

LIFT

Legacy Series:

LIFT's programmes have generated a wealth of information across themes and regions in Myanmar. LIFT launched a Legacy Series in 2017 to share this learning with its partners and stakeholders. This series will reflect on LIFT programmes and will look to the future of development programming in Myanmar.



Legacy Paper No.1

Learnings from Kyaukpyu and Tat Lan II



Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund



Learnings from Kyaukpyu and Tat Lan II

“Trust is complicated”

- Oxfam, Tat Lan Team Member

One of LIFT’s Tat Lan projects in Rakhine concluded in early 2017 providing an opportune moment to reflect on some of the lessons from this work. The project, implemented by Oxfam and Scholar Institute, supported greater social accountability in the complex and conflict-affected area of Kyaukpyu and succeeded in carrying out the first public hearing forums of their kind. This legacy paper focuses on how they developed and maintained trust amongst stakeholders, and the role trust had to play in establishing greater social accountability.¹

Tat Lan Programme

Tat Lan is a sustainable food security and livelihoods programme committed to building the resilience of 259 environmentally vulnerable and impoverished village communities in remote Rakhine State locations. Tat Lan is implemented in Pauktaw, Minbya and Myebon by Save the Children, in Myebon and Minbya by the International Rescue Committee (IRC), and in Kyaukpyu by Oxfam and Better Life Organization, BLO.

During Tat Lan II (2016-2018) Oxfam and Scholar Institute partnered to deliver a project to ensure community development and sustainable livelihood opportunities were supported by socially accountable governance. Oxfam and Scholar Institute, with expertise from Earth Rights International and the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), worked to support the empowerment of 68 communities, 10 civil society organisations (CSOs), five local government departments and Kyaukpyu’s Members of Parliament, building on work done in Tat Lan I.

¹ Oxfam will also be producing a learning note on social accountability in conflict contexts in Rakhine and Kachin. A preview of the findings can be found in the following blog: <https://myanmar.oxfam.org/blog/top-5-tips-social-accountability-conflict-ideas-myanmar>

Key Findings

- Trust between stakeholders is an end in itself when building good and socially accountable governance.
- Key to the success of this project was building strong working relationships and strategic partnerships. Oxfam and Scholar Institute complemented each other and together had the skills, experience and local knowledge to build trust with the local stakeholders and support the establishment of a more socially accountable social contract.
- Engaging with a range of stakeholders is also important as it ensures that there are multiple entry points for building relations, and supports a holistic understanding of the complex nuances of stakeholder relations.
- Transparent and open communication between stakeholders is important. Building the capacity of stakeholders to communicate and lead as well as creating new spaces for engagement was key to enabling trust to develop and for greater social accountability to be established.
- Conflict sensitive programming is important for building trust. It requires the continuous analysis and reanalysis of the context and how programmes are interacting within the context. Adapting and responding to the evolving context is key.

The pro-democracy movement that swept across Myanmar in the years prior to the 2016 elections and Aung San Suu Kyi's rise to power is changing the relationship between the government and the people of Myanmar.

Whilst these changes support an enabling environment for greater social accountability, and have in some cases been accompanied by greater space for civil society,² much of Myanmar's society remains fragmented and marred by conflict. Supporting greater social accountability in Rakhine remains highly challenging and requires building trust in a wary and complex context.

Kyaukpyu

Kyaukpyu Township is a poor township in Rakhine, with communities predominantly relying on farming, fishing and casual labour. It has a natural deep sea harbor, natural gas and is the proposed site for one of Myanmar's special economic zones (SEZs). SEZs are designated areas with special economic regulations that tend to favour foreign direct investment and increase trade and investment. It is believed that the construction of the SEZ in Kyaukpyu is imminent and 250 acres of land have already been demarcated for the initial phase.



The research and literature identifies a range of factors that contribute towards the building of trust, including: credibility, reliability, intimacy, self-orientation, competence and communication.³ This paper identifies: (1) strong and strategic partnerships; (2) communication and transparency; and (3) conflict sensitivity as key factors that enabled Oxfam and Scholar Institute to establish trusting relationships between stakeholders, hold public hearing forums and facilitate greater social accountability in the conflict-affected region of Kyaukpyu.



Daw Nu Nu Yee, 39, from remote Min Gan village, participated in a public hearing forum organised by Oxfam and Scholar Institute and engaged with government officials on village development issues. She is the leader of her local women's group, formed with help from Oxfam and Scholar Institute, which participates in village development activities such as road renovations, building a fence around the village pond and improving education facilities in the village. - Photo by Oxfam, 2016.

