

# Fish for Livelihoods (F4L) Newsletter

Issue 9, October - December 2021

## Fish for Livelihoods:

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funds the Fish for Livelihoods (F4L) Activity, which 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 (SSA) 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 5 years (October 2019 – September 2024). The *Activity* primarily targets SSA households with small ponds <0.5 acre (2,000m<sup>2</sup>) and associated supply chain actors. The *Activity* targets at least 10,000 individuals, mainly pond farmers, and fish supply chain market actors, over the 5 years of the *Activity*.

## Activity anticipated results:

Inclusive and sustainable aquaculture growth to improve nutrition and food security, especially for reproductive-age women and children under 5 years of age in central and northern Myanmar.

**IR 1: Production.** Small-scale aquaculture production increased through improved 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 of SSA farmers 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 5 years of age.

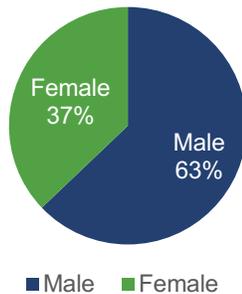


**Figure 1.** A woman washing her hands with tippy tap provided by the Activity in Seikphyu Township.

## A. Scaling up interventions in the existing townships:

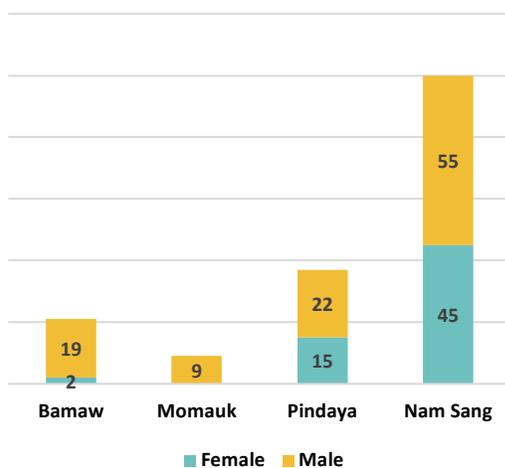
**1. Small-scale aquaculture (SSA) farmer selection in Kachin and Southern Shan States:** The WorldFish-led *Activity* is in its third year of implementation and is assisted by sub-grantees who are delivering services to SSA farmers in the field. These partners include BRAC, PACT, IWMI, KMSS, and MFF. The *Activity* identified

and selected 167 (male=105, female=62) new SSA farmers from several townships in the Kachin Region and Southern Shan State. Amongst the newly identified farmers, 37 percent are female and 63 percent are male SSA farmers (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Proportion of male and female among newly selected farmers.

In Kachin, the *Activity* selected nine male farmers and 21 (male=19, female=2) farmers from Momauk and Bamaw Townships, respectively. In Southern Shan, 37 (male=22, female=15) farmers and 100 (male=55, female=45) farmers were selected from Pindaya and Nam Sang Townships, respectively. Figure 3 below depicts the graph for each of the townships in Southern Shan and Kachin.



**Figure 3.** Gender composition of newly selected SSA farmers by township.

Prudent selection of SSA farmers is critical for the successful implementation of activities in the Townships. All selected farmers will participate in the *Activity's* work throughout the year. They will receive a series of SSA module training sessions during the fish growing season that will increase their knowledge of aquaculture techniques and practices. This increased knowledge will translate into additional income and benefits even beyond the *Activity*. The supported SSA farmers will continue culturing fish appropriately and will have a sustained aquaculture income and resultant access to nutritious food in the long run.



**Figure 4.** A staff member explains to newly selected farmers from Kachin State the assistance that the Activity will provide them.

## 2. Revolving fund for fisherfolk in the Inle Lake Region:

Fisherfolks operating in the Inle Lake Region are engaged in fishing, fish processing, and growing vegetables, either for their own consumption or to sell the produce in the local markets. The commercial activities require capital and technical assistance for the sustainable management of the lake if fisherfolks are to maintain their market share under a changing climate.

