizations).

3.6 The need for concertation arenas

Experience in other countries has shown that the demand for concertation with farmers' organizations by other stakeholder (local and national governments, donors, research, etc.) can stimulate, in return, a supply of well prepared and legitimate discourse. The creation of arenas where FOs can express their positions on specific topics gives these organizations significance in the public space and in the eyes of their members.

For example, a FO in Rakhine was established during the preliminary discussion leading to a large consultation with the State Prime Minister. It was formed of more than 100 farmers who wanted to put in action the ideas they had come up to during these preliminary meetings.

But we see from many countries that there is also a threat of having FOs that only express the positions of the leaders and not from their membership base. Pushing FOs into concertation and to express positions with giving them time and resources to build their capacity to bring forward the positions of their grass-roots members is a classic shortcoming.

The Food Security Working Group (FSWG), with its good understanding of the local organizations, is in a position to help these emerging FOs to build discourses and positions on key agricultural issues (see below).

4. Recommendations to the Food Security Working Group (FSWG)

Given the relative vacuum regarding farmers' organizations support in Myanmar, the FSWG can play an important role the emergence of the sector.

As stated in its strategy paper: *“The FSWG provide a platform for members to collectively learn and share experiences on food security topics, and provides an environment for constructive dialogue and debate between all stakeholders concerned with food security”*³⁷.

The FSWG coordination is currently categorizing its members as INGO, Myanmar NGO, CBOs and individuals. Even though some FOs are members of the FSWG they don't form a specific category.

As we've seen, the farmer base of FOs make them radically different from other civil society organizations. If it is interested by supporting FOs, the FSWG will have to consider FOs as a specific type, providing specific support and actions. Some propositions are detailed below.

4.1 A broad consultation to develop FSWG vision on FOs

The first step would be to develop a vision on FOs, especially their role in economic/social services provision and their role in representing smallholder farmers.

This vision should be developed with the participation of local farmers' groups. In order to involve them, discussions should be held as close as possible to the field, for example organizing workshops at the township level.

The workshops would be the occasion to present some of the findings of this work, to get existing local FOs to present what they are currently doing and finally to reflect on where FOs could go in the future and what would be the precise role of the FSWG. This process would build the legitimacy and the quality of the vision elaborated by the FSWG

The result of this consultation will have to be presented and discussed in the FSWG board and, if relevant, included in the future strategy of the FSWG.

4.2 Mobilizing FOs to become members

The FSWG should develop a specific membership process for FOs. They could form one separate group among the FSWG membership (i.e. an electoral college). Actions in favor of FOs would follow the same strategic approach as for its current actions (basically: capacity building, exchange among members and advocacy).

³⁷ Food Security Working Group Strategy (2012-2014).

Membership process for FOs should insist on the dimensions of FOs mentioned in the definition (IV.1).

4.3 Platform of exchanges among FOs

The main purpose of the FSWG is to give room for exchange and dialogue. FOs are new in Myanmar so it's important to have a place where they can discuss, present their experiences, their challenges and learn from each other. This facilitation process needs to be done as close as possible to the farmers, which means not in Yangon only. With the current resources of the FSWG one cannot expect it to facilitate FOs in all regions and states but it could start in one or two places where the consultation workshops have shown particular interest from local FOs.

4.4 Raising awareness of other stakeholders

Documentation and multi-stakeholder dialogue is also part of the mandate of the FSWG.

Regarding FOs, the research had found that documentation of achievements and experiences of FOs is almost inexistent in Myanmar. Based on the exchanges among FOs, the FSWG could publish some reports and success stories on FOs, targeted to FOs and to other stakeholders (local and national governments, donors, NGOs).

Another way to raise awareness is to get these other stakeholders into discussion with FOs on specific topics regarding farming (e.g. farming practices, land tenure policy, services to farmers, etc.). In such dialogues, FOs will bring different points of view, discourses based on the concrete experience of farmers and propositions that will build on FOs capacities to deliver services. This will contribute to open the other stakeholders to consider the potential of FOs.

4.5 Elaborating and sharing practical information for FOs

This study has proven the lack of formalized knowledge on farmers' organizations. This absence is even more striking when dealing with practical information (guidelines, tool sheets) adapted to farmers' organizations themselves.

