

Fish for Livelihoods (F4L) Newsletter

Issue 14, January - March 2023

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.

From October 2021 to September 2024, the *Activity* is implemented in five inland states and regions in Central and Northern Myanmar: Kachin, Magway, Mandalay, Sagaing, Southern Shan, and Eastern Shan. The *Activity* primarily targets SSA households with small ponds <0.5 acre (2,000m²) and associated supply chain actors. Over the last three years, at least 6,000 individuals, mainly pond farmers, and fish supply chain market actors, received assistance.

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 by 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 dietary 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 typical fish pond supported by F4L in Southern Shan State

A. Capacity building of SSA farmers and community awareness and orientation:

In the second quarter of the US financial year (Jan – March 2023), capacity building

and orientation of farmers, their families, and community members remained a central activity of F4L in Myanmar. F4L built capacity of 831 farmers and their family members in several events carried out in the field. Figure 2 shows capacity building statistics during period. The gender awareness sessions held at different townships trained 169 participants.

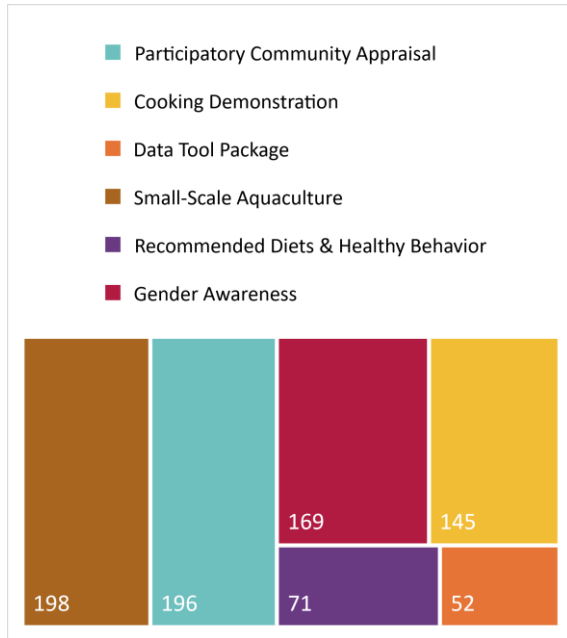
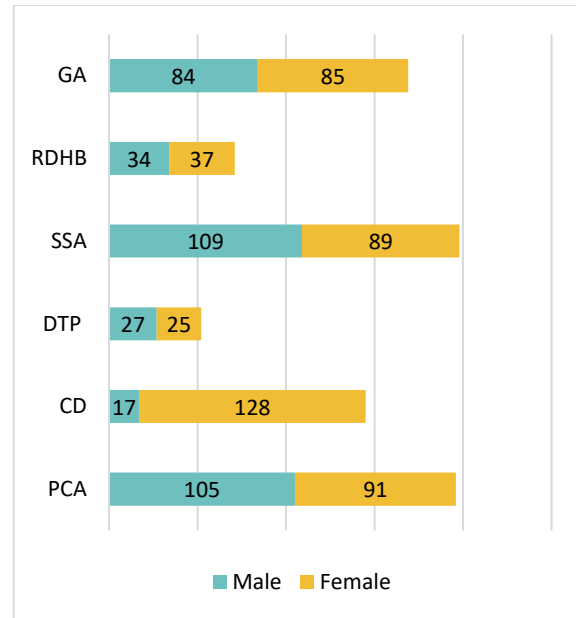


Figure 2 Aspects of capacity building carried out this quarter.

In aggregate, 55% participants are women and 45% were males attending capacity building events. Figure 3 shows the gender balance for all capacity building initiatives. It is important to note that almost a 50:50 ratio of males and females received gender awareness – an important milestone to sensitize males with awareness and empowerment of females.



