



**Final Evaluation of
“An Integrated Rural Economic Development
Programme for Livelihoods Improvement in
the Dry Zone of Myanmar”**

**Implemented by United Nations Economic and Social
Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) in
partnership with Network Activities Group (NAG)**

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Revised version

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The LIFT team has provided all necessary support or the preparation and implementation of this final evaluation.

| Summary of conclusions | | | |
|---------------------------------|--|---------|---|
| Evaluation criteria | Key aspects | Grading | Key findings |
| Relevance | Project approach and focus | | The project was relevant in targeting participatory approaches to policies, institutions and processes supporting Climate Resilient Agriculture in the Dry Zone, and in focusing on three highly significant topics |
| | Quality of design | | The activities and timespan were not fully consistent with the purpose of enhancing policy development capacities and fostering multi-stakeholders' sustainable knowledge resources net |
| Effectiveness | Achievement of output 1: Establishment of Knowledge Resource Network (KRN) | | Finding 3. The project has been effective in fostering a multi-stakeholder approach to networking initiating linkages between different levels of government, civil society, farmer organizations and private sector, but failed to establish a sustainable network |
| | Achievement of output 2: Transfer of improved and environmentally sound technologies | | The work on farmer-led seed enterprise and mung bean has created awareness and generated knowledge among stakeholders; there is no clear ownership of policy recommendations |
| | Achievement of output 3: Poverty reduction through sustainable agriculture | | The project has done useful contributions in disseminating important and challenging approaches and conceptual frameworks such as PRA and farmer-led innovation. It did not achieve significant progress in policy making. |
| | Achievement of output 4: Agricultural engineering and farm mechanization | | The workshops on agricultural mechanization raised interest but case studies and policy recommendations are too generic to have real added value in response to the needs of farmers in the Dry Zone |
| | Achievement of output 5: Multi-stakeholders policy research and dialogues | | The multi-stakeholders workshops have been useful experiences of bringing together actors who seldom discuss policy issues face to face; the policy papers were too generic and consultant driven to achieve any significant effect. |
| Efficiency | Achievement of planned outreach and targets | | Despite serious delays at the onset, the project could achieve almost all relevant outputs, with good organization of workshops but more difficulties with consultants' products |
| Impact | Achievement of project purpose | | There is no impact so far in terms of mainstreaming policy recommendations emanating from the studies, although the follow up of the multi-stakeholders policy dialogues could generate some more significant effect |
| Potential sustainability | Institutional sustainability of outcomes | | There are some concrete initiatives, but no coordinated follow-up of the outcomes although the policy environment is favourable to multi-stakeholders consultation |
| Cross cutting aspects | Gender: participation of women | | The gender dimension of the project was not addressed; counting participation of women in workshops does not constitute a gender approach. |

| | | | | | | | |
|--|------------------|--|-------------------------|--|--|--|---|
| | Overall positive | | Some significant issues | | Serious issues, affected overall performance | | Strong deficiencies, threatened whole project |
|--|------------------|--|-------------------------|--|--|--|---|

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List of acronyms

| | |
|-------------|--|
| AMD | Agriculture Mechanization Department, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation |
| APCTT | Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology |
| AVRDC | The World Vegetable Centre South Asia |
| CAPSA | Centre for Alleviation of Poverty through Sustainable Agriculture |
| CSAM | Centre for Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization |
| DAR | Department of Agricultural Research |
| DoA | Department of Agriculture, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation |
| DOP | Department of Planning |
| DRD | Department of Rural Development of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Irrigation |
| KAP | Knowledge, Attitudes and Practice (survey method) |
| KRN | Knowledge and Resource Network |
| MOALI | Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation (MOALI) |
| NAG | Network Activities Group |
| PRA | Participatory Rural Appraisal |
| SATNET Asia | Network for Knowledge Transfer on Sustainable Agricultural Technologies and Improved Market Linkages in South and Southeast Asia |
| UNESCAP | United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific |
| YAU | Yezin Agricultural University. |

1 Background

1.1 Situation in the area and project background

Farmers in the Dry Zone of Myanmar face growing uncertainties linked to climate change and natural resources degradation, economic and market instability, migration and other factors. Informal, poorly developed value chains do not allow poor farmers to face these uncertainties. Incomes from traditional cash crops are increasingly volatile and indebtedness has become a major constraint. In order to sustain and improve adaptation of livelihoods, evolution of techniques, organization and articulation of value chains are more than ever necessary. A series of strategic priorities has been defined through Development Partnership fora and United Nations agencies called in for supporting them. Among the priority areas, are policy development towards sustainable and inclusive rural development, and corresponding articulation of providers of knowledge and expertise at all relevant levels.

The proposal for this project stems from the need of providing tools for mainstreaming policy recommendations and ensuring their application through the different levels of governance. The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the proponent of the project, is the regional development arm of the United Nations for the Asia-Pacific region, established in 1947. The Commission focuses its action strengthening institutional capacities through generating analysis and peer learning, promoting policy dialogues and recommendations, good development practices, knowledge sharing and technical assistance to member States. Its thematic areas of action include, among others, Macroeconomic Policy, Poverty Reduction and Financing for Development, Trade and Investment, Environment and Development etc. It manages an extensive Capacity Development Programme.

For this project UNESCAP relies on the specific expertise of four its five regional institutes:

- The Centre for Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization (CSAM), based in Beijing;
- The Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology (APCTT), based in Delhi;
- The Centre for Alleviation of Poverty through Sustainable Agriculture (CAPSA), based in Bogor with its dissemination mechanisms, among them the Network for Knowledge Transfer on Sustainable Agricultural Technologies and Improved Market Linkages in South and Southeast Asia (SATNET Asia).

In order to better understand the project approach, it is necessary to review briefly its genesis. UNESCAP supported the Government of Myanmar in 2009 and 2011 in organizing a strategic analysis of development challenges through 3 successive “Development Partnership Fora” which concentrated on the issues facing food security and rice production as a policy priority. Several project concepts and proposals were discussed, at first based on the assumption that UNESCAP might open a Regional Technical Support Office (RTSO) in Myanmar which might have included a Technical Resources Centre in the Dry Zone supporting agricultural development, in particular rice. Permanent presence would have allowed to develop long term interventions towards capacity building and creating an enabling policy environment. With that in mind, UNESCAP had established the RTSO from August 2013 to July 2014. Afterwards, the changes in the political situation in Myanmar led to the closure of the RTSO in Yangon. The ambitions had to be reviewed. The initial proposal was an ambitious project with a 5 Million budget; it went through 6 successive proposals until finally accepted, with a much reduced budget. Management of the project was delegated to CAPSA.

In order to ensure in country implementation capacity, UNESCAP established a partnership with the Network Activities Group (NAG), a non-governmental organization in Myanmar dedicated to “improving the lives of the country’s poor and vulnerable”. It was established in 2008 with the name of Nargis Action Group (NAG); afterwards registered as Local NGO with the name of Network Activities Group (NAG). It describes its mission as facilitating “social and economic development through collaborative, community-driven projects focused on empowering communities, strengthening civil society and promoting good governance.” Through a series of partnerships, it is active in most regions of Myanmar. Apart from the LIFT funded partnership with UNESCAP, it has had several interventions in the Dry zone, among them the current “Addressing climate change risks on water resources and food security in the Dry Zone of Myanmar” funded by UNDP (2016-2018).

The implementation arrangement for the project thus includes UNESCAP as implementing agency, in charge of project coordination, administration and technical backstopping; planning and implementation of activities in Myanmar are delegated to NAG, while at township level, local activities are also coordinated through NAG, with LIFT local implementation partners. Initially, six LIFT funded projects active in the Dry Zone were identified as local partners.

The project formulation was based on previous UNESCAP experience, and consultations with LIFT partners, other Development partners active in the Dry Zone such as FAO and JICA.

The geographical focus is on the central Dry Zone, including Mandalay and Magway region as well as the southern part of Sagaing region.

1.2 Theory of change

The project counts on a logical framework but not a Theory of Change as such, as it was negotiated before LIFT introduced this planning tool.

The overall goal is: *Improved enabling environment for integrated socioeconomic development in Myanmar’s dry zone in the context of inclusive and sustained development with special emphasis on livelihoods development and security.*

The main purpose of the project is *to enhance capacity of policy makers to formulate appropriate policy options by linking local-level practices, skills and knowledge with state/regional-level expertise and national level policies and practice in addition to learning shared lessons and best practices from Asia-Pacific region.*

The rationale is that by developing, advocating and training for better adapted policy options, community-based organisations and vulnerable households in the targeted dry zone will be benefitted by capacity development and gender mainstreaming, and that rural agriculture productivity will be improved through adoption of improved technologies, and farmer access to affordable services.

Some areas of technical concentration have been defined: on-farm and post-harvest losses, agricultural mechanization, and renewable energy.

Five project Outputs were developed:

- Output 1: Establishment of Knowledge Resource Network (KRN): – Increased coordination and knowledge sharing among policymakers, LIFT development partners, i.e., LIFT project implementing partners (IPs), the private sector, and local governments, through the establishment of knowledge

sharing and collaboration mechanism(s). Under this output, three key activities were planned: 1.1 Inception workshop, 1.2 quarterly partners workshops on lessons learned, 1.3 develop a knowledge resources network.