A very important aspect of operating a business is access to credit – it satisfies the need for capital for many small

businesses. In Myanmar, in general, and in the Inle Lake Region in particular, access to credit is limited especially when fisherfolk intend to consolidate their businesses in fisheries or the alternative aquaculture activity, and their associated supply chains as well as the post-harvest activities. The *Activity* established a revolving fund to enable the fisherfolk to access micro-credit in FY 2020. The revolving fund has been a success for the first cycle in that it has contributed to increased fisherfolk household income – though more evidence needs to be collected. To sustain the fund and fisherfolk livelihoods, the *Activity* disbursed funds for the second cycle on October 06, 2021 (Figure 5).



**Figure 5.** The *Activity* team disbursing loans to fisherfolks.

Forty-five participants attended the disbursement meeting representing three villages. The principal amount of \$7,700 (14,625,000 MMK)<sup>1</sup> was disbursed for the second cycle with a 12 months payback period. The *Activity* team and participants discussed the usage of the fund and explained how it should be invested – mainly in post-harvest activities, fish selling, and value addition work including the drying of fish, aquaculture, and homestead vegetable garden (land-based) interventions. These activities will generate

additional incomes for the borrowers that will be reinvested in the revolving fund.

At Inle Lake, the vast majority of fisherfolk are struggling to sustain their livelihoods with diminishing incomes due to COVID-19 and the political turmoil in the country. With increased access to credit through the *Activity*, fisherfolk can invest in some alternative livelihoods associated with fishing by improving fish supply chain work to improve both sustainable management and incomes for their families. Moreover, savings realized through participation in the process will be reinvested in the revolving fund. This will increase the overall portfolio of the fund and more fisherfolks will be able to benefit from this intervention.

## B. Capacity building of SSA farmers:

### 1. On-site farmer exchange workshop in Nam Sang Township, Southern Shan:

The *Activity* began building the capacity of SSA farmers in Nam Sang Township, Southern Shan with the assistance of BRAC Myanmar in early 2021. Initially, the *Activity* provided assistance in the form of in-kind contributions (seed and feed). Lately, the *Activity* has switched to technical assistance. One of the prime tasks during the implementation is to monitor the success and challenges of fish farmers. At some stage during the culture period, an exchange workshop is organized. On December 07, 2021, the *Activity* organized a one-day farmer exchange workshop. The workshop was arranged at the *Activity* field office in Nam Sang Township. Fourteen (male=11, female=3) participants, farmers who are aquaculture promoters, attended this exchange workshop in person.

<sup>1</sup> Exchange rate USD 1 = MMK 1900

The objectives of the workshop are; 1) to share knowledge of SSA experiences, techniques, and challenges by individual farmers, 2) to connect aquaculture promoters to expand their SSA businesses, and 3) to observe the technical application of aquaculture at the demonstration and nursery ponds. The participants discussed the following aspects of SSA during the knowledge-exchange sessions; fish growth rate, feeding practices, water quality control, the benefit of applying SSA technology, and the benefit of working as an *Activity* supported farmer.



**Figure 6.** A visit to pond in Nam Sang Township.

The farmer exchange workshop is a platform to share the success, needs, and challenges of the SSA businesses. This in-person workshop brings farmers together so that they can discuss individual experiences and learn from each other. This learning from the workshop and field visit will be shared with other farmers when the participants return to their respective villages. Moreover, this will help farmers to learn the success and failure of other areas, and they could improve their SSA businesses from these lessons learned. The exchange is aimed to increase the cooperation and coordination among aquaculture promoters even after the completion of the *Activity*. This will foster a sustainable relationship between farmers



**Figure 7.** A farmer sharing his experience in aquaculture with other farmers in Nam Sang Township.

and their communities beyond the completion of the *Activity*.

