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Plan for Poverty Alleviation and Rural Development through
Agriculture (NAPA)**

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SOCIAL INCLUSION AND GENDER

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ACRONYMS

ACIAR	Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AED	Agriculture Education Division
AMD	Agriculture Mechanization Department
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CBM	Central Bank of Myanmar
CBO	Community-based Organization
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
DOA	Department of Agriculture
DAR	Department of Agricultural Research
DRD	Department of Rural Development
DSWD	Department for Social Welfare and Development
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FFS	Farmers' Field School
FSWG	Food Security Working Group
GAD	General Administration Department
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GSA	Gender Situation Analysis in Myanmar
HYV	High-yielding Variety
IHLCA	Integrated Household Living Conditions Assessment
INGO	International Non-governmental Organization
IPM	Integrated Pest Management
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
LCG	Land Core Group
LIFT	Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund
MADB	Myanmar Agriculture Development Bank
MAS	Myanmar Agriculture Service
MDRI	Myanmar Development Resources Institute
MFI	Microfinance Institution
MICDE	Myanmar Industrial Crop Development Enterprise
MoAI	Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation
MOECAAF	Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry
MOLFRD	Ministry of Livestock, Fisheries and Rural Development
NAPA	National Action Plan for Agriculture for Myanmar
NSPARD	National Strategy on Poverty Alleviation and Rural Development
NSPAW	National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
SLRD	Settlement and Land Records Department
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
VFV	Vacant, Fallow and Virgin Lands
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Programme
WRUD	Water Resources Utilization Department
YAU	Yezin Agricultural University

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This gender and social inclusion study, undertaken from December 2014 to January 2015, is one of a number of technical studies carried out during Phase I of FAO's formulation of the National Action Plan for Agriculture (NAPA) for Myanmar. The objective of NAPA, as a component of the National Strategy on Poverty Alleviation and Rural Development (NSPARD), is poverty alleviation and rural development in Myanmar.

Agriculture plays a central role in Myanmar's economy and society providing livelihoods for at least 5.4 million households; there is an uncounted number of landless agricultural labourers and various related rural businesses. The great majority of farm households in Myanmar are smallholders, holding less than 5 acres of land. While rice is the main staple crop, there is a diversity of other important crops produced by farmers across the country, particularly oil crops and pulses, and horticultural crops. Small-scale farmers often grow a variety of crops in different plots at different times of the year, and also take part in fishing as well as livestock-raising activities. Access to forests remains important for rural households in providing for a variety of household needs, including food and fuelwood, grazing and products for income. Landless households also rely on fishing, livestock raising and non-wood forest product gathering, and have few alternative employment options other than to work as agricultural labourers in other people's fields or migrating to another area.

In rural areas, poverty is widespread, around 29 percent of households live below the poverty line, however the median income is only a fraction above the poverty line, which indicates that, even the better-off are economically vulnerable. Insecure land tenure, lack of access to seeds, water and pasture, and lack of access to training in low-cost sustainable agricultural practices and low market bargaining power are key constraints of the smallholder sector.

Gender equality and social inclusion are of paramount importance for the eradication of poverty, the construction of an equitable economy and sustainable development. Women in Myanmar are beginning to take up leadership roles in politics traditionally reserved for men. Women are also well represented in central ministries, including senior levels of the Department of Agriculture. However, in local governance decision-making hierarchies, women are still largely absent. Persistent gender biases also tend to obscure the economic role that women play in the household and in the rural economy. In fact, rural women in Myanmar work in all sectors of agriculture. However, both on- and off-farm unskilled daily wages for women remain consistently below that of men.

Married men in Myanmar are, in the main, considered the head of their households, according to patriarchal norms, and in their leadership role, they have greater opportunities than their spouses to access training, join meetings, connect with the government and hold or register assets. Women's access to formal credit has increased with the provision of micro-credit funds for women, which in at least one project have shown not only positive material gains but also empowerment gains for the beneficiaries. Most female-headed rural households comprise a single adult – in four out of five cases, a widow. Such households are not necessarily more likely

to be poor than male-headed households, although they have been found to have lower average incomes than male-headed households.