GA=Gender Awareness, RDHB= Recommended Diets and Healthy Behavior, SSA=Small-scale Aquaculture, DTP=Data Tool Package, CD=Cooking Demonstration, PCA=Participatory Community Appraisal

Figure 3 Capacity building gender balance

1. Small-scale Aquaculture (SSA) Farmers selection and Participatory Community Appraisal (PCA) in Southern Shan and Mandalay:

A preliminary survey to assess SSA feasibility in the area was undertaken from November 2022 to January 2023. In the survey, SSA farmers expressed their willingness to receive assistance from F4L Activity. The survey identified 286 new farmers in total (78 farmers in Pekhon, 52 farmers in Pinlaung, 104 farmers in Nyaung Shwe and Inle, 52 farmers in Hsihseng townships respectively). To select the farmers and subsequent formation of groups based on the selection criteria, community orientation workshops and participatory community appraisals (PCA) were conducted as a broad empowerment approach that seeks to build community knowledge, assessing local conditions, problems, and opportunities using different visual tools and methods.

Participatory Community Appraisal (PCA) workshop was introduced to new Small-scale Aquaculture (SSA) farmers in Singaing Township, Mandalay. Forty participants from the village enthusiastically took part in PCA exercise (Fig. 4). The brainstorming sessions by the participants led to the mapping of their own village, listing festivities, and seasonal livelihood activities according to the Burmese lunar calendar, and community engagement with organizations. F4L has successfully selected new SSA farmers to reach the FY 2023 target in the Southern Shan and Mandalay intervention areas. Identification and subsequent selection of SSA farmers will increase the depth and outreach of F4L interventions.



Figure 4 PCA Session in Hsihseng Township

2. Small-scale aquaculture training Module (1) in Sintgaing Township, Mandalay Region: F4L Activity trained 198 – including 45% female – farmers. These training sessions covered a range of topics including F4L introduction, the nutritional value of fish and foods groups, pond management, water testing, and suitability, the role of gender, and disaster management in fish culture to mention a few (Fig. 5).



Figure 5 A glimpse of SSA farmers training session in Mandalay Region

The face-to-face training sessions were delivered successfully to 198 farmers. They received clear guidance on how to adopt better management practices (BMP), utilize increased knowledge of human nutrition, and administer pond dike cropping systems. The enhanced knowledge and techniques attained via training sessions, when practiced well, will positively impact farmers, and will result in increased production from the fishpond.

B. Nutrition, and post-harvest activities:

1. Cooking demonstration in Myothit Township, Magway:

F4L conducted an Improved Nutrition (cooking demonstration) and improved water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) practices event in Salin and Myothit Townships in Magway Region (Fig.6). The cooking demonstration was attended by 145 participants (Male=17, Female=128). Human nutrition and WASH activities are important for community building as a means of promoting improved health and productivity. These communities are now aware on the importance of consuming diverse food and adoption of good WASH practices to achieve better nutrition and good health.



Figure 6 Participants preparing for cooking in a cooking demonstration event in Myothis Township

2. Testing of improved kiln in Inle Lake, Southern Shan (Fig. 7):

F4L Activity conducted the first test production of the improved kiln for smoking fish led by the smoked fish processor himself. The testing was supervised by an international expert on improved post-harvest processing with the support of F4L colleagues based in Nyaung Shwe Township, Southern Shan State.



Figure 7 Improved fish smoking Kiln in Southern Shan

The initial results showed; 1) reduced smoking time from 12 hours to 3-4 hours, 2) reduced use of firewood for fuel, 3) better color golden-brown color vs. dark charcoal color, hence reduced polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbon (PAH) contaminants 4) reduced smoke emitted by the kiln, and 5) the improved kiln is more durable than

the traditional design. With the construction of the upgraded kiln, it supports the improvement of smoked fish quality, food safety and increased income for the fish processor. It is expected that the technology will be replicated by other fish processors in the area with the right support resulting in the availability of nutritious and safe foods for Myanmar people.

3. Good post-harvest practices training and provision of fish display rack for fresh fish retailers in Nyaung Shwe Township, Southern Shan State:

The training and demonstration on good post-harvest practices and use of fish display racks was conducted in Nyaung Shwe market. As a result of the activity, other fresh fish vendors are becoming more aware of good fish handling practices for improved food safety.



Figure 8. A F4L staff member leading a discussion on food safety practices

Fish retailers, 95% women, contributed by paying 30% of the display rack cost (Fig.9). F4L helped fresh fish retailers to gain knowledge on the importance of good post-harvest and food safety practices, and quality control. The fresh fish retailers adopted the use of fish display rack and hygiene practices instead of displaying fish on the ground.