Current members of the FSWG have a large amount of grey literature (technical reports, methodological documents, templates, etc.) based on their experiences of working with farmers' groups to develop services to farmers (marketing, input supply, farmers' rights mobilization, etc.). Indeed, as illustrated in the case studies in annex and in the interviews, some FSWG members such as Action Aid, ADRA, CESVI, GRET, Metta Development Foundation, Mercy Corps, SwissAid or Welthungerhilfe have worked in the strengthening of farmers' groups³⁸. The literature they've produced could be further elaborated into proper documentation accessible to farmers' organizations on how to set up services to their members or how to seek for support from other stakeholders.

There is a potential key role here for the FSWG coordination team to elaborate this technical documentation based on these members' contribution. The second step would be to share it broadly through its local resources centers and awareness meetings to other member organizations.

³⁸ LIFT, *The Village Organisation Study*, 2015

V. ANNEXES

ANNEX 1 - Case studies of farmers' organisations

Type A - Local farmers' unions

Agriculture and farmer federation of Myanmar (AFFM-IUF), King Taung village, Rakhine State

By the supervision of U Kyaw Thein, organizer in charge of Rakhine State AFFM, King Taung FO was formed in 2013 in King Taung village, Rakhine State as village level (Basic Union) of AFFM-IUF. The purpose is to support the rights of farmers and general workers. Now they have 33 members in total and collect 500 kyats for membership fees and 100 kyats for monthly fees. Seven members make up the executive committee.

The basic union is formed with seven executive committee members. They got the registration of Taungoke (King Taung) Agriculture (Farm)/Basic (342/2014) on August, 2014 from Ministry of labour.

With the technical support from Rakhine State AFFM, the leaders of the FO organize regular trainings to on land law awareness the information on the current status of policy of labor rights and farm land laws. They also support the members who are involved in land grabbing.

They main challenge is to access financial resources to increase the services they deliver to farmers, especially on capacity building.

Dawei Farmers Network (DFN), Dawei township, Tanintharyi Region

DFN is a township level FO in Dawei township. By the support of U Than Swe, former NLD member, small local farmer group from Dawei, Thayet Chaung, Laung Lon and Yay Phyu townships cooperated to form the DFN in 2012.

DFN started with data collection for land confiscation in detail to get back the farmers' land in their local area, towards its overall objective to help the farmers with land grabbing issues.

Executive committee formed with executive members and 15 regular members in Dawei township, which link with other three townships: Laung Lon, Thayet Chaung and Yay Phyu. So far, they have no formal rule and regulation and each township works differently.

Within Tanintharyi Region DFN is networking with basic farmers groups from two townships at Kawthaung and four townships at Myiek, and it collaborates with Dawei women affairs association and farmer affair association.

They face difficulty to access data from the government department on land grabbing case. Meanwhile they suffer from financial shortage and lack of technical resources to work of the local farmers.

Type B - Local technico-economic FOs

Taunghy Latyone

In Magway Region, Seik Thu Township, Taungthu Latyone is a village based organization formed as part Cesvi (an Italian NGO) intervention through farmer extension groups. The group is collecting membership fees and providing technical advice to its members on compost-making, safe use of pesticides and seed production. These services are provided voluntarily by the leaders of the organizations with punctual technical assistance from Cesvi, the Department of Agriculture or the Livestock Breeding and Veterinary Department (LBVD).

Farmers' Federation in Htantabin

In Htantabin, a rural area of Yangon division, Welthungerhilfe has started an intervention in 2006 to strengthen local communities and rural development. In 2008, they initiated rice banks at the village level. The rice banks provided a batch of fertilizer to farmers who had to repay at the end of the season in paddy with 50% interest. The paddy stock would remain in the rice bank of the village and be used for the next year to purchase fertilizer and give it to members on credit, and so on. Most of the smallholder farmers from each village became member of the rice bank and the fund increased year after year due to high level of interests. After some years, these village-based groups had the capacity to purchase a large amount of inputs at the beginning of the season. Progressively, rice bank groups from different villages thought about doing a joint purchase at the beginning of the season in order to enjoy a better bargaining position towards input dealers.

In 2014, they agreed on the creation of a “farmers’ federation” that became in charge of purchasing the inputs of all the rice banks. This federation is made of 26 groups (rice banks) gathering around 480 members. For the monsoon 2015, the federation purchased 53 tons of urea based on the demand of its members.

The challenge now for the federation is to register officially while keeping the governance system where individual members, through their village groups, have their say. Welthungerhilfe has helped the federation to explore the process for cooperative registration but the relevant administration did not show interest in having them registered (even though their current regulations were very close to the ones expected from the cooperatives in the Myanmar legal framework). Another option is to register as an association but it would not enable to share the benefit from their services among the members.