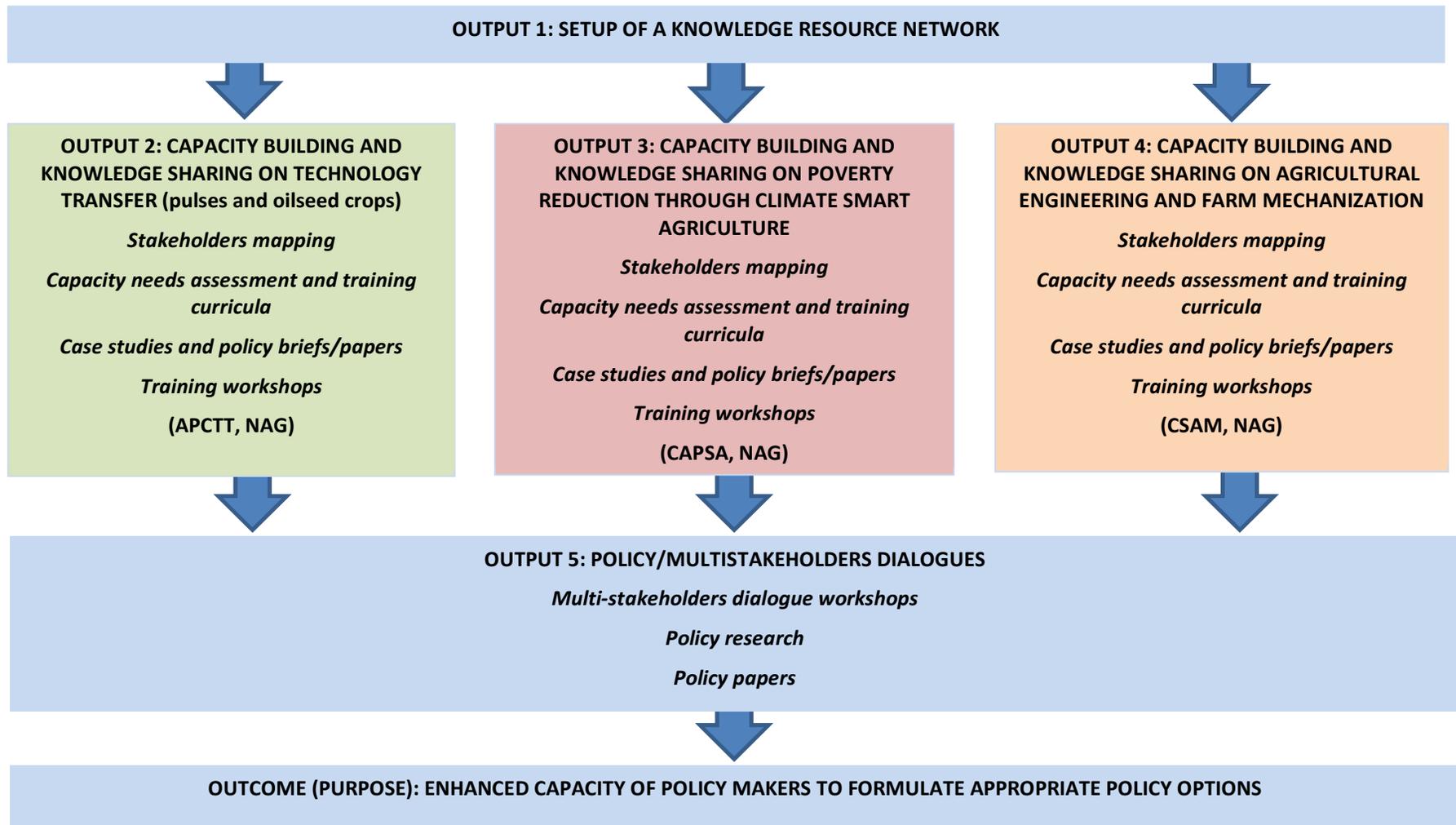
- Output 2: Transfer of improved and environmentally sound technologies: – increased capacity of policymakers and LIFT development partners to promote technology transfer of improved and environmentally sound technologies for small and medium-scale enterprise (SMEs) available locally as well as in the region. Key activities planned under this output were: 2.1 Training needs assessment and training programme development, 2.2 Training programme implementation, 2.3 specific technical advice and 2.4 compile case studies and draft policy papers.
- Output 3: Poverty reduction through sustainable agriculture: – increased capacity of policy makers and LIFT development partners to design and implement rural development and poverty reduction programmes. Key activities were 3.1 Technical assistance to identify needs and constraints, 3.2 Capacity needs assessment and training programme design, 3.3 Training programmes on policies, 3.4 compile case studies and draft policy papers.
- Output 4: Agricultural engineering and farm mechanization – increased capacity of policymakers and LIFT development partners to promote improved agricultural technologies and farm mechanization for increased food security and poverty reduction. With a similar set of activities as output 3.
- Output 5: Multi-stakeholders policy research and dialogues - Increased capacity of policymakers and LIFT development partners on policy formulation and advocacy with particular focus on rural development, poverty reduction, livelihoods improvement and food security in the dry zone of Myanmar. Key activities identified were 5.1 Organize policy dialogues, 5.2 Training programmes on policy advocacy, and 5.3 prepare policy papers based on partners' experience.

The only significant changes in the original design, concern the thematic focus of some of the outputs, was done after the discussion of the Inception workshop. Output 2 was focused specifically on pulses and oilseed crops, and output 3 on "Climate Smart Agriculture".

For the purpose of this evaluation, we have constituted a schematic theory of change summarized in Fig. 1 next page. The progress for the five outputs are discussed under effectiveness, while the project purpose is considered as the central outcome discussed under impact.



Fig. 1. Theory of change overview based on UNESCAP proposal and documents



2 Objectives and methodology of the evaluation

According to its Terms of Reference, the final evaluation will assess the achievements of the project, particularly in terms of the project's relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability, as well as review its overall approach and specific methodologies. It will summarize findings, lessons and recommendations that will inform to expected result / impact from implemented project and the design of a potential project in near future.

The specific objectives of the review include:

2.1 Address the LIFT-level evaluation questions concerning the following criteria, in relation to the project's overall approach and its individual components where appropriate:

- **Relevance:** The extent to which the project and its components are suited to: (1) the priorities and needs of the target beneficiaries; (2) LIFT's policies and objectives; and (3) the Myanmar policy and development context.
- **Effectiveness:** A measure of the extent to which the project is attaining its expected results and targets, based on the project's logical framework.
- **Efficiency:** A measure of the extent to which the project has delivered value for money, in terms of costs and major benefits.
- **Sustainability:** An assessment of the economic and, where appropriate, social and environmental sustainability, of a project. Particular focus in on whether the benefits of the project are likely to continue after donor funding has been withdrawn.
- **Gender equality:** The extent to which project design and implementation has considered gender-related differences in the roles, responsibilities and needs of the target beneficiaries and enabled greater gender equality and women's empowerment.

2.2 Address specific technical questions on the following project components:

- Best practices in Dry Zone major crops production, post-harvest management and quality control
- Business Management and improvement of custom hiring of agricultural machinery in the Dry Zone by government and private sector
- Strengthening local capacities for climate-resilient agriculture in Myanmar's Dry Zone
- Policy influence on local government on crop production, climate-resilient agriculture and custom hiring of agricultural machinery
- Online knowledge resource network discussion.

2.3 Distil lessons and good practices, as well as identify barriers to effective implementation, in order to provide meaningful and feasible recommendations for improving the project design for future potential projects. These lessons and good practices should aim to be of value for the implementing partner but also may to other similar projects and stakeholders. Thematic areas to consider for learning that are of particular interest to LIFT and implementing partners and may be relevant to this study are: inclusive value chains, and gender. Generic lessons should be avoided in favour of rich and context specific learning.

The additional detailed questions suggested in the Task Note, as well as other specific evaluation questions are included in the following evaluation table.


Table 1. Evaluation questions

| Evaluation criteria | Evaluation questions |
|---------------------|--|
| 1. Relevance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How relevant are the project's overall purpose and objectives to the needs of Myanmar? To what extent have the project strategy and project interventions been relevant to the needs of the people it intends to reach? • How relevant are the project's overall approach and components to the Myanmar socio-political context and for achieving the project's objectives? • How relevant are the project approach on knowledge dissemination to relevant government staff, private sector, individual farmers and LIFT's IP and its staff. • How relevant are the transferred technology for small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs), sustainable agriculture and farm mechanization to the requirement of targeted beneficiaries. |
| 2. Effectiveness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent has the project achieved its expected outputs and outcomes on the basis of the project logframe? Is the strategy working? To what extent has the project been effective in achieving its intended purpose and higher level outcomes, including in helping people to step up, step out and hang in? • To what extent has the project contributed to the achievement of the LIFT logframe, particularly to increasing incomes, improving the nutritional status of women and children, and improving pro-poor policy? • What have been the positive and negative unintended and unexpected consequences of the project? • To what extent has the transferred technologies and knowledge dissemination on sustainable agriculture, farm mechanization achieved in terms of replication of acquired knowledge by recipients. • To what extent has the lesson learned and impact story used by target beneficiaries (government departmental staff, private sector and farmers) as well as LIFT's IP and its staff. • What actions were taken by the target group as a result of the project interventions? • What are/will be the key obstacles of target group to applying or using the project outputs? |
| 3. Efficiency | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent has the project been implemented on budget and on time? • To what extent is the project delivering or posed to deliver value for money, as defined by costs versus major benefits? • To what extent has project delivered value-for-money against the results framework, where material / tangible benefits are measurable? • To what extent did activities involve stakeholders of the intervention (e.g. project / sub programme partners, civil society, multilateral and bilateral donors)? • To what extent has the intended knowledge dissemination and technology transferring been received by targeted beneficiaries. • To what extent has the locally available SMEs and newly stabilised SMEs fulfil the needs of farmers for farm mechanization. |
| 4. Impact | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What evidences exist to demonstrate that the project's objectives (or purpose) have been achieved? • What significant changes if any have occurred in the policy-related context? (this may be in relation to the policy itself or in the relationships between or interests among key stakeholders) |



| Evaluation criteria | Evaluation questions |
|---------------------|---|
| 5. Sustainability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent are the outcomes replicable? • To what extent has project identified and established sustainable approaches for achieving the purpose and programme outcomes after project support ends? • To what extent has the project established a viable business model for private sector provision of services and products? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent has the transferred technology, disseminated knowledge and lesson learned contributed to changes of policy and practice in sustainable agriculture and using of farm mechanization. • To what extent has the project effort in providing of sustainable agriculture practice for poverty reduction been used by farmers, LIFT's IP and concerned government departmental staff. • Are there issues or concerns regarding the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the project? • Were there barriers to the full use of human and financial resources? Did these affect men, women or other social groups? What effect did this have on efficiency? |
| 6. Gender | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent was gender integrated into the design and implementation of the intervention? <p>To what extent has the project considered gendered differences in the needs, constraints and opportunities of beneficiaries?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent have women participated equally in the project? • To what extent have men and women benefitted equally from the project? • To what extent has project contributed to furthering gender equality and women's empowerment? |