Social inclusion refers to the removal of institutional barriers and the enhancement of incentives to increase the access of diverse individuals and groups to development opportunities. With very limited budgets, most agricultural programmes, including inputs distribution, research and extension are not realistically resourced to be able to reach the majority of the small-scale farming population. However, programmes are also not clearly designed to foster inclusion. Where top-down approaches to programme design and implementation still exist, these are failing to address the priorities, needs and constraints of small-scale farmers. Recent changes have been made to place poverty reduction at the heart of the agriculture sector and rural development policies, but much work will be needed now to re-orient programmes and activities to achieve these goals. There are insufficient opportunities for government technicians to be able to communicate and discuss directly with groups of small farmers. The distribution of high-quality seeds is well below demand, even for the major pillar crops, although there are efforts to diversify the sources of seed, through village-based seed multiplication programmes. Women, in particular, are often excluded from access to training from government agencies. Systematic evaluations have not yet been carried out to be able to assess the effectiveness of training programmes for small farmers of both genders.

Indebtedness is a common feature of the rural household economy in Myanmar however, worryingly credit is most often used to purchase food, which is an indicator of the perpetuation of poverty. There is some indication that the number of households taking loans for agriculture is increasing, although data are not conclusive on this point, while loan sizes are clearly increasing. Most households do not access formal loans, but source money from family and friends as well as informal money lenders. Well-designed microfinance schemes that are reaching women appear to have resulted not only in increased material assets, but are beginning to influence other transformational impacts on women's empowerment within the community.

Policies such as the NSPARD and the National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women (NSPAW) have been developed through consultative processes. New programmes implemented by the DRD are introducing a decentralized approach that gives relative autonomy to community groups to decide on how to use funds, managed by new more gender-balanced committees. Additional initiatives will be needed, however, to develop a strategic approach to increasing rural employment opportunities. With an increase in landlessness and the strong outmigration from certain rural areas, particularly amongst the youth, this must be an area for urgent attention.

On the other hand, there has been no specific programme for the implementation of the NSPAW in the rural livelihoods sector. The plan does not appear to be well known throughout the government. Very little attention has been given to women's agricultural livelihoods within programmes of work on gender. However, gender is being addressed by groups working on smallholder farmer development initiatives.

Myanmar has a growing civil society sector working in all states and regions of the country and carrying out community-centred development projects. Networks that span community-based organizations (CBOs), local NGOs, international NGOs and other actors have been established and are effective coordinating mechanisms on relevant issues relating to food security, land tenure, agricultural policy and gender. The cooperatives sector has in the past mostly focused on distributing loans and offering hire purchase services, rather than joint venture initiatives. Social

inclusion issues have not yet been specifically considered within cooperatives development – there are exceedingly few women represented on the boards of primary cooperatives, and very few women members.

Several key constraints to the sector are reviewed and analysed. Major constraints that could be highlighted here include the fact that the policies set out in the long-term plan for agriculture have a top-down character and appear to leave little room for regional variation and responsiveness to local conditions. The focus of the plans is on the promotion of foreign and domestic private sector involvement in the agriculture sector and to develop agro-industries and export markets. Few of the action plans appear to give attention to the inclusion of small-scale and resource-poor farmers. Additionally, budget constraints are a major restriction to the effective outreach of the research and extension services.

Major opportunities are presented by the fact that poverty alleviation is now at the heart of policy goals and new decentralized approaches are being developed within rural development. Moreover, interesting pilot initiatives have already been developed by local and international NGOs in the field of improving access to markets and community business development, enabling small farmers to capture larger shares of the product value. Many of these have been developed with a gender lens and have been successful in encouraging the participation of women within community initiatives. These pilot experiences can point the way to broader programme interventions.