Type C - National farmers' unions

Agriculture and Farmers' Federation of Myanmar: AFFM-IUF and AFFM-FTUM

The AFFM-IUF is the result of the split of the original AFFM which established with the support of the, then exiled, Federation of Trade Union of Burma (FTUB). This split was the result of internal dissent with parts of the governance willing to remain independent from the FTUB. Some leaders of the AFFM were willing to remain under the umbrella of the FTUB so it resulted in having two separate AFFM.

The pro-independence branch has kept membership of the international union of food and farm workers associations (IUF), being coined AFFM-IUF. The branch that remained under the FTUB (that has changed its name to FTUM) is mentioned as AFFM-FTUM³⁹.

Each organization has its own leaders. AFFM-IUF is handled Daw Than Than Htay and Dr U Maung Maung while AFFM-FTUM is under the leadership of U Than Swe.

Both organizations are claiming large number of members of affiliated groups in the region. The research has found in the field that the recognition of the affiliation to these organizations vary greatly from one region to another. Anyway, the research didn't have the resources to confirm the membership figures of around 40,000 farmers claimed by each organization.

Both organizations receive technical support from ILO in building the capacities of their national and regional leaders on farmers' rights. AFFM-FTUM has developed a partnership with Asian Farmers Association and AsiaDhrra, including the implementation of IFAD-EU funded MTCP2 project.

Type D - National economic FOs

Myanmar Fruit, Flowers and Vegetables Producers and Exporters Association (MFVP)⁴⁰

MFVP has been established in 2006 with a registration under the Ministry of Commerce. It has been under the Umbrella of UMFCCI (Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry) that hosts 54 different associations in its building at Yangon.

The general objective of MFVP is to provide tropical and temperate fresh and processed quality fruits and vegetables for the consumer.

The main mandates of MFVP are:

- Encouraging and supporting fruits and vegetable producers to be able to produce fresh and high quality safe fruits and vegetable up to export quality and packaging standard.
- Enhancing coordination, cooperation and networking among the fruit and vegetable farmers (producers), crop buyers, wholesalers, distributors, exporters and suppliers of support services.

MFVP has applied for registration under the Company Act at Ministry of Planning three years ago but the process has been hindered by Ministry of Agriculture (MoAI) that did not want them to emerge as an autonomous association. Eventually, MoAI has endorsed their application for registration as an association and they have received the registration card.

MFVP gathers 3000 members through their headquarters in Yangon, and in total 40,000 members in the country. The structure is developed through 27 clusters that are both commodity (mango, tea, mushroom, vegetable, watermelon, coffee...) and region/state based, except for 8 cluster that are nation-wide because they cover smaller commodities. 14 employees are working for the organization, with a large majority in Yangon.

Clusters are autonomous in their decision-making and actions. They gather all actors of the value chains (farmers/producers, traders, processors, transporters) but it's not clear how governance and

³⁹ <http://column.global-labour-university.org/2013/07/on-labour-organisations-in-myanmar.html>

⁴⁰ Based on observations from Pierre Ferrand (January 2015) completed by the research team.

power is shared among these actors that might have diverging interests. According to MFVP headquarters, there is a recent interest among some clusters to involve more smallholder farmers as they represent large amount of produce. Up to now, clusters seemed to have mostly relied on larger farmers (coined *producers*), traders and processors without much consideration for smallholder farmers.

MFVP has a farmer market corner inside Thiri Mingalar market in Yangon. They also provide access to their members to Muse commodity market. They also provide training, educational material and excursions to their members, mostly through the clusters.

MFVP is currently receiving international technical assistance from GIZ with an international advisor. MFVP has contacts with USAID, FAO, ADB and is about to sign Memorandum of Understanding with Government of the Netherlands on vegetable seed production.

Myanmar Farmers Association (MFA)⁴¹

The Myanmar Farmers Association has been established in 2012 as a member organization of the Myanmar Rice Federation (see diagram below), along with other member organizations that were already in place. Its creation comes from the initiative of a businessman, Dr. Soe Tun, with the objective of promoting the situation of farmers through greater inclusion in the rice value chain and better linkages with other business sectors.

The organization relies on a network of 250 farmer leaders in 100 townships, mostly in Ayeyarwaddy and Bago Regions but also in Mon, Shan and Kayah States. They claim to have around 200,000 farmer members who benefit from the services offered by MFA.

