

## Improved seed varieties strengthen Burmese farmers' position in the national rice market.

### INTRODUCTION

Over the last three years, 180 rice farmers in Ayeyarwaddy Division of Myanmar have worked together with NCA Myanmar and Loka Ahlinn Social Development Network to increase the quality and volume of their rice production, and to enable them to sell directly to rice markets; bypassing the middlemen.

### PROBLEM ANALYSIS

The Ayeyarwaddy Delta has historically been known as the rice bowl of Myanmar. Developments over recent years have however seen a dramatic decrease in paddy production in this area. This has come as a result of corrupt farmland administration by authorities; limited investment in rice research, technology and market facilities; and limited technological assistance to the small and marginalized farming communities. The situation was worsened by 2008's Cyclone Nargis during which farmers in the Delta lost everything including seeds, farm equipment and livestock. Whilst replacement of farming assets as part of the Nargis emergency response helped local communities on the road to recovery; the key to improved rice production, and improved livelihoods, was identified by this project as the introduction of new seed types and production technologies tailored for the local environment.

### RESULTS

The project, *Seeds to Strength: Improving seeds quality and strengthening farmers' capacities*, started in May 2012 and by its close in April 2015 had realized some concrete results. The most impressive of these is the fact that 130 of the 180 farming households have increased the quality and volume of their rice yield considerably and are able to sell their product directly to buyers at a realistic market price. For example, some of these farmers are now producing over 40% more rice per acre than when using traditional production methods, and have increased their incomes from sale of the product by the same percentage.

This has not only meant increased incomes for their households, but also improved food security and living conditions. The project worked together with the farmers to achieve these results by improving their farming techniques using the 'Farmer Field School' methodology; developing their knowledge of seed production and land rights; and providing them with improved farming inputs. There has also been a focus on providing the farmers with accurate market price information; equipping them with improved negotiation skills and establishing direct trading links with the buyers of their produce.



**An open air training session for the Farmer Field School  
(Photo: Loka Ahlinn Social Development Network)**



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## LESSONS LEARNED

The project's final report highlighted several lessons from the first three years of the project that can be taken forward into future phases. These include the importance of developing the focus on local ownership and community development further; the need to include the facilitation of access to affordable credit for the farmers; and the success of the 'passing of the gift system', which has meant that at the end of the each year of the project, farmers have been able to pass on five baskets of quality rice seed to the group starting at the Farmer Field School the following year.



**Farmer Field School practical training session (Photo: Loka Ahlinn Social Development Network)**

## PROGRAMME SCOPE

The project provided support to 180 farmers from 30 villages in Bogalay Township, Ayeyarwaddy Division, Myanmar. A total of USD 288.821 was granted in financial support by Kadoorie Charitable Foundation (KCF), whilst NCA provided funds for the development of the project as well as human resources to manage the donor contract; facilitate donor relations and develop the capacity of their local partner organisation, Loka Ahlinn Social Development Network.

## SOURCES

Final Narrative Report and Final Evaluation for *Seeds to Strength: Improving seeds quality and strengthening farmers' capacities* (May 2012-April 2015).

## PARTNERS

The project fell under NCA's program *Livelihood and Trade* and was implemented in partnership with Loka Ahlinn Social Network.