3 Methodology

The final evaluation used triangulated information from several sources:

- Review of existing project documentation and publications (see bibliography).
- Consultations with project implementation partners (UNESCAP, CAPSA, APCTT, CSAM and NAG); there was a briefing and debriefing with UNESCAP staff in Bangkok.
- Interviews with a sample of participants in the workshops and institutional partners:
- A focus group interview with representatives of Farmer Groups having participated in workshops.

The field phase lasted seven days and included interviews and meetings in Yangon, Magway and Nay Pyi Taw.

A total of 39 persons linked to the project were interviewed, representing a sample of the different categories of institutional stakeholders

| Type of stakeholders | Number of persons interviewed | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|-----------|
| | M | W |
| UNESCAP | 6 | 2 |
| NAG | 1 | 2 |
| NGOs/INGOs | 5 | 4 |
| Government (central) | 6 | 2 |
| Government (regional) | 3 | 2 |
| Farmer organizations | 5 | |
| University (YAU) | | 1 |
| Total | 26 | 13 |

The interviews followed a semi-structured pattern based on key elements of participation of project:

- Participation in workshops and other project activities;
- Feedback on quality and usefulness of process (strengths and weaknesses);
- Key learnings and application in institutional context;
- Changes in institutional practice (mainstreaming);
- Perspectives on follow up actions.

Considering the peculiar nature of this project, consisting mainly of workshops and studies, and with only “soft” outputs, the methodological approach is simplified, consisting of analysing the intervention logic, the efficiency of activities, the effectiveness, impact and sustainability based on feedback from stakeholders and analysis of the quality of documents.

Some of the specific research questions proposed in the mission task note, and based on the initial project proposal, could not be addressed given the nature of the outputs (especially the questions relative to “technology transfer” of “mechanization SMEs”).

4 Findings

4.1 Relevance

Finding 1. The project was relevant in targeting participatory approaches to policies, institutions and processes supporting Climate Resilient Agriculture in the Dry Zone, and in focusing on three highly significant topics

The challenges of sustainable agricultural development in Myanmar Dry Zone are multiple and demand a move away from top down, poorly coordinated policies which had dominated the issue until recently. The project purpose of enhancing “*capacity of policy makers to formulate appropriate policy options by linking local-level practices, skills and knowledge with state/regional-level expertise and national level policies and practice*” was highly relevant at three levels:

- For local stakeholders in the Dry Zone, who need access to better knowledge about good practices to face the multiple challenges of agriculture and food security, and to be able to better influence policies;
- For LIFT partners engaged in the Dry Zone, as the project provided an opportunity to better link their field practices to governance levels, and a space for policy dialogue; they were defined as key target group for the project;
- For the relevant departments of the Government of Myanmar, which are in the process of better adapting their policies and practices.

The project defined key issues of agriculture in the Dry Zone, addressed in a broad sense in the proposal:

- Technology transfer of environmentally sustainable technologies (defining output 2);
- Poverty reduction policies development based on sustainable agriculture (defining output 3);
- Agricultural engineering and farm mechanization (defining output 4).

This broad definition in the proposal (particularly for outputs 2 and 3) needed focussing on better defined and operational themes. An inception workshop was organized in Yangon on 5 May 2015 with representatives from 18 organizations (Central and regional governments, INGOs and NGOs working with LIFT). It was agreed to refocus slightly:

- Output 2 would concentrate on oilseed crops and pulses seed production;
- Output 3 would concentrate on “Climate resilient agriculture”;
- Output 4 would concentrate on practices of “custom hiring” of machinery.

Some aspects mentioned in the proposal, such as on-farm and post-harvest losses, were not retained as such. There was no contract amendment to register the changes.

Focusing on specific technical issues and practices (seed production, custom hiring of machinery) and broader policy development approaches (participatory policy advocacy and PRA) made the project relevant for a variety of stakeholders at different levels.

The proposal was also relevant in targeting a large array of stakeholders, with emphasis on regional and locally active ones in three key regions (Magway, Sagaing and Mandalay). The three thematic areas were completed by two process-oriented outputs, geared towards the set-up of a multi stakeholders Knowledge Resources Network (output 1) and the initiating a Multi-Stakeholders policy dialogue and research process (Output 5). The recent political changes have increased the relevance of the chosen multi-stakeholders

approaches, which are now enjoying a much more enabling environment. The openness of Government agencies to participate in the process with all key stakeholders prove its relevance.

LIFT Implementation Partners (IP) active in the Dry Zone were involved in consultations and chosen as key stakeholders groups, together with Government agencies at central, regional and local levels, farmers' organizations and private sector actors. Delays in inception created an unforeseen situation, given that several LIFT partners initially envisioned were not active anymore, the first batch of project having finalized. This stakeholders group had to be refocused also.

The implementation approach was consistent with the objectives defined; activities could in principle have followed a logical sequence:

- To define key stakeholders for the different thematic areas through stakeholders mapping;
- To assess capacity building needs and define training programs for stakeholders in the areas of focus;
- To gather evidence on relevant experience and good practices in Myanmar and other countries;
- To organize focused training programmes supported by curricula ¹, mostly through workshops;
- To generate Knowledge Resources Networks through the process, supported by the relevant IT tools (mostly the SATNET platform);
- To feed information into policy research and policy dialogues involving the stakeholders concerned.

The institutional support of UNESCAP was also relevant, being a chief motivation behind LIFT funding: thanks to its high regional profile and political credibility, UNESCAP was an adequate partner for bringing government and other stakeholders together to analyse and discuss policy development needs.

The role given to each of the UNESCAP agencies was also consistent and relevant:

- CAPSA would bring its expertise on networking on sustainable agriculture (outputs 1,3, and 5);
- APCTT would bring its own expertise for technology transfer (output 2);
- CSAM would play that role for agricultural mechanization (output 4).

The local partner, NAG, was an appropriate choice given its wide network in Myanmar, good relations with regional and local governments, and experience in policy advocacy at those levels.

Existing knowledge networks, such as the Food Security Working Group (FSWG) were not involved closely in project implementation (the scheduled meeting with FSWG representative could not be held during the mission). It sounds logical to have pursued that, given the mission of this group, defined as *“improve the quality of, and the enabling environment for, food security interventions and policies implemented in Myanmar through mobilising the collective capacities of the network”*. The group includes most IP for LIFT and others NGOs, INGOs and CBOs including NAG. UNESCAP staff reports that *“FSWG participated in the Inception Workshop and possibilities for collaboration had been discussed with Dr Ohnmar Khaing (former Coordinator of FSWG). FSWG offered the use of their resource centres in the Dry Zone should such a need arise (...). After the departure of Dr Ohnmar Khaing, face-to-face discussions had been held with Dr. Khin Pa Pa Wai (Coordinator of FSWG) and Ms. Khin Win Myint (Policy Officer, FSWG) on involvement with capacity building activities particularly for the policy advocacy workshop. However much of the FSWG work on policy advocacy seemed to be based on the sharing of information regarding existing policies and not on processes for policy development. “*

¹ LIFT reports never having received formally training curricula documents.

Finding 2. The activities and timespan were not fully consistent with the purpose of enhancing policy development capacities and fostering multi-stakeholders coordination with a sustainable knowledge resources network

The initial design was affected by several operational changes which tended to reduce the relevance and quality of design. The key issues which affected project performance were:

- The time span which was unrealistic for the ambitions, increasing output delivery focus.
- The consultant-driven and academic approach to case studies which did not serve the objectives of generating policy advocacy capacities and proposals based on stakeholders' experiences.
- The policy advocacy training was designed as supply driven and there was no strategy to ensure adaptation to the institutional context.
- The lack of a sustainability strategy with no clear institutional ownership for the outcomes of the consultations.
- The indicators encouraging a M&E approach focused exclusively on outputs delivery.

Duration of project

Initially the implementation period was fixed to 1st January 2014-31st December 2016. This original time span of three years was in any case not sufficient to set up a really effective knowledge network wielding policy influence. Furthermore, the scope of the project was only marginally adapted to the fact that the original implementation period was reduced, with over a year of implementation lost for a series of reasons:

- Lengthy negotiations with government agencies to determine the Ministry in charge;
- Changes in the structure of government, creation of DRD which finally was nominated as focal department;
- Administrative adjustments between UNESCAP and DRD respective procedures;
- Changes in the orientation of the project with leadership transferred to CAPSA.

The reduction from a three-year to a two-year project was supported by an addendum and revised budget. Implementation proper started only in May 2015, after the Inception Workshop allowed to focus some thematic areas (see finding 1).