² LIFT's Household survey found that between 2013 and 2015 the number of surveyed villages with community-based organisations (CBOs) increased from just over half to 90 per cent: LIFT, LIFT Household Survey, 2015. Such changes were also recorded in LIFT's qualitative monitoring series: QSEM 6, 2016.

³ Penn State, Centre for Economic and Community Development, The Role and Importance of Building Trust (2017) <http://aeese.psu.edu/research/centers/cecd/engagement-toolbox/role-importance-of-building-trust/>; Oxfam, From Poverty to Power, (2016), <https://oxfamblogs.org/fp2p/is-trust-the-missing-piece-in-a-lot-of-developmentthinking/>

Strong and strategic partnerships

Oxfam and Scholar Institute's partnership lay at the centre of their project. Oxfam brought international expertise and experience in governance work and helped build the capacity of Scholar Institute to deliver effective governance trainings and build stakeholder relations. Scholar Institute brought an in-depth understanding of the local context and the ability to foster truly trusting relationships with government representatives and key civil society stakeholders.

Scholar Institute's insight and position as a local organisation was highly valuable within the Kyaukpyu context. It became clear during the project that misinformation on the activities of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) was common, and that many were suspicious of international non-governmental organisations (INGOs). Scholar Institute had a high proportion of ethnic Rakhine staff and a good relationship with Rakhine State government representatives and local communities. This gave Oxfam and Scholar Institute greater insight into how best to engage with stakeholders and into the complexities of stakeholder relations. It also helped the project gain credibility and to become more trusted in the eyes of their stakeholders.

Oxfam and Scholar Institute dedicated time and resources to establishing ways of working and a common understanding and established a strong and strategic partnership. Their experience highlights the importance of forming the right partnerships and the value of local partners and knowledge.

Communication and transparency

Oxfam and Scholar Institute further built and reinforced trust between stakeholders by promoting proactive, continuous and transparent communication between all stakeholders.

Oxfam and Scholar Institute carried out communication, facilitation and leadership training sessions with local leaders, community leaders, village tract administrators, parliamentarians and members of local civil society organisations. These training sessions built the capacity of civil society organisations and village leaders to represent their communities and communicate their needs.

The trainings and activities also leveraged the good will of government officials and equipped them with the tools required to be more socially accountable. This good will of behalf of government representatives also helped build greater trust between the authorities, Scholar Institute and Oxfam.

The work of Oxfam and Scholar Institute was innovative in Kyaukpyu and culminated in the first public hearings of their kind. However at first their plans for public hearing forums were approached with apprehension. To overcome this Oxfam and Scholar Institute dedicated time to explaining the purpose and value of these forums and maintained transparent communication with government representatives. Scholar Institute also gave authorities the communities' questions before the hearings. This enabled the authorities to prepare and cemented trust with the communities who knew their concerns would be expressed and heard.

This technique also enabled more tangible and positive outcomes from the forums. Indeed at these forums government representatives offered

real commitments to resolving situations to the people of Kyaukpyu. For example, government representatives investigated missing Form 7 land registration applications and provided the parties in question with their certificates. They also revised a tax that had been newly imposed on market sellers. The government's commitments and delivery on their promises reinforced the emergent trust between the communities and the authorities.

Communication and transparency lay at the core of Oxfam and Scholar Institute's approach and enabled stakeholders to come together at public hearing forums, marking a key milestone in the history of governance in Kyaukpyu. After the project ended Scholar Institute received a request from parliamentarians in Kyaukpyu to facilitate a similar public forum, highlighting how communication and trust supported a sustained desire for greater social accountability in Kyaukpyu.