There is a need to improve processes and focus on social inclusion to bring target beneficiary groups to the forefront of existing programmes and investments. Recommended interventions include the establishment of a participatory approach for the re-orientation of agricultural programmes to be responsive to the needs, concerns and constraints of farmers, of both genders, around the country, and decentralization of programme implementation to the local level. Secondly, encourage the development of participatory research and extension programmes. Thirdly, encourage socially inclusive agribusinesses, growing from a small scale to networks. Fourthly establish a programme to develop equitable market access for the resource-poor. Finally, host forums for improved cooperation and mutual learning among sectors including learning from other Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries.

INTRODUCTION

This gender and social inclusion study, undertaken from December 2014 to January 2015, is one of a number of technical studies carried out during Phase I of FAO's formulation of the National Action Plan for Agriculture (NAPA) for Myanmar. The objective of NAPA, as a component of the National Strategy on Poverty Alleviation and Rural Development (NSPARD), is poverty alleviation and rural development in Myanmar.

BACKGROUND – SMALLHOLDER SECTOR

Myanmar is an agrarian country that is at a historic stage in its development. It has been undergoing rapid economic transformation since 2008. A new Constitution, which contains basic principles of multiparty democracy, the rule of law, human rights and the separation of powers among the executive, the legislature and the judiciary, was adopted in May 2008. Subsequently, elections were held in November 2010 and by-elections in April 2012. A number of reforms have already been undertaken in the financial sector, media censorship has been relaxed, detainees have been released and ceasefire agreements have been negotiated in a number of conflict areas.

The provisional results of the 2014 census estimate a population of approximately 51.4 million people, with 70 percent occupying rural areas. Myanmar has many diverse ethnic groups. The government has recognized 135 indigenous ethnic groups with highly distinctive identities in terms of community history, living culture and language. Although the Myanma tongue is the most widely spoken language, over 100 different languages and dialects are spoken by different ethnic groups around the country.

2.1 Smallholder production

The country's terrain and climate is highly diverse, which allows for the cultivation of both tropical and temperate crops in different agro-ecological zones throughout the country. Agriculture plays a central role in Myanmar's economy and society, providing livelihoods for at least 5.4 million households. It is the biggest employer in the country, affording just over 50 percent of the available employment (MNPED et al. 2011). Agriculture also contributes substantially to the broader economy through domestic and international trade, involving a great number of small- and medium-sized trading networks (Wong and Wai 2013).

The staple crop, rice, is grown by 2.1 million households. Ayeyarwaddy, Rakhine, Sagaing and Bago regions are the areas that produce major surpluses of rice. While areas such as Chin State and Mandalay Division are in permanent rice deficit (Wong and Wai 2013). A large portion of the crop, around 30 percent of rice produced nationwide, is stored by farmers to feed their families (ibid). Seeds are also commonly saved for replanting in the subsequent year (USAID 2013). Rice is normally the largest component of food expenditure in an average family budget. Low rural incomes, natural disasters and economic shocks have however generated food insecurity, although this condition fluctuates considerably. It was estimated in 2010 that average rural households experienced food shortages over two months in the year, but two years later 90 percent of households experienced no food shortage at all.

Other important annual crops for smallholders include a wide diversity of beans and pulses (soybean, chickpea, butter bean, green gram, pigeon pea, black gram, kidney bean, cowpea, etc.).

These legumes are also grown around the country, often planted after rice to help replenish soil nutrient fertility. Oilseeds such as groundnuts, sunflower and sesame are grown particularly in the Central Dry Zone (CDZ) where lower availability of water resources constrains the choices of profitable crops. Chilies, onion, garlic, potatoes, cauliflower, tomatoes and other vegetables are grown year round in suitable climates particularly in hilly areas such as Sagaing and Shan State. Smallholders are also engaged in the cultivation of tropical fruits and coconuts, particularly in areas near the coast. Key constraints include the lack of access to improved seeds, water resources and lack of training in low-cost sustainable agricultural practices.