## C. Nutrition awareness sessions and campaigns for SSA farmers and their families:

### 1. Pre-testing of Myanmar Food-Based Dietary Guide IEC materials developed by FAO and UNICEF:

On November 11, 2021, the *Activity* participated in a virtual feedback session facilitated by Dr. Saw Eden from Save the Children. A total of 19 (female=11, male=8) staff members from WorldFish, BRAC Taunggyi, and MFF Pindaya attended the session. The participants provided comments on the food plate graphic, a visual tool that promotes the daily consumption of healthy foods by pregnant and lactating women and children under 5-year-old. The comments were then communicated to FAO and UNICEF for revision of the IEC materials to ensure appropriateness (e.g., easy to understand, attractiveness, acceptability) of the tools when disseminated to a diverse audience in Myanmar. From the session, the *Activity* team learned the process of pre-testing IEC materials that can be applied in the *Activity*. Also, *Activity* team members

learned from the nutrition discussion, which they can share within the communities where the *Activity* is working.

## 2. Nutrition information sharing session at Maina IDP Camp, Waimaw Township, Kachin:

On November 15, 2021, the *Activity* together with MFF Kachin, conducted an in-person awareness-raising event with a total of 34 (female=10, male=24) participants. The attendees learned the importance of consuming basic food groups and the role of vitamins and minerals in the body, and 2) the importance of the first 1000 days – from conception until the child’s second birthday to prevent the cycle of malnutrition. Aside from providing knowledge, the *Activity* team distributed posters, leaflets, and handwashing materials to the attendees to promote effective sanitation and hygiene practices (Figure 8).



**Figure 8.** Participants at Maina IDP camp in Waimaw Township.

The event reiterated key messages on the importance of consuming diverse foods daily to achieve good nutrition, as the consequence of malnutrition is irreversible and has long-term adverse effects on health and livelihoods. It is assumed participants will apply what they have learned and disseminate the information among their neighbors to ensure that everyone in the community achieves good nutrition.

## D. Reduction of post-harvest loss:

### 1. Meeting with fresh fish vendors in Bhamo and Myitkyina Townships, Kachin:

On December 09, 2021, the *Activity* team organized a meeting with ten fresh fish vendors. The attendees were the same vendors who received the fish display racks to support them in adopting good hygiene and food safety practices. The attendees provided an update on how they used the fish display racks. They also mentioned that they shared information on applying good post-harvest practices to improve their businesses among fish vendors/market actors in their areas.

The participants added that;

- They used the racks because they noticed that fish stays fresh longer
- They sold more fish thus increasing their income
- There is a positive response from customers
- Vendors have increased interest to participate in our activity

The meeting reinforced the message that applying good fish handling and hygiene practices among fresh fish vendors, can increase their income and provide safe fish among local consumers. Further assessment will be conducted in the coming months to determine the economic and health benefits of the activity among market actors.

## E. Participation in SUN CSA activities:

### 1. Hosting of information sharing event:

On December 02, 2021, the *Activity* team hosted an online activity with over nine participants from different local/international organizations in Myanmar. The team shared the

approaches of the *Activity*, the challenges faced, and how the team addressed the challenges for activities to continue on the ground. Through the event, the *Activity* team met other organizations who are working in different areas that may have the interest to collaborate in supporting communities in Myanmar.

## **2. Scaling Up Nutrition Civil Society Alliance (SUN-CSA) General Assembly:**

On December 7-9, 2021, the *Activity* team participated in an online event with over 75 participants from UN organizations, INGOs, LNGOs, and selected donors, organized by the SUN-CSA secretariat. As part of the event, Daw Ei Ei Phyo, M&E coordinator presented the purpose, methodology, and results of the Minimum Dietary Diversity-Women (MDDW) survey that was conducted in the second quarter of this year. She also highlighted the challenges and the measures that the *Activity* team has undertaken to make the survey successful despite the difficult situation (COVID-19 and coup) that was happening at that time. The participation of our team provided the visibility of the activities to a wider audience, and the feedback and comments support improving the current nutrition activities to achieve the goal of the *Activity*.

**For more information about the Activity and to access communication products and material, please visit the link given below:**

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