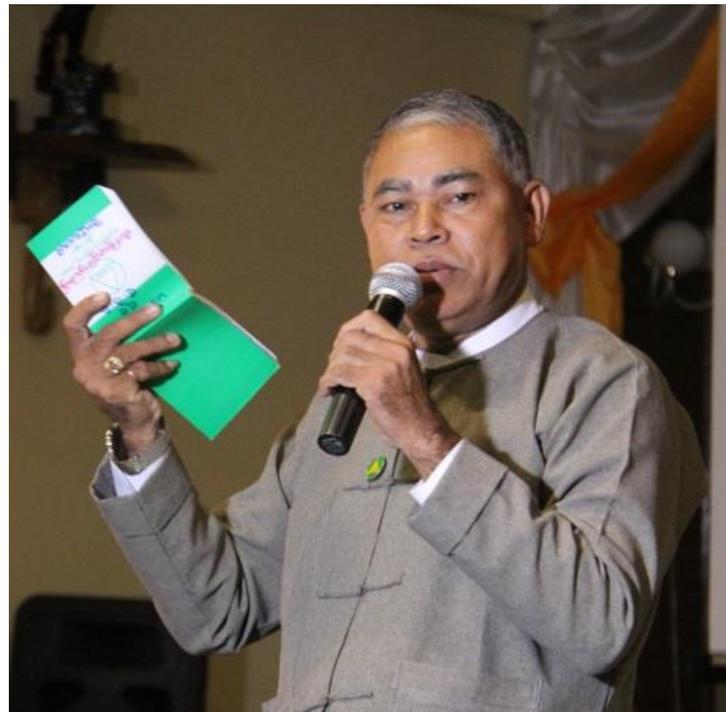
This project also highlights that whilst tangible results from the forums were important, achieving greater communication and trust amongst stakeholders was an end in itself.

“I will listen to the voice of the people and will try to respond to people's needs with the relevant MPs and department. Citizens must speak up and point out actions of the government that should be done differently”

- MP, opening remarks at Public Hearing Forum, 2016

Conflict sensitivity

Conflict sensitivity was another key factor in determining how Oxfam and Scholar Institute built trust. Violence erupted in 2012 in Rakhine and tensions remain with many internally-displaced people still in camps. Working within this context carries the risk of inadvertently causing or exacerbating these tensions. To combat this Oxfam and Scholar Institute took a conflict sensitive approach to project design and implementation. Oxfam and Scholar Institute used a 'do no harm' assessment produced during Tat Lan I, a report published by CDA and internal assessments to analyse the context and guide its conflict sensitive approach.⁴



U Maung Tun Win, Deputy Director of the Rakhine State Education Department, explained how the education budget is allocated in Kyaukpyu township. He also asked participants to visit him in his office in Sittwe to discuss education issues. - Photo by Kalika Bro-Jorgensen, 2016

⁴ CDA, Reshaping Engagement: 'Perspectives on Conflict Sensitivity in Rakhine State, (2016) Rhttp://cdacollaborative.org/publication/reshaping-engagement-perspectivesconflict-sensitivity-rakhine-state-cda-collaborative/

Fundamental to Oxfam and Scholar Institute's approach to conflict sensitivity was working through a range of partners. Engaging with stakeholders across the communities and with different civil society actors and government representatives enabled Oxfam and Scholar Institute to spread the risk associated with focusing on one stakeholder group and increased their chances of building and maintaining trusting relationships amongst the range of stakeholders. Engaging with a wider network also enabled them to unravel the nuances of stakeholder relations and governance systems in Kyaukpyu.

Other conflict sensitive approaches included maintaining a strong field presence, regular contact with stakeholders and transparent communication. Conflict sensitive materials that explained the organisations' and programme's mandate were produced to support these communications and ensure that project messaging was clear, culturally sensitive and relevant to the context.

Furthermore, to ensure that the context was continually analysed, and that the impact of the project was continually reviewed, Oxfam and Scholar Institute developed the conflict sensitivity skills of those in the field. CDA and Oxfam's conflict advisor conducted a training session for Tat Lan staff on conflict sensitivity and identified a conflict sensitivity focal person in the Kyaukpyu office. This built the team's mediating, negotiating and facilitation skills, effectively institutionalising conflict sensitive approaches and ensuring they were maintained throughout the project cycle.

These actions helped to minimise the potential negative effects of the programme and highlighted the need to continuously adapt to the context to build trust amongst stakeholders.

Concluding remarks

Oxfam and Scholar Institute used a range of interacting and overlapping approaches and succeeded in building solid and trusting relationships with stakeholders. Building strategic and strong partnerships, maintaining open communication and transparency between stakeholders, and adopting a conflict sensitive approach were all key ingredients. This trust enabled Oxfam and Scholar Institute to significantly strengthen civil society in Kyaukpyu, and reshaped the relationship between stakeholders. Trust was in many ways an end in itself and an important milestone in the development of more social accountable governance in Kyaukpyu.

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Front cover photo by Oxfam, 2016

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