

Fish for Livelihoods Newsletter

Issue 5, October - December 2020

Fish for Livelihoods:

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funded Fish for Livelihoods project aims to increase fish production, labor productivity, food availability, and fish consumption especially for women and children from vulnerable households. It provides opportunities for entrepreneurial activities in small-scale aquaculture systems and promotes social behavioral change messages that direct home production and market purchases towards nutritious-conscious household decisions.

Fish for Livelihoods is being implemented in five inland states and regions in Central and Northern Myanmar: Mandalay, Magway, Sagaing, Shan, and Kachin for a period of five years (October 2019 – September 2024). The project primarily targets small-scale aquaculture households (with small ponds <1 acre) and associated value chain actors. The project targets at least 10,000 individuals, mainly pond farmers and fish value chain market actors over 5 years of the project.

Project Anticipated Results:

Inclusive and sustainable aquaculture growth to improve nutrition and food security especially for reproductive-age women and children under five in central and northern Myanmar.

IR 1: Production. Small-scale aquaculture production increased by improved and land and water use and increased access to information, high-quality inputs, and credit.

IR 2: Increased access to food-safe fish and fish products in the markets. Access to SSA to domestic markets increased and a consistent supply of food-safe fish and fish products was ensured.

IR 3: Improved nutrition, food safety, and WASH. Improved diet diversity and consumption of safe fish products and increased access to WASH packages especially for Women of Reproductive age and children under five.



Figure 1. A woman weighing a Fish sample.

Post-Harvest/Trading and Processing Innovations in Fish Value chains:

In October, Fish for Livelihoods together with Asper Consulting conducted a post-harvest survey using Key Informants (KIs)

interviews and focus group discussion (FGD) methods with various townships. More than 30 Community Facilitators (CFs) participated in an online meeting to update on key informant interviews conducted per township, challenges experienced and ways in addressing the challenges, ways forward in conducting FGD under the COVID-19 restrictions.

The meeting provided clarity on the status of the interviews that were conducted by the CFs using Kobo application software (<https://www.kobotoolbox.org/>). Due to covid-19 restrictions imposed by the local authorities, many interviews were collected by phone instead of in person. A total of 165 market actors (fish processors, processed fish retailers, processed fish wholesalers, fresh fish retailers, and fresh fish wholesalers) were interviewed. To complement the KII, FGD was conducted to further collect data on post-harvest loss. After completion of data collection (KII and FGD), the data were analyzed to provide a clear picture of the current trading and processing activities in the project areas. Subsequently, innovative technologies/training will be identified that can help in improving the business of market actors.



Figure 2. Community Facilitators capturing post-harvest survey data.

Data Quality Assessment (DQA) by USAID:

In October 2020, a USAID delegation conducted a Data Quality Assessment (DQA) of 'Fish for Livelihoods' activity indicators. From the WorldFish side, the Chief of Party, Fish for Livelihoods, and M&E team attended the DQA. The USAID delegation took a comprehensive review of the activity's M&E systems, M&E team structure, data collection, and analysis tool, and reporting flows. WorldFish team delivered a session in which the presentation was given to the USAID delegation on M&E systems, processes, and tools adopted for M&E. DQA help strengthened internal processes and systems of Fish for Livelihoods. This helps to identify gaps in the system and then filling those gaps adequately. Internal controls; process and procedures, became strengthened, robust, and vivid

Feed Trials at Nyaung Shwe Township, Southern Shan State and Madaya township, Mandalay:

To assess the performance of different types of fish feeds on fish production and profitability, two feed trials were set up at two different locations in Myanmar. The initial locations where the trials were set up are Nyaung Shwe township in southern Shan state and Madaya township in the Mandalay region. The sampling data of these trials are being collected weekly. The sampling data provided useful insights on the development of fish exposed to different treatments. The monitoring helped in the identification of early fixes and comparison amongst different treatments. These trials will scale up after completion based on performance from different treatments.



Figure 3. Feed Trial set-up in Madaya.



Figure 4. A Community Facilitator facilitating a session near a pond.