Industrial crops such as oil-palm and rubber tend to be planted in much larger areas, although there are smallholder rubber farms in the south. Cotton is commonly grown by smallholders in the CDZ. It is difficult to find information on which farmers are growing which crops, although maize, which requires more expensive inputs, including hybrid seeds and high doses of agrochemicals, is likely to be out of reach of the poorer farmers.

Fish is another staple food, providing two-thirds of the animal protein in Myanmar diets. The consumption of fish and fisheries produce in fresh and preserved forms, is estimated at 23 kilograms/year per capita. Ayeyarwaddy and Tanintharyi regions are the largest fish producers. Fishing is the primary income source of approximately 9 percent of households around the country. It also provides a valuable livelihood for the landless (LIFT 2013) and many smallholder farmers also engage in fishing as a secondary activity.

Smallholders aim to cultivate more than one crop in different plots and in different seasons, to reduce climatic and environmental risks, which in bad years can bring about 100 percent losses in a single crop. In areas where cultivation is constrained, however, diversification of livelihoods and access to forests are essential for food security. As many as 4.31 million households keep livestock and poultry as an integrated part of their farm (MCA 2010). Grazing livestock is particularly important in the CDZ where around half of the country's cattle is raised, and 77 percent of the sheep and goats are found (JICA 2010). Livestock are a form of savings as well as productive assets that can help in tillage, threshing, transport, providing manures, even pest control, and can feed on crop residues. Overall, they are very important household assets, kept by poorer households almost as much as by richer households according to the LIFT 2013 survey. Small animal husbandry is especially attractive for smallholders as they can generate incomes during off-seasons for agriculture, and for the landless. According to 2012 LIFT data, approximately half of all landless families keep poultry such as chickens and ducks, and over a quarter keep small livestock such as pigs, goats and sheep. Access to pasture for grazing animals however is a key constraint to livestock development.

Smallholders do not capture very much of the market value of their produce as they tend to sell their produce, unprocessed at the farm-gate, although a small proportion of households take their own produce to market. Overall 90 percent of the households surveyed by LIFT sold their crops individually and 62 percent sold their main crop immediately at harvest. As a consequence, few farmers had any bargaining power with buyers and traders. Nearly a quarter of households had no price information before they sold their crops, and those that did, mostly obtained this from family and friends or the traders themselves, as currently there is no independent market information system for farmers or rural communities.

2.2 Poverty contexts

It has been estimated that currently the incidence of poverty among the total population is at 26 percent although amongst rural households the incidence is higher at around 29 percent (MNPED et al. 2011). Low incomes are the norm however because the median income is only 25 percent above the poverty line, which also indicates that better-off families are also at risk of falling back into poverty in tightened circumstances (UNDP 2013).

The large majority, or 85 percent, of the poor households is located in rural areas. The Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey 2009-2010 (MNPED et al. 2011) provides much data on the different conditions of poverty around the country. In terms of overall numbers, poor households in Ayeyarwaddy, Mandalay, Rakhine and Shan State account for over half the population living below the poverty line in Myanmar. But in terms of incidence within a given regional population, the area where poverty appears to be most widespread is Chin State, where as much as 73 percent of households are recorded as poor. High incidence of poverty is also reported in Rakhine (44 percent) and Tanintharyi, Shan and Ayeyarwaddy regions (32-33 percent).

Similarly, food poverty, a level of extreme hardship, is also most pervasive amongst the population of Chin State, with around 25 percent of households not having enough food to eat, followed by Rakhine (10 percent), Tanintharyi (9.6 percent) and Shan (9 percent). Poor households spend over 70 percent of their income on food. A third of rural families borrows money to be able to feed themselves at times of food stress during the year. For many of the poor, therefore, their economic status is extremely precarious and investments that require cash input entail a very high risk.

2.3 Land tenure

Data on landholdings in Myanmar is not yet systematized. Estimates vary considerably, however a recent assessment has found that approximately 76 percent of farm households are smallholders, with less than 5 acres of farmland. In terms of area, however, smallholders hold 27 percent of the net sown area throughout the country. Average farm sizes are getting smaller, even as the net sown area has increased nationwide.