The reduced timespan affected seriously the logical pathway for implementation mentioned under finding 1, which would have started with stakeholders mapping, capacity building needs assessment, followed by studies to gather background information to be shared in the workshops and trainings. Furthermore, some steps took a considerable time after the inception, especially the "curriculum development" (see footnote in previous section). The first workshops started in November-December 2015, followed by 9 workshops implemented in 2016, sometimes almost back-to-back. The workshops and studies, instead of being fully complementary, became by force almost parallel processes.

Studies

The case studies and preliminary background documents, which should have been key inputs to support the trainings and consultation, were poorly designed to do so for a series of reasons:

- The case studies were consultants driven, based on very generic terms of reference, followed by an orientation workshop for the chosen consultants. The terms of reference had little focus on the training needs, since the process of case studies and training curricula development were largely parallel, with reduced feedback between both. An approach paper was developed by CAPSA to outline the background of the studies to be conducted (expected results, definition of terminology, structure of the report, methodological tools and steps for the development of the case studies). The definition and content of studies were managed by each UNESCAP agency without an interactive

process which would have allowed stakeholders to participate actively in data collection about their own practices and experiences. The studies could have been designed by stages, with initial background notes being enriched by the work done in workshops and exchanges between stakeholders. The studies became mere inputs, with no ownership by stakeholders.

- There were serious quality issues, linked to the inadequate terms of reference, the fact that consultants worked in a traditional way without actively involving the stakeholders in the process, and to the inadequate profile of some of the consultants. The poor quality of several documents obliged the agencies to dedicate a lot of work to revise them so as to match the basic requirements.
- The mismatching between the documents and the training process was worsened by the fact that often, the documents were not available on time to feed the consultations. The time absorbed in editing and improving the draft documents and translating into Myanmar language had been underestimated, to the point that many documents are only becoming available by the last months of the project. During the mission, we noted that no stakeholder interviewed had had the time to read the documents, generally received only recently.
- The academic approach to these studies make them of little operational use to most intended users (see detailed review of main documents under effectiveness).

The logical sequence being partially lost, the linkages between studies, training and policy advocacy weakened, implementation became almost exclusively geared towards output delivery, weakening the learning process: stakeholders mapping should have come first, followed by an inventory of experiences and practices. Outputs were organized according to the (complicated) management arrangement and thematic competencies of each agency.

Policy advocacy training

As indicated in the logframe, participants in the workshops would be trained in policy advocacy and supported by the policy briefs and papers. It was assumed that they would be enabled to promote policy initiatives, contributing to the project purpose whose indicators were the number of policies adopted.

This assumption could not really hold, because policy advocacy has different contexts and follows different paths with specific actors in each institutional context. There were no activities to support stakeholders in policy development and advocacy after the trainings/workshops. The approach was much too supply driven to fit the specific needs.

Exit strategy

In the proposal, there was only a very vague definition of how the sustainability of outcomes could be ensured. The proposal assumed that *“the participatory and inclusive approach (...) ensure sustainability of activities beyond the three-year duration”* by *“establishing sustainable public-private partnerships”* and a *“knowledge resources network that will give project beneficiaries access to sources of financing and channels for commercializing their goods and services”*. These considerations were rather unrealistic, since the planning did not include the activities and processes to ensure such results.

The obvious limitation created by the short duration of the project was not adequately taken into account. Besides, the envisioned “Knowledge Resources Network” which would have provided some sustainability, was only defined in generic terms. This Network was defined as *“a platform to disseminate and share information and knowledge, and transfer technology to the target groups”* (...) *fully recognized by the stakeholders as an effective knowledge-sharing platform*. From the institutional point of view, KRN management would be *“handed over to a suitable organization in Myanmar”*. Later on, the institutional platform idea was dropped to a much-reduced reference to the IT platform provided by the SATNET operated by CAPSA. An IT platform is a useful instrument, but does not by itself guarantee the operation of a network. In fact, the *“suitable organization in Myanmar”* was never identified.

M&E indicators

The indicators for a “soft” project focused on networking, capacity building and policy advocacy present specific challenges. If they fail to address the needs to measure the progress and quality of the process with adequate (not necessarily quantitative) indicators and clear milestones, they will encourage an activities-oriented approach. This was clearly the case for the UNESCAP project:

- At purpose level, indicators referred to *“Number of policy options generated from the project reflected in national policies and programmes”* and to *“Number of policymakers and LIFT development partners who reported to have initiated a process of formulating new policies”*. There was no possibility to set realistic targets to such outcomes, since no previous indications existed about the nature and institutional process necessary to achieve it (see above). The project could not ensure that policy briefs could lead to adoption. Therefore, no meaningful M&E could be done at purpose level.
- At outputs level, the indicators were mostly linked to outreach of activities. For Output 1, the key indicator was the number of policymakers and LIFT development partners participating in the Knowledge and Resource Network. There was no way to measure whether a Knowledge Resources Network would be in the process of being established, functioning and owned by local stakeholders. For Output 2, 3 and 4 indicators were geared on numbers of stakeholders trained and on their feedback on the workshops, while indicators on mainstreaming and application of knowledge in practice were not adequate. The same with Output 5: indicators such as *“Number of policy dialogues conducted taking lessons from project activities”* and *“Percentage of participating policymakers and LIFT development partners indicating that capacity building activities implemented by the project are useful”* are not sufficient to measure whether the training have actually generated new practices.
- For studies, there are indicators about numbers of reports, not about their use by the intended beneficiaries.

The monitoring of such indicators is based on the assumption that if the activities are implemented, planned outputs and outcomes should be more or less automatically achieved. UNESCAP could report precisely on implementation and coverage of activities, but discussion of progress was not based on hard data. The project has made serious efforts at measuring the satisfaction of participants, and whether they applied some knowledge through the “Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices” survey (KAP) applied by NAG after the workshops. This has been the best approximation to qualitative measurement, and provides some indications of feedback, but falls short of appreciating the outcomes of the process.

4.2 Effectiveness

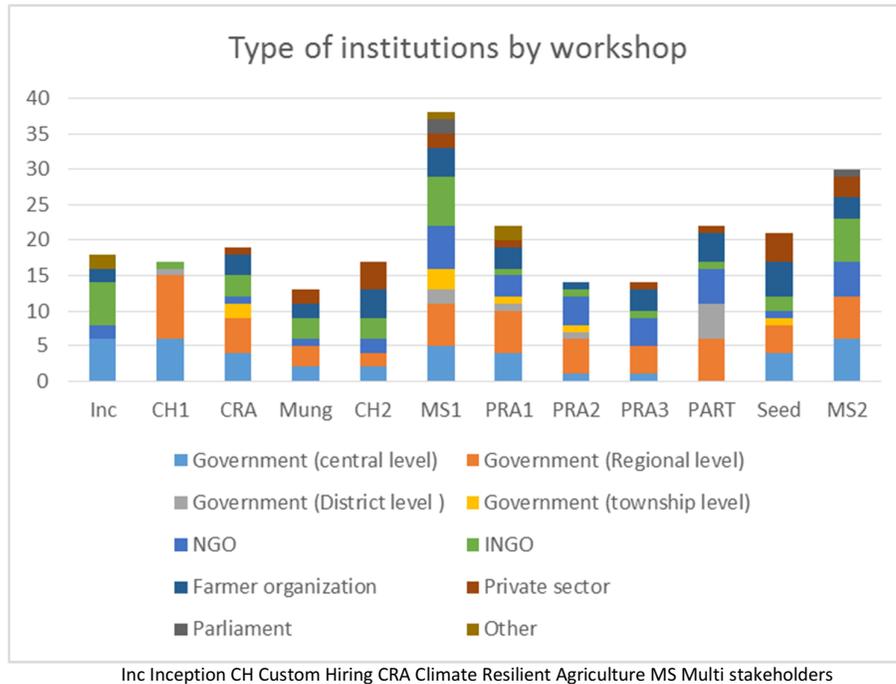
Finding 3. The project has been effective in fostering a multi-stakeholder approach to networking initiating linkages between different levels of government, civil society, farmer organizations and private sector, but failed to establish a sustainable network

The project has been successful in putting together a representative array of the stakeholders from the diverse sectors. This was very useful to initiate a networking process, but not enough to actually give birth to the intended Knowledge Resources Network.

Besides the initial inception workshop, the project organized 11 events (the thematic is discussed further on) involving a large variety of institutional stakeholders, as illustrated by the following table. We have computed the table based on the list of participants of each event; for government levels, we have computed each specific department, at the central, regional, district and township levels; for farmer organizations, the different geographical levels. Some institutional stakeholders were represented by more than one person, so that the total numbers differ from the total of attendants, the more so because UNESCAP, LIFT and NAG staff are not included.

| Type institutional Stakeholder | Number |
|--------------------------------|------------|
| Government (central level) | 11 |
| Government (Regional level) | 21 |
| Government (District level) | 8 |
| Government (township level) | 7 |
| NGO | 18 |
| INGO | 12 |
| Farmer organization | 21 |
| Private sector | 14 |
| Parliament | 2 |
| Other | 4 |
| Total | 118 |

The project has achieved to mobilize a high variety of stakeholders; it is noteworthy that the representation of regional, district and township government staff were significant. The proportion varied with time, as each specific event had different topics and some had a regional scope, such as the 3 successive PRA training courses. The graph below shows that the participation of different types of institutional stakeholders has varied, but participation of NGOs, farmer, and regional government remained significant in each. The specific events are in chronological order.



In terms of outreach, the project has indeed achieved to bring together a representative sample of key stakeholders from the most relevant sector of agriculture in the Dry Zone. This means that appropriate conditions were created to disseminate the topics, findings and discussions developed in the successive events.