The main service is the provision of fertilizer on credit. Farmer leaders buy fertilizer for their whole group to MAPCO (the business branch of the MRF), while MFA acts as the guarantor of the credit. Farmer leaders then manage the fertilizer loan in their township and pay back the loan on behalf of all farmers. Input loan are for 6 months without interest rate.

Other economic services consist in technical advice: training on combined harvesters, post-harvest management, fertilizer use, demonstration of land leveling, etc. They conducted fertilizer quality tests in the first years with interesting results. In pilot townships they have also facilitated farmers' access to three-year loans from Yuzana Bank.

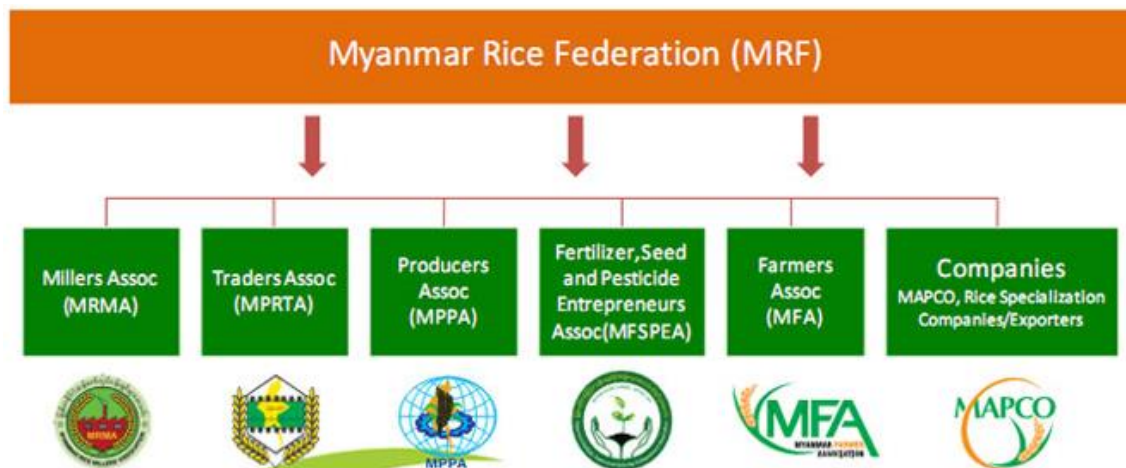
MFA has been involved in the discussions on the Farmer Protection Act by the Ministry of Agriculture. They invited about 20 farmers of organizations to attend the different meeting in the elaboration of the Act.

The status of the MFA is still unclear. They are under the umbrella of the MRF which is registered at the Union of Myanmar Chamber of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI). They employ three permanent staff at the UMFCCI office in Yangon. Resources come mostly from sponsorship by companies (members of the MRF, especially input companies). In 2014 they also received support from the World Food Programme to provide mobile phones to farmers in 40 townships to conduct a food security survey.

The unclear status of the MFA creates uncertainty about the governance. The chairman (Dr. Soe Tun) admits that he receives little support from the network of farmer leader farmers when ex-

⁴¹ <http://myanmarfarmer.org>

pressing the positions of the organization or developing new services. He recognizes that the structuring of the FO is the main challenge for the future in order to let local farmer take ownership of the organization.



Composition of the Myanmar Rice Federation (extract from MRF Brochure)

Type E - Mixed FOs

OAFADG

In Pwint Phyu Township, Magway Region, the Organic Agriculture and Farmers' Affairs Development Group (OAFADG) is a local organization that aims at helping several village groups at developing organic farming. The group was created in interaction with Pang Khu and Save the Children, when some leaders participated to trainings on organic farming. These leaders shared their knowledge in their respective villages and decided to form an organization that would help them to go further into the valorization of their production. So far they have just enquired about potential urban markets and conducted regular cross visits. They are looking for technical partnership to enter really into organic production.

Besides this *economic* function, the FO has also recently been exposed to farmers' rights and land laws by the sensitization of FRDO. The leaders of the FO are now sharing information on land rights with the grass-roots members while seeking feedback on potential issues faced by them.

So the organization has clearly these two different areas of function: economic and social. For the leaders it is consistent for a farmers' organizations to work on both as they are both needed to improve the situation of smallholder farmers.

To date, OAFADG has members in 5 villages but doesn't keep individual members directory. They were not registered in July 2015 as they didn't face the need for registration.