Field Monitoring visit to grow-out ponds:

A rare opportunity amid the COVID-19 pandemic was taken when the 'Fish for Livelihoods' field team visited five (5) grower ponds with Aquaculture Promoters (APs) and Community Facilitators (CFs) in Salin township, Magway. The team assessed the fish sample and the pond conditions. Some ponds are with better water quality and, fish weight. The water quality is not good for some of the ponds because of their location in the village. The field team explained to farmers about feed conversion ratio (FCR), and how to improve water quality along with the removal of harmful aquatic weeds. One of the challenges with farmers is that they are not available with the cast net. These visits helped to generate data and evidence on what has been happening in the field with SSA farmers. WorldFish and IPs staff of Fish for Livelihoods may utilize this evidence and data and track the activity progress. These in-person visits are vital in the midst of the COVID-19 crises and travel restrictions – wherever they are permitted to do.

World Fisheries Day social media posts and stories:

1. 'Fish for Livelihoods' in collaboration with the USAID Burma Communications team aired posts on social media to commemorate World Fisheries Day on November 21, 2020. These posts highlighted and celebrated the successes and achievements of year-1 on what has been achieved so far to capacitate SSA farmers in 14 townships in 5 regions/state (s) of Myanmar. These social media posts reached broader external audiences and helped generate higher visibility of the Fish for Livelihoods activity.

2. A total of 108 million women and men catch, process, and trade fish from small-scale fisheries - it is these people at the heart of WorldFish's research and whose often-unheard voices we must help to elevate. On World Fisheries Day, WorldFish published an article as live experiences from fishers – Fish for Livelihoods Myanmar was part of this initiative as well. One of the stories covered a participant from the "Fish for Livelihoods" activity. This can be accessed at the link; (<https://worldfish.exposure.co/lived-experiences.%E2%80%AF%E2%80%AF%20T>). This helped Fish for Livelihoods to share the current experiences and the positive impacts on communities associated with fish as their primary

livelihoods, source of fish for household consumption, and earning source.

New Farmers Selection by Implementing Partners for Year-2:

'Fish for Livelihoods' Implementing Partners (IPs) have identified new SSA farmers from both existing (year-1) and scaling (year-2) townships. In aggregate, an estimated 1,200 grow out SSA farmers and 150 fishers are identified from 21 townships and two lakes; Inle lake committee and Pehkon Lake Conservation Committee. These SSA farmers and fishers will be the key project participants in year 2. It is noteworthy that the project participants' family members will be exposed to various types of interventions around aquaculture, nutrition, WASH, and sanitation in year 2 (Oct 2020 till Sep 2021). The activity will also continue to extend support to year 1 participants, their family members, and existing market actors. The plan is to select and support around 4,000 individuals in year 2. The identified SSA farmers will learn, adapt and adopt Better Management Practices (BMPs) on SSA, nutrition, WASH and be benefited through accessing services. IPs are selecting farmers and their family members based on a defined criterion and aiming to build their knowledge and capacity so that they could increase fish production and increase consumption that ultimately will lead towards sustainable livelihoods for them.

The baseline of lake authorities thru Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):

As part of continuous adapting through learning, 'Fish for Livelihoods' planned concrete interventions with two of the major lakes in Myanmar; Inle lake and Pehkon lake. The activity engaged Inle Lake

Committee (ILC) and Pehkon Lake Conservation Committee (PLCC) as IPs. To ascertain the current situation of the lakes in terms of fish catching practices, environmental hazards, climate change impacts, and potential areas to intervene, series of Focus Group Discussion (FGD) sessions were held with fisherfolks from ILC and PLCC. This work was undertaken with the help of a consulting firm, MSR. A brief and concise report was published based on the discussion with fisherfolks in both of the lakes.



Figure 5. Traditional Fishing in the Inle Lake.

The report captured the current fishing practices, knowledge, of the fisherfolks. It also looked at the broader areas including, biodiversity, effects of climate change on water in lakes, and management of the lake committees. The findings from this baseline report will inform activity interventions around lake committees in current and upcoming years. This may serve as a reference to measure and track the performance of interventions to be implemented via Fish for Livelihoods support.