In terms of the quality of the process, many interviewees have indicated that the fact that workshops brought together staff from different levels of governments, farmer organizations, NGOs and private sector was a rather new occurrence in their experience. In particular, they were impressed by the fact that medium- and high-level government officers would remain for the whole duration of the events, often participating in round tables and working groups, creating an atmosphere of dialogue that was highly appreciated.

Nevertheless, the achievement of output 1 is left at the initiation stage; as discussed under finding 2, *“Increased coordination and knowledge sharing”* demanded a different set of activities, institutional arrangements and timespan.

The very existence and functioning of the Knowledge Resources Network are rather assumed than proven by specific indicator. The 2016 annual report indicates that *“As of 31 December 2016, 491 people have been incorporated into KRN of which 340 are people who participated in the technical trainings and policy dialogues.”* These figures have been calculated From CAPSA Myanmar partners list (for SATNET Updates dissemination). The total number of individual national participants in the 11 workshops as computed from reports, is 328 persons. In any case there is no clear definition of what a member of the KRN is. A number of participants is not a proxy for membership of a network.

Another proxy used in reports is the use of the SATNET platform for the KRN. The available data from the project show a modest increase of visitors to the website based in Myanmar compared to the situation before the project: from an average of 7 visits monthly (out of 460) before inception, to 26 monthly in 2016 (out of a total of 713). Access and knowledge of modern knowledge exchange IT tools in Myanmar is still limited, being recognized by the project as a major limitation to the use of such platforms. Similarly, an

online discussion forum open on SATNET to collect success stories received inputs from 22 contributors, out of 95 invited.

Rather than qualifying all participants and recipients of information of the project as KRN members, it would have been better to have a measure of the institutional stakeholders and individual persons who are actively sharing information on the topics developed. The KAP surveys give only a partial answer. Through interviews we have gathered frequent feedback on ad-hoc networking established between participants to the workshops mostly for practical use (exchange of seeds, business contacts etc) which is a reflection of the usefulness of the workshops, but hardly a formal and sustainable networking effort.

More could not have been expected, since no structure or specific set of activities were established to ensure follow-up to the meetings.

Finding 4. The work on farmer-led seed enterprise and mung bean has created awareness and generated knowledge among stakeholders; there is no clear ownership of policy recommendations

The activities under output 2 were concentrated on issues of seed development for pulses, legumes and oil crops. The focusing on specific aspects of seed production (mung bean, farmer seed banks) proved its relevance for the stakeholders as the two workshops have the most positive feedback in terms of practical applications. Most activities were implemented under the technical direction of APCTT. Most planned outputs were achieved:

- Initially, two case studies were planned: one on *“Stakeholder Mapping in the Area of Value Chains for Seed Development for Pulses, Legumes and Oil Crops in the Dry Zone”* and the other on *‘Policies, Institutions and Processes to Support Value Chains for Seed Development for Pulses, Legumes and Oil Crops in the Dry Zone’*. The case study on policies, institutions and processes for seed development provides a good overview and some practical recommendations. It is not including much crop-specific and location specific experience, such as LIFT partners experience. The second case study was completed and published, while the stakeholders mapping draft was found lacking in technical quality by APCTT and could not be adjusted, so it was never published.
- A Training workshop on *“Best Practices in Mung bean (Green gram) Seed Production, Quality Control and Maintenance”* was held from 29 February - 01 March 2016 in Magway. The workshop included presentation on Good Agricultural Practices and ways to improve seed production systems. The technical presentations were done by an international specialist from World Vegetable Centre, South Asia Regional Office, Hyderabad, India, and by the Head of Peas and Beans Division, Department of Agricultural Research (DAR). Policy aspects were presented by a specialist from APCTT. There was a discussion forum.
- A second training workshop on *“Best Practices in Farmer-led Seed Enterprise Development for Improving Seed Quality and Enhancing Revenue Generation”*, was organized in Mandalay (08 - 09 November 2016). This one focused on understanding the challenges faced by farmer-led seed enterprises in the dry zone, and examining possible solutions. There were international experts from Technology Transfer, APCTT-ESCAP, from the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and from a Farmers Federation in Tamil Nadu, India, giving a multi-stakeholders perspective to presentations. National and international experiences were compared and discussed, and there was a brainstorming session on developing a blueprint for an “ideal” farmer led seed enterprise.
- One of the most appreciated outputs was the *“Mung Bean Seed Production Training Manual”* published by APCTT in collaboration with AVRDC, the Asian Vegetable Centre, demonstrating the

need for technical, operational information along with the more institutional and academic case studies.

A “factsheet” was published by CAPSA under the title “Supporting Value Chains for Seed Development of Pulses, Legumes and Oil Crops in Myanmar's Dry Zone”. Besides an overview of the case study it included a series of policy recommendations. The key recommendations are the following:

- Formulate and adopt a national seed policy with the support of national and international experts to assist the implementation of the Seed Law (2011);
- Encourage community-based farmers' seed banks and promote the seed value chain through private sector development and public-private partnerships (PPPs);
- 8 institutional recommendations and 11 process recommendations regarding how to organize the previous overall policy orientations.

The two workshops were appreciated by most participants for their practical and interactive nature. The

Mainstreaming of farmer seed group concept by local NGO

“Golden Plains Livelihoods Development services” is implementing a LIFT-funded project on green manure in the Dry Zone. They report that the farmer-led seed production workshop enabled them to make the necessary links with Indian seed companies and district DoA, to set up in 2017 several seed producers groups. These will multiply the sun hemp (*Crotalaria*) green manure seeds.

Improving practice by existing seed producer group

Members of Magway Farmers Development Association who participated in the workshop on farmer-led seed enterprises reported some useful information, rather of technical nature which helped improved their existing practice: the need to reduce chemical use and seed piling time for black sesame seed. They also made new contacts with seed traders thanks to the workshop.

Starting mung bean seed production

The Mandalay Farmer Association has initiated mung bean seed production after the workshop, thanks to the connections made.

two workshops were practically oriented and included useful information as well as comparison of Myanmar and international experiences in farmer-led seed enterprises; they have generated a good level of dissemination and some practical application among participants (farmer groups and NGOs). In the KAP post workshop surveys, there were many instances of dissemination of knowledge and practices. This was confirmed to us by several interviewees, especially representatives from Farmer Groups and NGOs.

We could not have feedback from institutional stakeholders such as DAR on the usefulness of the case study and recommendations, as they had only received the copies recently.

The case study gives a general overview of seed production and seed value chain in the Dry Zone, without crop-specific or local variation analysis based on concrete field cases. There could have also included some specific farmer led experiences from several LIFT partners. There is a good overview and a SWOT analysis but little on the practical constraints faced by existing farmer led seed production. The case study would have gained in incorporating some of the information shared on the second workshop.

The recommendations are rather detailed, but some are already being mainstreamed in existing policies, especially regarding PPPs.

There is no indication at the moment of this evaluation, of any “buy-in” of the policy recommendations; the participation of DAR in the workshops was too limited to warrant a strong ownership. On the other hand, there is some very practical follow-up activity on mung bean research (see finding 9). The workshop generated an important linkage between DAR and the World Vegetable Centre.

Finding 5. The project has done useful contributions in disseminating important and challenging approaches and conceptual frameworks such as PRA and farmer-led innovation, which is going to be useful in changing future approaches to rural development in the Dry Zone. It did not achieve significant progress in policy making.

Output 3, under the responsibility of CAPSA, focused from the broadly defined result of “increased capacity of policy makers and LIFT development partners to design and implement rural development and poverty reduction programmes” onto specific aspects of farmer-led technology development for Climate Resilient Agriculture (CRA) and promotion of participatory decision making to support the processes. All planned outputs under component 3 were achieved:

- Two case studies on “*Assessment of Stakeholders Interventions for Sustainable Agriculture in Myanmar’s Dry Zone*” and on “*Policy, institutions and processes to support climate resilient and sustainable agriculture (initially title Farmer led innovations)*” were produced. The first is based on review and mapping of activities of more than 40 stakeholders, completed by a SWOT analysis by category (government, NGOs and farmer organizations, multi- and bilateral partners, and private sector. It contains a series of recommendation for priority topics. The second case study, reviews the national policy and strategy documents on Environment, Poverty Alleviation and Rural Development; it contains also a SWOT analysis of policies, institutions and processes. The two case studies are well documented but little known by stakeholders; the scale of analysis of the PIP is somewhat too far from the more operational issues that were discussed in the workshops.
- Two policy briefs were published: “*Assessment of stakeholders’ intervention for sustainable agriculture in Myanmar Dry Zone*” and “*Supporting Climate-resilient and Sustainable Agriculture in Myanmar’s Dry Zone: Role of National Environment Policy, National Comprehensive Development Plan and National Strategy on Poverty Alleviation and Rural Development*”.
- A workshop on “*Promoting Farmer-led Innovation for Climate-resilient Agriculture in Myanmar’s Dry Zone*” was held in Mandalay on 10-11 December 2015. It was focused on local and participatory technology development; cases from local NGO practice and DAR were presented, and field visits completed the programme. The conclusions of the case study on “Policies, Institutions and Processes” were discussed.

Mainstreaming of PRA in DoA, Magway district

The Magway District Officer for DoA reported to this mission, that the learning from the workshop is being mainstreamed within the district extension staff. The participatory approach is being used not only in relations with farmers, but also to enable staff members; extension workers do not visit villages with pre-arranged topics anymore, they base their interaction on farmer needs. The exchanges are more lively, farmers more open and extensionists feel empowered. The officer says that his action did not require high level authorization and could be mainstreamed widely at district and township levels.

Institutional obstacles to adopting PRA in agricultural research

DAR participant recognizes PRA techniques could enhanced farmer-based research. However, the working of the Department is still very vertical, and more participatory approaches should be advocated with medium and high-level staff.