The leaders recognize that the structuring of the FO is still very loose as it relied on volunteer work from a handful of lead farmers. According to them, the development of more professional service provision by OAFADG would require effort in organizational development (structuring, governance, management).

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ANNEX 3 - Composition of the research committee

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U Ye Min Thant, FSWG

Ms. SiuSue Mark, Pyoe Pin

Dr. Ohnmar Khaing, FSWG

U Kya Moo, MyanDHRRA

ANNEX 4 - Data collection framework⁴²

**Farmers' Organisations Interview
Data entry table**

Table to be filled after the interview – Not to be used during the interview

Name of the FO: _____

Date of the interview: _____

Place of the interview: _____

Region/State of data collection: _____

Name(s), organisation(s) and contact(s) of the interviewer(s): _____

Name(s) and position(s) of the person(s) interviewed: _____

A) PRESENTATION OF THE FO	
<p>1) History of the FOs – background:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Key events - Main achievements - Leadership (origin, involvement) 	
<p>2) Why they established the FO?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mission 	<p>Answer from FO:</p>

⁴² The frame has been adapted to fit in the annex. The original frame was designed to be filled in handwriting by the interviewer.

	Perception of the interviewers (confidential):
3) Objectives (can be mixed with topic 2)	

B) ABOUT MEMBERS	
1) Number of members (approximate)	
2) Membership fees (in detail)	
3) Type of farmers (farming activities, practices, acreage, ethnics)	
4) Services / Supports received by farmers	

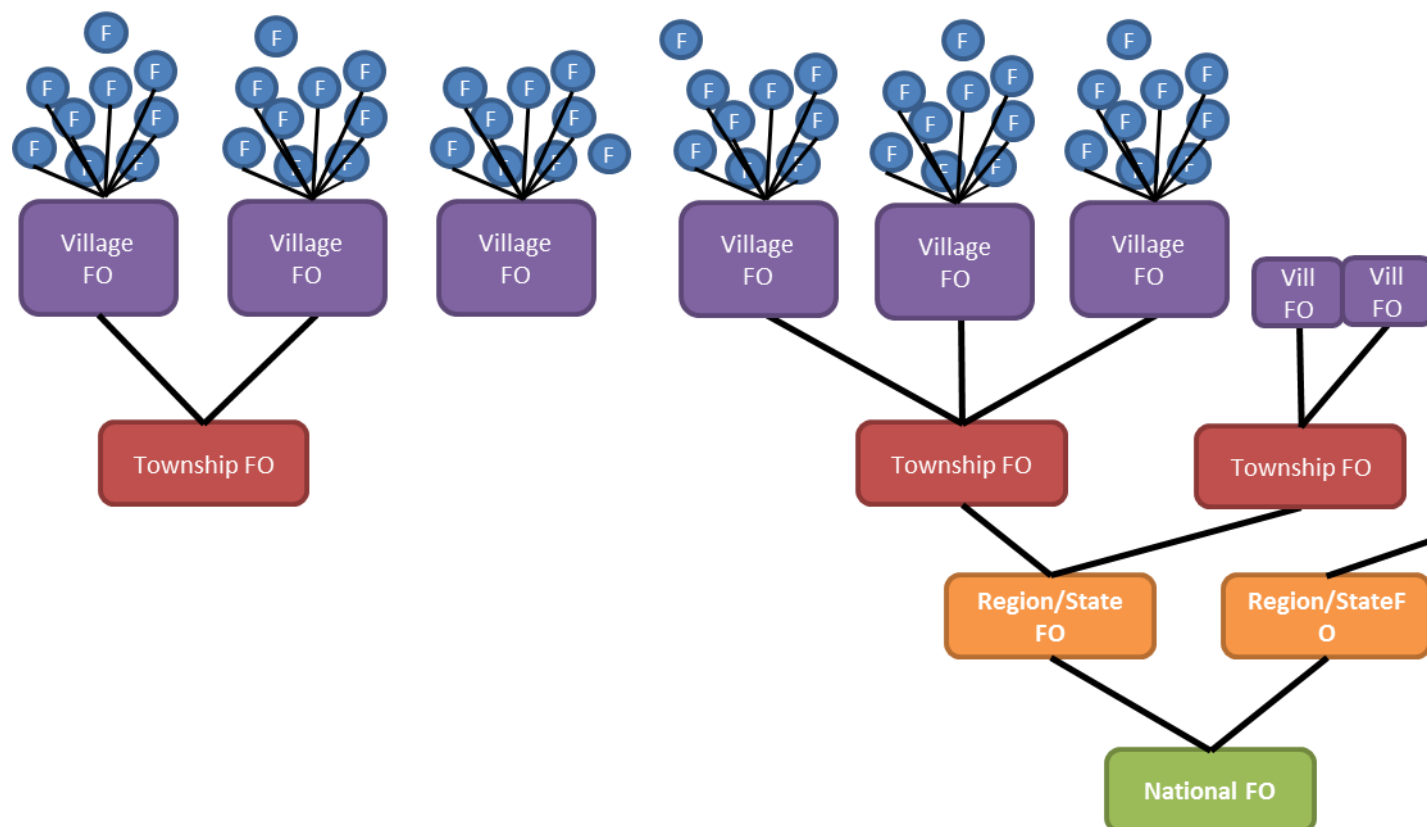
C) HOW IS THE FO WORKING? (Functioning)
--