Scaling Up Nutrition Civil Society Alliance (SUN-CSA) General Assembly:

'Fish for Livelihoods' actively participated in the Scaling Up Nutrition Civil Society Alliance (SUN-CSA) general assembly with over 80 participants from UN organizations, INGOs, NGOs, and selected donors,

organized by the SUN CSA secretariat. WorldFish team presented key achievements and challenges of Fish for Livelihoods activity for this year, and the Project Manager of Fedwell Foods presented their experience in Developing dried small fish powder ([Blog](#) available here). WorldFish and Fedwell's participation provided the visibility of the activities to a wider audience. The feedback and comments received from participants will further support in improving the current nutrition activities to achieve the nutrition goal set by the “Fish for Livelihoods” activity.

Monitoring & Evaluation and Training component virtual training sessions for the “Fish for Livelihoods” partners:

In December 2020, Monitoring Evaluation & Learning (MEL) and Training department, WorldFish delivered a series of virtual training sessions to all Implementing Partner (IP) staff members on the ‘Fish for Livelihoods’ data tools package. The data tools package, comprised of standardized questionnaires, templates, formats, and databases, is updated and revised based on field team learnings in year-1 and requirements outlined in the activity MEL plan. This full-day session was attended by 54 participants (IP staff = 45, WorldFish = 9) in three days, each day with a different group of participants. The training sessions would help build IP staff’s skills on how to collect, analyze, and report data using standardized format and template for the ‘Fish for Livelihoods.’ The staff primarily those who are working at the grass-roots level are now more aware, knowledgeable, and informed on how to capture and report data. They are cognizant of the importance of indicators data collection and, how the collected data will inform and tell stories about Myanmar at the higher level to internal and external audiences.



Figure 6. Participants during M&E training session.

Facilitators Skills Training Sessions for WorldFish and IP Staff:

In December 2020, training sessions on facilitation skills to the ‘Fish for Livelihoods’ team including IPs staff members were delivered. The main objectives of this training were to; 1) understand the adult learning theories and principles, 2) learn how to carry out different types of participatory activities in the communities, and 3) build confidence to identify and solve problems. The sessions were facilitated by LEARN project team from Save the Children and attended by IP staff members including Team Leaders, Community Facilitators, and Aquaculture Promoters. This capacity-building initiative supported in acquiring and aiding facilitation and communication skills among the participants that will help boost their confidence when conducting training and meetings among various stakeholders in the project areas. This helps in providing effective and quality interventions in the communities that Fish for Livelihoods are working on along with hands-on skills to solve basic community problems.

Creation of Revolving Funds for Inle Lake Committee and Pehkon Lake Conservation Committee:

Access to financial resources is one of the most important and impactful resources for a community. To empower fisherfolks in Myanmar, 'Fish for Livelihoods' established a group microcredit program, revolving fund, each in collaboration with the lake committees; Inle Lake Committee (ILC), and Pehkon Lake Conservation Committee (PLCC). The main purpose of creating revolving funds is to ensure that the fisherfolks can access credit to invest in fisheries, aquaculture, and other livelihood activities. As part of the first loan cycle, loans were disbursed to 45 fisherfolks (three groups) at the Inle lake region. Apart from microcredit, the activity will further support financial literacy training to build financial management capacity at the community level. The creation of revolving funds and loan disbursements in groups will help facilitate fisherfolks to operate more freely with increased access to finance. It will help them to invest this loan into their existing or new micro-businesses primarily around fisheries and aquaculture. Amplified economic activity due to loan disbursements will create positive effects on fish production, income, and create more livelihood opportunities for associated communities in the longer run.



Figure 7. Loan disbursement at the Inle Lake.

GIFT Tilapia brood transportation



Figure 8. GIFT Tilapia releasing in a pond.

'Fish for Livelihoods' activity transported 2,250 GIFT (Genetically Improved Farmed Tilapia) Tilapia broods from Net Ye Kan hatchery to newly established GIFT Tilapia hatchery in Kyone Ywar village in December 2020. The survival rate during transportation was 100 %. On average, the weight of the broods was 40 grams. The male and female brood were kept together for two weeks initially, and then they were separated. The water depth was three (3) feet when the fish are stocked in the hapas. The depth of the water gradually increased to 4.5 feet within the first two weeks and the feed was applied to the broods. The key of this activity is to promote GIFT tilapia in Myanmar. GIFT is an improved strain of Nile tilapia that grows more than 30 percent faster and has a higher survival rate than other strains.

For more information about the project and to access communications products, please visit the link given below;

<https://www.worldfishcenter.org/content/fish-livelihoods>