Mainstreaming of PRA by local NGO

“Golden Plains Livelihoods Development services” is applying the PRA training in its projects in the Dry Zone and Karen state, and have been able to train villagers to participate more actively in project M&E by using some key PRA tools.

Introducing PRA in Yezin University

A Professor at the Agricultural Economy Department reports having introduced PRA in Research Methodology course after the workshop. However, formalizing into curriculum would require a more complex process.

- As the topic of Participatory Rural Appraisal appeared at the top of priorities during the first multi-stakeholders workshop (see finding X), three additional region wide workshops on “*Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) to Support Local Planning for Climate resilient Agriculture*” were conducted in Monywa (from 7-9 September 2016), Mandalay (14-16 September 2016) and Magway (26-28 September 2016). These workshops were organized administratively under output 5 but contribute directly to output 3.
- Another workshop on “*Advocacy to Promote Participatory Decision-making for Climate-resilient Agriculture in Myanmar’s Dry Zone*” was held from 29-30 September 2016, in Magway. A background presentation was offered by the author of the working paper, followed by review of experiences and current options for increasing participatory decision-making in agricultural development in the Dry Zone and a presentation of the stakeholders mapping report. There was group discussion on options and priorities.

In terms of feedback from the workshops, the one on CRA raised initial interest on the concept of farmer-led innovation and a couple of participants reported having used the learning to include in training programmes.

The PRA trainings, despite their short duration (2 days) which was regretted by many, were probably the most successful in terms of interest and impact. Regional and township level government staff and some NGOs who had not yet been introduced to the principles and practices benefitted, with interesting cases of dissemination. District office of DoA has extended training to its extensionists which are using new approaches in dealing with communities (see box). In DRD participatory approaches are in place through CDD but PRA tools are being introduced.

In terms of achieving the output, the project has done useful contributions in disseminating important and challenging approaches and conceptual frameworks such as PRA and farmer-led innovation, which is going to be useful in changing future approaches to rural development in the Dry Zone.

Finding 6. The workshops on agricultural mechanization raised interest but the case studies and policy recommendations are too generic to have real added value in response to the needs of farmers in the Dry Zone

All planned activities were implemented under output 4 (agricultural mechanization) under the technical direction of CSAM. All planned outputs under component 4 were achieved:

- Two case study on policies, institutions and processes (PIPs) were prepared by international and national consultants: 1) policies/institutions/processes to support custom hiring of agricultural machines in the Dry Zone of Myanmar, and 2) stakeholder mapping exercise of custom hiring of agricultural machines in the Dry Zone of Myanmar. The drafts went through several revisions, until final editions were made available by the end of 2016 for one, and early 2017 for the other.
- A Training Manual on “*Business Management of Custom Hiring of Agricultural Machinery in the Dry Zone*” was produced by CSAM in the context of this project. It describes the conditions for success and business approach to Custom Hiring, introduces the fundamental of an adapted business plan, and provides examples of practices from 3 Asian countries.
- A knowledge sharing workshop was organized in Mandalay November 30 to December 1st, 2015, on the topic “*Enabling Environment for Custom Hiring of Agricultural Machinery in the Dry Zone of Myanmar*”. The two case studies were presented as draft, as well as a presentation from the Agricultural Mechanization Department (AMD) and a background presentation on conceptual

framework of custom hiring practices in the region. The workshop counted on contributions from international consultants hired through CSAM.

- A Workshop on “*Business Management of Custom Hiring of Agricultural Machinery in the Dry Zone*” held from 3-4 May 2016 in Mandalay, joined stakeholders from line ministries, NGOs and INGOs, farmer organizations and private sector. The training included an updated presentation of both case studies, lectures on theories and concepts aimed to provide practical instruction on topics such as custom hiring business plans, a field visit to active companies, and presentation of private experiences from different countries of the region.
- Two policy briefs were developed based on the case studies
 - “*Strengthening Policies, Institutions and Processes for Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization Development in Myanmar’s Dry Zone*”.
 - “Promoting *custom* hiring of Agriculture Machines for Climate Resilient Agriculture in Myanmar’s Dry Zone
- Conclusions and recommendations were shared during the second multi-stakeholder dialogue in Nay Pyi Taw, on 20th December 2016.

The policy recommendations, as final product of the process, are the following:

- Give further policy consideration to deepening the engagement of the private sector (including FDI).
- Develop further financing options in the public sector for agricultural mechanization development.
- Develop infrastructure in the Dry Zone, with more focus on the upland areas.
- Further develop systematic and comprehensive education and research programmes in collaboration with international organizations.
- Establish and conduct testing and standardization for both imported and locally produced agricultural machinery and establish a certification system.
- Engage a wider range of stakeholders in the policy formulation process. Formulate regional/state/township action plans according to the specific conditions of the Dry Zone, while aligning with national policies.
- Provide strengthened support in terms of enabling legislation and regulation of policy implementation activities.
- Improve coordination mechanisms among involved institutions and strengthen their technical cooperation.
- Set up regular and systematic monitoring and evaluation procedures to assess the performance and results of policy implementation.

Application of knowledge from custom-hiring workshops

The technicians from the Mennonite Economic Development Association (MEDA) reported that the main use of the workshop was to bring their attention to the possibilities of custom hiring arrangements, and allowing direct contact with potential providers.

The private provider met in Mandalay reported also making useful contacts, and taking some practices from the management manual.

- Emphasize social equity and environmental protection in pursuing economic growth while developing agricultural mechanization.

In terms of fulfilling the planning and indicators (which are only about outreach and satisfaction of workshop participants) the project has achieved its planned outputs. The feedback from post-workshop survey shows most participants satisfied with the overall quality of the training and discussions. Depending on the type of stakeholders, the usefulness of the workshop varies: practical information on how to hire equipment, contacts made with providers and potential customers, interest of the custom hiring approach and good practices for

adopting in projects and processes. We have noted similar feedback from stakeholders interviewed during

this mission. Some have also mentioned that the focus of presentations was rather on large-scale farming and machinery, and therefore not quite adapted to the small farmer context of the Dry Zone.

In terms of contribution to the outcomes in enabling policy-makers and stakeholders to better develop policy options in terms of mechanization, we have received a more mitigated return.

Officers in charge of AMD recognized the value of the case studies and workshops in providing an overview of the situation and raising attention of stakeholders on the options available, but they consider that there is little added value in terms of analysis of the situation and policy recommendations. They regret that the consultants had only what they see as limited interaction with the Department, and that the report do not reflect the whole range of relevant activities. For them, key recommendations are already taken on board by Government policies, in particularly the drive toward partial privatization, with plans adopted early 2016 to encourage private sector to move in in rice production and other most accessible areas of the Dry Zone, while government services would concentrate on the less accessible areas where custom hiring investment should be less attractive to private providers.

The Department of Cooperatives appreciated the fact that the workshops called attention to the issues but regretted that no follow up action was made besides the KAP survey. They draw the attention on the fact that cooperatives are playing an increasing role in mechanization, with 34 registered as mechanization service providers and 29 in the process of being registered, something that is poorly reflected in the studies.

After review of case studies and policy brief, we tend to share the appreciation that the documents are good overviews of the institutional framework and current situation, but that they stay short of getting into the more concrete aspects, especially, in our view, in three key dimensions:

- The documents lack a more down-to-earth element that could have been brought by a few case studies of specific situations in a few locations, that would show the variety of situations and arrangements developed locally in terms of custom hiring, with the advantages and constraints for providers and farmers; such field cases would have illustrated the two following policy issues;
- More importantly, while acknowledging that mechanization reaches mostly rice farmers and that upland areas which constitute the vast majority of cropped areas in the Dry Zone have a critically limited access to adapted machinery, the studies and recommendations fail to develop on this; the recommendation to “emphasize social equity” illustrates the lack of concrete analysis at this level;
- There is very little space dedicated to the role that Farmers Organizations can play in promoting agricultural mechanization;
- In the same order of things, the studies fail to give even a partial answer on the question of barriers in access to machinery on the demand side, while analysing mostly the supply side: there is no micro-economic analysis on those barriers at household level, nor a recommendation on analysing further where farmer groups approach might help overcome such barriers, despite existing experience of farmer groups service provision including machinery.

We conclude that the policy recommendations are so generic that they are not specific for Myanmar and much less for the Dry Zone, and could have been applied to many other countries at this generic level. UNESCAP and NAG have done a strong job in improving the initial documents that were seriously deficient, but could not compensate for its poor level of analysis of local experience and limited data. Obviously, the outputs have limited ownership and there is no clear way forward from what has been provided by the project.

Finding 7. The multi-stakeholders workshops have been useful experiences of bringing together actors who seldom discuss policy issues face to face; the policy papers were too generic and consultant driven to achieve any significant effect.