1) Structure and governance	Answer from FO:
	Perception of the interviewer (confidential):
2) Financial resources and funding sources	
3) Partners and collaborations (NGOs, Donors, CSOs, Gvt, private sector)	
4) Networks, federations and alliances	

D) FUTURE AND CHALLENGES	
1) Future plan or strategic plan	
2) Prospects for formal registration (if not yet achieved)	
3) Challenges and needs	

E) Annexes: Identity Sheet and Covered Areas Sheet

ANNEX 5 - Illustration of farmers' organization structuring



- Structuring is the action of making arrangements among a complex entity. Here, structuring is used to describe the strength of the linkage between the different levels of farmers' organizations (the black line in the diagram above) as well as the number of tiers starting from grass-roots level.
- In a 'model' FO structure, the grass-roots members are the basis for all decisions taken at all levels. The direction and strategy at each level come from the lower level's decision.
- The quality of this structuring, down to the basic groups, ensures that each level is well working for the interests of the farmers it is representing.
- Structuring implies:
 - o Governance (election, transparency, accountability)
 - o Information sharing
 - o Focus on the provision of services that are profitable for grass roots farmers

- When a national FO is taking a decision to start collaboration with a research institute, the decision has to be validated by region/state FO to make sure it serves the interests of its members.
- The diagram is no accurate in showing that one farmer is member of only one FO, and that one village has only one FO. Actually, farmers create FOs based on the services they need and the interest they share with other farmers. Farmers are usually members of several that may specialize in one type of crop or animal breeding, or in one service (e.g. financial services are often handled by specialized FOs).
- The number of tiers (= levels of structuring) is not fixed. It depends on several factors:
 - o Number of basic FOs
 - o Interest for the FOs to join their efforts at the different levels
 - o Capacity to discuss collectively the decisions and positions without being overwhelmed by the number
 - o Type of services provided by the FOs
- Often, FOs remain at a lower level of structuring without creating region/state and national federation. The structuring at higher levels only comes from the need to develop interactions at such levels in order to improve the quality of the services provided to the members. If the services can be well provided at only local levels, then there is no need to join at national level.
- The question of structuring is linked to the one of representativeness. With a weak structure, the representation of grass-roots farmers is often limited. For example, when a national leader is speaking to a minister, the position carried there has been agreed at all levels, on a majority or consensus base. And the information given by the minister is shared in return towards all the members.

ANNEX 6 - List of FOs interviewed

See the farmers' organizations directory (including names, locations, types of FO and contact) available upon request from the Food Security Working Group (fswg.communicationsofficer@gmail.com).

The Emergence of Farmers' Organizations in Myanmar

A Mapping Study – December 2015

This study aims at understanding the dynamics of farmers' organisations in Myanmar.

The first finding is the lack of clarity and shared understanding on farmers' organizations in the country. Even the term *farmers' organization* is subject to a variety of perceptions. The report tries to elaborate a definition that applies to the country specificities. This definition shows the importance of taking into account several dimensions of farmers' organizations such as: membership, functions and funding and structuring.

A typology of the farmers' organizations that have been interviewed during the research is developed, including case studies. The report highlights the current trend in the emergence of local farmers' organizations, and their role in delivering social and economic services to their members, despite the lack of recognition and support from other stakeholders (local and national governments, donors and NGOs).

Recommendations are given to enhance the role of farmers' organizations and help them represent farmers genuinely. Specific recommendations are directed at the Food Security Working Group.

A study conducted by



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