Nga Bei Phyu for Consumption and Savings

For rural farmer households in the Ayeyarwady Delta, Myanmar, fish is the cheapest source of animal protein in their diet.[1] However, fish stocks are declining due to illegal fishing practices, population growth, and unregulated use of pesticides which has negative implications for consumption, nutrition, and income. To mitigate these negative implications, WorldFish in partnership with the Department of Fisheries promotes sustainable growth of aquaculture in rural areas through MYCulture project- funded by Livelihoods and Food Security Fund (LIFT).[2]

U Kyaw Than Oo is a 46 years old farmer living with his wife and 2 daughters in Kyone Phae Village near Pyapon town. He used to earn money from rice farming and pig raising and buy fish at the local market. However, in recent years U Kyaw was only able to buy fish occasionally since less fish was available and the price increased.

U Kyaw Than Oo showing nga bei phyu harvested from his Chan Myaung using Dye Wun (Scoop net)

When Community Facilitators (CF) from Network Activities Group (NAG); one of the implementing partners of WorldFish visited his village to explain about aquaculture, he attended the meeting and was very interested to join the project. After participating in several trainings regarding pond preparation and management, nutrition and vegetable production, the project provided him with fish seed Nga bei phyu (Mola), Rohu and Pangasius to start his small scale aquaculture activities.

U Kyaw Than Oo shared that before adopting the technology of small scale aquaculture, his income comes from rice farming and pig raising which were not enough to support the family. With the support from WorldFish he has been able to increase his income and improve food consumption at home. He combined the growing of a small indigenous fish species like nga bei phyu, together with large fish species.

U Kyaw Than Oo said that he prefers the combination of two fish species, because he and his family are consuming an adequate amount of small fish frequently without spending money. He mentioned that besides liking the taste of small fish, he also learned that it is highly nutritious when eaten whole, thus it can help him and the family achieve good nutrition.

Previously, he had to buy the small fish such as nga daun zin, darkina, and other small pelagic fish from the local market or from fishermen from the village, and that entails spending money, time and effort to acquire food. Now that has changed as he can go to his pond anytime and can partially harvest small fish amounting to 15-20 tical (250-320 grams) per harvest every 2-3 days; enough for one meal for a family of four.

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[1] Belton, B., A. Hein, K. Htoo, L. Seng Kham, U. Nischan, T. Reardon, & D. Boughton, (2015) *Aquaculture in Transition: Value chain transformation, fish and food security in Myanmar*. International Development Working Paper 139. Yangon: USAID/Burma and LIFT by MSU,MDRI-CESD, and IFPRI, available at: http://www.fsg.afre.msu.edu/fsp/burma/Myanmar_Aquaculture_Value_Chain_Study_Report_FINAL.pdf

[2] WorldFish, (2016) *Promoting the sustainable growth of Aquaculture in Myanmar to improve food security and income for communities in the Ayeyawardy Delta and Central Dry Zone (MYFC*), Penang, Malaysia: WorldFish, Available at: https://www.worldfishcenter.org/content/promoting-sustainable-growth-aquaculture-myanmar-improve-food-security-and-income

Whilst other farmers struggled to maintain nga bei phyu in the ponds, especially during dry season when water is low and the temperature is high, he shared that measuring water temperature and maintaining correct water depth either though pumping water or using the inlet/ outlet pipes helped in sustaining the fish throughout the year. He learned the technique through the Community Facilitators and WorldFish staff.

U Kyaw Than Oo's meal consisting of rice, nga bei phyu and water cress

Other benefits he gained from farming nga bei phyu are; he can exchange the fish for labor charges when he asked neighbors to help him in the field and he can also share fish with neighbors, friends, and parents at no extra cost. He encourages other farmers to do the same by showing his ponds and also by teaching them to partially harvest the fish to increase fish consumption.

When asked of his plan for the coming year, he wants to try farming only nga bei phyu in s mall sized chan myaung (a small ditch channel) to test if the production rate will still be high without the large fish because he heard that one farmer in the village who stocked only 80 heads of mola seeds last year, and was able to harvest at least 30 viss (48 kgs). The fish was sold within the village at a price of 3,000 MMK per viss when compared to the market price of 2,000 MMK in previous year; the farmer got a very large income with less input.

U Kyaw Than Oo's message to other farmers who have not yet experienced adopting the technology is that mola is highly nutritious, has high fecundity and when the pond is managed properly, can provide food in any season of the year. And if there is a surplus of fish, they can sell it for additional income because there is a high market demand.

Name of the project: Promoting the sustainable growth of Aquaculture in Myanmar to improve food security and income for communities in the Ayeyawardy Delta and Central Dry Zone (MYFC)

Project duration: 2015-2019

Target beneficiaries: 4540 HHs

Geographical locations: Pyapon, Daedaye, Mawgyun, Kyeik Latt and Bogalay in Ayeyawarddy, Delta
Yinmarbin, Meiktila and Salin in Central Dry Zone
Nay Pyi Taw and Bago Region
Mon and Kayin State

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