Component 5 was dedicated to multi-stakeholders dialogue on rural and agricultural development, and capacity building on policy activity. PRA training is discussed under output 3. The planned outputs were delivered:

- A first “*Multi-stakeholder dialogue on strengthening local capacities for climate-resilient agriculture in Myanmar’s Dry Zone*” was organized in Nay Pyi Taw on 30 – 31 May 2016. It brought together over 50 participants from different levels of government agencies, NGOs, bilateral and multilateral agencies and private sector. The exchanges were developed around the lessons learned from existing experiences on Climate-Resilient Agriculture in the Dry Zone, the challenges and opportunities. In particular, the respective role of government agencies and NGOs were debated. The workshop had strategic recommendations on adapting and coordinating the response to farmers’ needs; we have no indication of follow-up to these recommendations.
- A policy paper on “*Promoting Participatory Decision-making for Better Policy Design and Implementation for Sustainable Agriculture in Myanmar’s Dry Zone*”, was completed. It is a general review of participation in governance in Myanmar since 2011, with a thorough analysis of institutional governance of the sector. There is a series of recommendations on introducing participatory practices at different level which are relevant to the topic of the project, while others are so generic as to be virtually useless (“*Farmers in the Dry Zone should organize themselves into cooperatives to pool their produce and negotiate better prices*”) or totally out of the scope (“*The permit system for slaughterhouses (...) should be abolished*”). The 25 recommendations are very generic and over ambitious, not very operational and unlikely to have much effect on the participatory process. This said, the document is of a good quality from the descriptive point of view. Another Policy Paper on “*Promoting Private Sector Engagement; Policy Perspective*” is reportedly under edition.
- PRA trainings should be here. Under output 5
- The second policy dialogue on the topic of “*Scaling-up Interventions for Sustainable Agricultural Development in Myanmar’s Dry Zone*” was held, also in Nay Pyi Taw on 20 – 21 December 2016. It brought together 64 senior and mid-level participants. There were presentations and panels on experiences of scaling up interventions in the Dry Zone, from Government and NGO, and issues and challenges. There were three policy recommendations on the need for evidence based data collection, multi-stakeholders knowledge networking and setting up a national/regional information hub.

The two multi-stakeholder workshops were highly appreciated because they brought together representatives from the different stakeholders with high level Government officer, in an open exchange that would not have been possible in previous periods. This is viewed by many participants as a starting point for more constructive dialogue on relevant policies. Some interviewees (METTA, GRET) suggested that the model of MS workshop should be adapted to each level (local, regional, central) and mainstreamed so that all levels are participating. There is a need to break former practices in government department, which limit the sharing of information between senior, medium and junior colleagues.

Some effects of the policy dialogue can be observed. In response to the recommendation to one of the recommendations of the second Multi-stakeholder workshop, the Department of Agriculture has indicated adoption of the proposed establishment of an agricultural call centre (see also under finding 9). However, the lack of organized follow-up limited the effects of the consultations (see impact).

4.3 Efficiency

Finding 8. Despite serious delays at the onset, the project could achieve almost all relevant outputs, with good organization of workshops but more difficulties with consultants products

The project implementation had to face several challenges: despite these, the majority of outputs were delivered in a reduced time frame, additional extension being needed to finalize publications mainly. The selection of NAG as implementation partner in Myanmar was proved relevant.

The challenges mentioned under finding 2 had the effect of reducing relevance of several aspects of the project.

The reduction of the implementation period was one of the main factors. With the slow start in 2015, the key activities had to be implemented over a 18 months period. Amendment 1 to Letter of Agreement (LoA) was signed on 22nd November 2016 to extend the end date to 30 June 2017, in line with the no-cost extension of the project. The timeframe, budget, and reporting has been revised to accommodate the extension without any change in the overall budget amount.

The quality of organization of workshops by NAG has been widely appreciated and inspired several stakeholders in improving their own practices for similar multi stakeholders' events. The NAG team was in charge of identifying participants, organizing the events, and maintaining the link with local, regional and central government as well as other stakeholders. The organization of meetings was especially successful in terms of commitment of government staff, with other stakeholders indicating in interviews, that it was unusual to see high level government staff staying through workshops and participating in face to face dialogue. Some mentioned the method used by NAG of committing participants through application letters, as a replicable good practice. This was a time-consuming practice for NAG (especially since many government agencies still do not use e-mail routinely for communication), but it paid off.

NAG was also responsible to collect feedback from participants, applying the "Knowledge, Attitudes and Practice" (KAP) methodology. Data on each workshop have been processed jointly by NAG and CAPSA.

The coordination between NAG and UNESCAP was reported as constructive, but often difficult due to communication issues. It was not an easy task for a NGO based in Myanmar, to maintain the coordination with four agencies based in Bangkok, Bogor, New Delhi and Beijing.

The Steering Committee functioned in a limited way; it addressed some issues, such as limited DoA involvement at the onset.

The case studies, as mentioned already under finding 2, had multiple issues of quality and timely availability which seriously reduced their usefulness to support the multi-stakeholder process. In terms of efficiency, the studies faced several difficulties:

- The terms of reference generated by UNESCAP were too generic and only partially compensated by an orientation meeting after selection of consultants;
- NAG was tasked with organizing the calls for proposals and selecting local consultants based on ToR generated by UNESCAP, which was time-consuming and did not give the expected results; many selected consultants had only a technical profile with a weak understanding of policy aspects; only for policy papers, a team of international and national consultants was introduced.
- The time and resources available did not allow for wide consultations and collection of experiences in the field; some consultants started with very limited network of contacts and received limited support;

- The low quality of several draft reports forced NAG and UNESCAP teams to spend many months in editing the drafts, so that they were available too late to generate discussions during the workshops;
- The translations from English to Myanmar was another time-consuming task for NAG staff, many publications being available only in 2017; the fact that only English drafts of some studies were available for the workshops, limited their dissemination.

It has also to be mentioned, that connectivity issues which still affect Myanmar access to Internet were also a limiting factor, many stakeholders having reduced access and limited experience of the most up-to-date IT innovations,. The effectiveness of SATNET as a platform was also reduced by this reality. Many of the stakeholders did not participate in the web discussion groups, which were active only for a limited time.

4.4 Impact

Finding 9. There is little impact so far in terms of mainstreaming policy recommendations emanating from the studies, although the follow up of the multi-stakeholders policy dialogues could generate some more significant effect

The impact based on the project purpose, is linked to the mainstreaming of policy recommendations from the process in national policies and programmes, and to the development of new policies and programmes being advocated and mainstreamed at the stakeholders' institutional level.

In terms of national mainstreaming, the Director of DRD reported that the recommendations from the different policy briefs and papers are being processed by its Department and some will be submitted to the Minister (a new Minister has been nominated recently). He stressed that government is already mainstreaming participatory approaches:

- Participatory approaches to village development are already being widely adopted by DRD , through the "Community Driven Development" approach promoted by the World Bank across 5,000 villages;
- The Ministry has opened to dialogue and engaged in significant multi-stakeholders consultations around its 5-years Agricultural Policy, conducting consultations in all regions and states.

The case studies and policy papers lack significant institutional ownership because of their consultant-driven nature, while on the other side, the two Multi Stakeholders workshops are seen as a significant step in the overall trend. There is more ownership because the recommendation emanate from participants. One of them, the establishment of a Call Centre for agriculture, is actually being implemented.

4.5 Sustainability

Finding 10. There are some concrete initiatives, but no coordinated follow-up of the outcomes although the policy environment is favourable to multi-stakeholders consultation

The lack of an operational exit strategy has been mentioned under finding 2 as a key issue. The absence of any concrete institutional framework for ensuring a follow up to the different thematic exchanges and policy dialogues, does not allow for any coordinated effort to pick up the process where it has been left after the workshops.

There are however some interesting institutional follow-up initiatives.

- A nationwide initiative on mung bean was initiated after the workshop thanks to the facilitation of APCTT: as reported by Dr Ramakrishnan M. Nair *“this workshop also provided a valuable platform for the World Vegetable Centre (AVRDC), APCTT’s knowledge partner for this workshop to understand the various needs and constraints of mung bean farmers in the dry zone of Myanmar and to plan launch of new and improved mung bean varieties in Myanmar to meet these needs through AVRDC’s International Mung bean Improvement Network programme funded by the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR). AVRDC incorporated the suggestions received from the APCTT workshop and followed up with the Department of Agricultural Research (DAR), Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Myanmar. AVRDC, as an initial step, transferred seeds of 59 elite mung bean lines with pest and disease resistance to the Department of Agricultural Research (DAR), Myanmar through the International Mung bean Improvement Network in which Myanmar is one of the participating member countries. Currently experimental trials are being undertaken in Myanmar to select the best climate-resilient seed varieties from these lines for the benefit of small holder farmers in Myanmar. APCTT will continue to closely follow up with AVRDC as well as the key stakeholders in Myanmar to monitor further progress related to the capacity building efforts for Mung bean seed sector and facilitate sharing of best practices, knowledge, technologies and experiences among the stakeholders.”*
- The dissemination of learnings and practice (mainstreaming of PRA approaches and tools) after the workshops has given birth to interesting initiatives, such as mainstreaming into extension practice in DoA staff in Magway District. There is an obvious opportunity to pursue at this level.
- The results of the project have had some effect on the decision by LIFT to dedicate a call for proposals on farmer-led seed enterprise, including mung bean.
- CSAM has received demands for additional training on custom-hiring.

Otherwise, there are more sporadic initiatives, such as those mentioned in the boxes in the text.

Several stakeholders have expressed regrets that the only follow up after the workshops was the Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP) survey and expected some further action from LIFT and its partners, without having concrete proposals as to what should be done.

The role of the SATNET platform has repository of the documents generated is far from sufficient for ensuring the development of a sustainable KRN on the Dry Zone, especially considering the generic nature of most publications and their lack of link to more operational resources platforms on tools and practices.

Where there is indeed some institutional sustainability, is linked to UNESCAP core activities. It is the case for the Mung bean network and the work of CSAM on standardisation for agricultural equipment.

Recognizing this major gap, the idea of a final stakeholders workshop to analyse the sustainability and follow up options was proposed and supported by LIFT, but could not be materialized. Limited time and resources conducted to replace it with official closure meetings conducted in 15-16 June 2017.

4.6 Cross cutting themes

Finding 11. The gender dimension of the project was not addressed; counting participation of women in workshops do not constitute a gender approach.