Figure 9. Fish vendors who received fish display racks from F4L Activity

4. Recommended diet and healthy eating behavior (RDHB) for Pregnant and Lactating Women (PLW) and 2–5-year-old children training:

A total of 44 participants, with a 50:50 gender balance attended RDHB session. In Magway, the same training sessions was conducted attended by 13 participants (Males=7, Females=6). While in Nyaung Shwe, Southern Shan State, 14 participants attended the training with more than 60% women (Fig. 10).



Figure 10. A group discussing the different ingredients to use for cooking healthy meal



Figure 11. A facilitator explaining about 7 food groups and dietary diversity in Nyaung Shwe Township

The training sessions were aimed at improving the knowledge about nutrition which is essential for communities in that area. The participants learnt the current guidelines for a healthy and balanced diet suitable for Myanmar children and pregnant and lactating women (Fig.11).

Participants learnt the importance of consuming diverse food in the correct amounts daily to become well-nourished and prevent lifestyle diseases. It is expected that the participants will share the new knowledge with their colleagues and communities to ensure improved nutrition is achieved.

In partnership with

C. Gender Women and Youth:

1. International Women’s Day, 2023:

On March 08, 2023, the F4L Activity celebrated International Women’s Day (IWD) as a half day event in line with the global theme “**DigitALL: Innovation and Technology for Gender Equality**”. In total, 20 women from Salin Township, Magway Region participated in the event (Fig. 12). The women participants had the chance to discuss their opinions and personal experiences when using digital platforms. The women also identified and recognized the benefits, disadvantages, and limitations of adopting digital technology. This is the first-time celebration event in Magway by F4L. Women attendees got the opportunity to gain knowledge about the 12 key messages of the 2023 International Women’s Day theme. In their feedback, they claimed that taking part in the celebration event made them feel very proud (Fig. 13).



Figure 12 Participants at IWD 2023

2. Training of Trainers (ToT) session on Gender Equality & Inclusion



Figure 13 Gender awareness session Salin Township, Magway

Many important aspects of gender mainstreaming were delivered in TOT session. The participants from F4L partner organizations acknowledged that they gained wider knowledge on GEI (Fig. 14). This included awareness of the do-no-harm approach in the community to be able to address power dynamics and foster women's agency (capacities, self-esteem, confidence, and leadership) through male engagement. F4L is promoting improved nutritional knowledge in the community.



Figure 14 Participants during a ToT session

3. Pilot Community level Awareness Raising on Gender

F4L also conducted the pilot community level gender awareness sessions in Salin and Myo Thit Townships, Magway region with total 66 participants (Salin-Female=19, Male=12), (Myothit – Female =23, Male=12).

Furthermore, F4L Pilot Community Awareness raising was continued in Mandalay, Sagaing and Kachin as well. In Singaing Township, Mandalay Region, a total 60 participants from Tet Gyi (Female=11, Male=19) and Hin Ngu Village (Female=14, Male=16) actively joined. In Sagaing, a total 60 participants from U Yin Taw Village (Female=19, Male=13) and Hta Naung Win village (Female=16, Male=12) of Shwebo Township were trained. In Kachin, Wu Yung village of Waingmaw Township was piloted and total 50 (Female=38, Male=12) participated.

The sessions helped communities realize the concept of gender equality and equity. In addition, all-inclusion aspects towards a peaceful society were explored. This was achieved by helping participants understand the root causes of negative social gender norms in their context and how to eliminate those into positive gender outcomes as well as empowering women to become good leaders in their households for private and public through equal participation in decision making and equal access to resource allocation.



Figure 15. F4L Staff and Participants at a Gender Equality & Inclusion TOT Session in Magway

D. Cross-Cutting:

1. Refresher session for Data Tool Package:

A total of 52 (Female=25, Male=27) participants attended the session organized by F4L M&E and data team. The M&E and data team delivered presentations on how to collect the record books and use the new database templates. All the field staff are now familiar with recordkeeping books and the use of new database templates. They prepared and submitted all the different types of datasets to the M&E team and Information Education Communications and Training (IECT) team for the timely quarterly and annual reporting. In addition, feedback will be provided to IPs and beneficiaries.

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>