The issues linked to gender in agriculture in the Dry Zone are of primary importance. They were not addressed explicitly by the project. Instead, all there was in terms of gender was some attention to the numbers of women participating in the events. The 2016 annual report indicated that *“30.4% of 491 people engaged in the knowledge resource network are women”*. It also claimed, based on the KAP survey, that

from a total of 80 female respondents that participated within capacity building activities, 85% of them had the willingness to become a trainer after the event and the report presents this as gender empowerment.

In terms of addressing the gender problematic in studies, there is very little. As the table below shows, a search for the two key words “women” and “gender” in 7 publications brought extremely limited results. Not so surprising as the Terms of Reference did not mention them at all.

| Project publication | Occurrence of “women” | Occurrence of “gender” |
|--|---|------------------------|
| TERMS OF REFERENCE – CONSULTANTS & INDIVIDUAL CONTRACTORS | 0 | 0 |
| Policies, Institutions and Processes to Support Climate Resilient and Sustainable Agriculture in Myanmar’s Dry Zone | 0 | 0 |
| Assessment of Stakeholder Interventions for Sustainable Agriculture in Myanmar’s Dry Zone | 5 (a question was included in stakeholders questionnaire) | 2 |
| Stakeholder Mapping for Custom Hiring of Agricultural Machines in the Dry Zone of Myanmar | 1 | 0 |
| Policies, Institutions and Processes to Support Agricultural Mechanization Development in Myanmar’s Dry Zone | 10 (a short section and a recommendation) | 0 |
| Policies, Institutions and Processes to Support Value Chains for Seed Development for Pulses, Legumes and Oil Crops in the Dry Zone | 1 | 0 |
| Promoting Participatory Decision-making for Better Policy Design and Implementation for Sustainable Agriculture in Myanmar’s Dry Zone | 6 (no specific section) | 0 |
| Supporting Climate Resilient and Sustainable Agriculture in Myanmar’s Dry Zone: Role of National Environment Policy, National Comprehensive Development Plan and National Strategy on Poverty Alleviation and Rural Development ¹ | 0 | 0 |

5 Key lessons

The project ends June 30 2017. It is too late for operational recommendations. Four key lessons may be drawn from the experience, and two follow up recommendations are addressed to LIFT.

Lesson learned 1. There is a need for more institutionalized, demand-driven multi stakeholders processes for agricultural development in Myanmar

The project has initiated a process; more permanent networking requires a set-up completely different from such a short-term, output oriented project. A bottom-up and demand driven network is needed.

In terms of training needs, a more iterative process is needed instead of confirming only at inception stage. The example of PRA trainings, introduced afterwards through specific demands during workshops, show that it is possible; by the way these trainings have been the most successful in terms of positive feedback.

There are a few useful recommendations in the Policy Paper 111 but they are very generic. There is a need for more systematic exchange of information at local levels to start with. Field projects should be encouraged to include more systematic policy linkages and institutional networking especially with regional and local governance levels. Some existing spaces such as Regional and Township Agricultural Committees should be used more systematically to exchange experiences and advocate. In this way, a “critical mass” of advocacy can be generated, and “champions” can be identified to carry the key proposals. The current political environment is more favourable than ever for this, but participation is easily “boxed in” if a wide constituency is not ensured.

Lesson learned 2. An operational multi-stakeholders Knowledge Resources Network needs an institutional framework in-country

There is limited follow up because there are no clear “owners” of the process. Institutional stakeholders should be mapped from the start, and the channels for exchange and management of information should be known. The involvement of the key partners and “champions” should start from formulation stages.

The mechanisms for exchange and storage of experience are more sustainable if they are based on previous experience and needs of key institutional “champions”. This implies in most cases, multiform networks.

Lesson learned 3. Stakeholders at different levels have different networking needs; these needs have to be identified so that interactive networking is possible between local, intermediate and central levels

The information generated by the project targeted different users: decision makers, local stakeholders, farmers, academic institutions etc ; everybody found some useful information, but few found sufficient answers.

Academic papers are of little use to farmers, private sector and field practitioners. “Policy” has different meanings at different levels of governance.

Policy development and advocacy processes should be grounded on a more thorough research of experiences, information needs and priorities of stakeholders. Similar projects should be based on participatory collection of experiences and concerns of stakeholders, consolidated from the bottom up. There are time consuming processes so that strong ownership is vital.

It was a good thing that the project joined diverse stakeholders in key events, but such consultations would have a stronger impact if prepared by a more inclusive process at local level.

Lesson learned 4. Knowledge resources networks should take different forms and modalities according to stakeholders’ needs

With such a variety of stakeholders, knowledge management should be multiform rather than centralized:

- Semi-formal « communities of practice », i.e. to disseminate and adapt PRA practice in extension;
- Facilitation mechanisms to systematize field experience, particularly in support of farmer groups;
- More formal, institutionalized networks such as FSWG;

- Multi-stakeholders consultation mechanisms.

Support to such mechanisms is more effective if mainstreamed into a number of key projects.

6 Annexes

6.1 Itinerary (field mission)

| Day | Date | Activities |
|-----|------------|--|
| 1 | 25.05.2017 | Arrival in Bangkok |
| 2 | 26.05.2017 | <p>Briefing at UNESCAP Strategy and Programme Management Division with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adnan H. Aliani, Director Strategy and Programme Management Division • Takashi Takahatake, Programme Officer • Edgar Dante Chief Evaluation Unit • Srinivas Tata Chief Capacity Development and Partnerships Section • Masakazu Ichimura, Head, CAPSA (in Bogor) • Fitra Rinawati, LIFT project consultant, CAPSA (in Bogor) • Krishnan Srinivasaraghavan, APCTT (in Delhi) • Lian Zhang, CSAM (in Beijing) <p>Evening travel to Yangon</p> |
| 3 | 27.05.2017 | Briefing with LIFT staff |
| 4 | 28.05.2017 | Revision of documents and preparation of interviews |
| 5 | 29.05.2017 | <p>Briefing at National Advisory Group (NAG) Yangon</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bobby, Chef Executive Officer • Myo Na Na Than, Program Manager (ESCAP) • Khin La Pyaye Win, Research Officer <p>Meeting at Golden Plains Livelihoods Development Services, Yangon</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Htwe Htwe Aung, Vice Chairperson • U Maung Maung Htwe, advisor • Khin Phuyar Htun, agronomist • Htay Htay Aung, agronomist <p>Meeting at GRET, Yangon Dr Htet Kyu, National Network Coordinator Agroecological Learning Alliance in South East Asia (ALISEA)</p> |
| 6 | 30.05.2017 | <p>Meeting at METTA Development Foundation, Yangon</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Khin Maung Latt, National Agriculture and Forestry Sector Coordinator <p>Meeting at Mennonite Economic Development Association (MEDA), Yangon</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kyaw Lin Oo, agricultural specialist <p>Meeting at Shan Maw Myae organic rice company Yangon</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aye Aye Maw, agricultural technician |
| 7 | 31.05.2017 | Revision of documents (workshop cancelled) |

| Day | Date | Activities |
|-----|------------|--|
| 8 | 01.06.2017 | Travel by road to Magway |
| 9 | 02.06.2017 | Ms. Win Win Mar, Researcher, DAR Research Farm, Magway Mr. Thein Lwin, District Officer, DOA District Office, Magway Mr. Kyaw Kyaw Lwin, Staff officer, DRD Township office, Magway |
| 10 | 03.06.2017 | Mr. Soe Myint, Regional Minister, Agriculture, Livestock & Irrigation, Regional Government, Magway Focus group with representatives of farmer organization; Mr. Han Nyunt, Chairperson (Regional Farmer Development Association), Mr Myint Shwe, Vice Chairperson (Regional Farmer Development Association), and Mr Soe Lwin Aye, member (Regional Farmer Development Association) as well as Mr Than Htike Aung, private service provider, agricultural mechanization. |
| 11 | 04.06.2017 | Travel by road to Nay Pyi Daw |
| 12 | 05.06.2017 | Dr. Zani Minn, Director, DRD Ms. Khin Mar Oo, Deputy Director, DOP Mr. Aung Win Deputy Director AMD Mr Kyaw Zayar Myint Staff Officer AMD |
| 13 | 06.06.2017 | Dr. Tun Shwe Director Oilseeds and pulses Crops Division DAR Dr. Shwe Mar Than Lecturer YAU Mr. Sein Maung Member Mandalay Farmer Group |
| 14 | 07.06.2017 | Mr Myo Aung, Director, Department of Cooperatives Travel by road to Yangon |
| 15 | 08.06.2017 | Debriefing at LIFT office, Yangon <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Air travel to Bangkok |
| 16 | 09.06.2017 | Debriefing at UNESCAP Strategy and Programme Management Division with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adnan H. Aliani, Director Strategy and Programme Management Division Harald Kreusher, Project Officer, LIFT Takashi Takahatake, Programme Officer Edgar Dante Chief Evaluation Unit Srinivas Tata Chief Capacity Development and Partnerships Section Naylin Oo, Regional Adviser, ASEAN Masakazu Ichimura, Head, CAPSA (in Bogor) Fitra Rinawati, LIFT project consultant, CAPSA (in Bogor) Krishnan Srinivasaraghavan, APCTT (in Delhi) Lian Zhang, CSAM (in Beijing) |
| 17 | 10.06.2017 | Travel by air Bangkok - Brussels |

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| CAPSA-UNESCAP 2017 | Policy Paper on Promoting Participatory Decision-making for Better Policy Design and Implementation for Sustainable Agriculture in Myanmar’s Dry Zone |
| CSAM-UNESCAP 2016 | Training manual business management |
| CSAM-UNESCAP 2016 | Case study “Policies, Institutions and Processes to Support Agricultural Mechanization Development in Myanmar’s Dry Zone” |
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