The adequacy of landholding size is clearly related to the quality of land and the returns achieved from the use that is made of it. It has been estimated that 7-10 acres of average land (or 15-20 acres of poor quality land) are required to sustain minimum standards of living for a family in the CDZ, for example (USAID 2013). If a family does not have the resources to cultivate or the land is infertile, they are likely to still struggle to make a living. Figures from the UNDP (2013) poverty profile found that as many as 30 percent of poor households surveyed held more than 5 acres of land.

Nationwide, a quarter of those whose primary economic activity is agriculture are landless households (MNPED et al. 2011). Landlessness is particularly widespread in the Delta area. According to the LIFT household survey, 72 percent of rural households in the Delta and coastal regions are currently landless (2012), while 43 percent of households in the CDZ are without land and the figure is 26 percent in the hilly areas. Half of all agricultural households nationwide have either no land or less than 2 acres of land which is referred to as being 'land poor' (USAID 2013).

Land utilization is increasing and land markets are beginning to push up the price of land in areas of high demand such as peri-urban areas, and in the Tanintharyi region in the south. Land-tenure insecurity is a major problem identified by smallholder farmers and interviewees from civil society groups. Economic shocks and unmanaged or unmanageable debt are a key stimulus of land loss. However, insecurity is also the result of land conflicts, thousands of which have been reported throughout the country and are the subject of ongoing parliamentary inquiries. Such conflicts have very long-term impacts on the affected groups and their communities. As state infrastructure projects and private investments begin to proliferate in many rural areas, including for agricultural investments and dam construction, farmers are being expected to cede their land for these high-profile projects, in a governance context that is still weak and which provides limited oversight to ensure the rights and welfare of those affected are properly protected and that livelihoods are sustainably restored.

A new land registration programme has begun in the last couple of years following the implementation of the Farmland Law and the Virgin, Fallow and Vacant Lands Law in 2012, which issues farming permits akin to land rights' certificates which are more up to date and can be more easily transferred than under the prior cadastral system. Drawn up without attention to gender issues, the laws are written in gender-neutral terms which do not extend adequate protection for women's land rights. Mostly, wives' names have been left off the land rights' certificates despite the property concerned being considered by spouses as their joint property. This omission places administrative barriers for married women to assert their rights, as enshrined under the marriage property laws.

Certain areas are not eligible for land registration under the Farmland Law. For example, pasture areas are unable to be certified in community ownership, and, as a result, areas that used to be a valuable resource for smallholder farmers are being appropriated by land-poor and other private interests. With the declining availability of pasture, opportunities also diminish for smallholders and the landless to diversify their income sources by raising cattle, for example.

An estimated 70 percent of Myanmar's 32.5 million rural population depends on forests for basic needs, as they derive household materials, fuelwood, fodder and food from wooded areas. The contribution to rural livelihoods is significant. Forests managed and farmed under shifting cultivation practices provide resources for the families of 2-20 million shifting cultivators (Srinivas and Hlaing 2015). In addition, around half a million people are estimated to rely on forests for employment (USAID 2013). However, access to the forests is insecure. Approximately 2 000 village settlements and, in many cases, related farmlands are classified as located within reserve forests, and as a result the land tenure and livelihoods of these populations is in legal terms very insecure. Efforts to bring in participatory management through community forests are progressing slowly.

Equally, access to water sources, such as rivers and lakes, shallow wells, etc. is an essential component of rural livelihoods, variously providing drinking water, water for cooking, washing, as well as watering backyard plots. Water resource quality is under threat from pollution through mining activities, overuse of pesticides, and industrialization (USAID 2013). The quantity of water available from local sources varies throughout the year, and is particularly scarce from March to June in hilly areas, where as many as three-quarters of villages suffer water scarcity at the peak of the summer (LIFT 2013). The CDZ suffers from extreme heat in summer months, although groundwater extraction via village tubewells has alleviated domestic water needs to

some extent. Groundwater quality does not appear to be effectively monitored in all areas yet, as several agencies need to be coordinated, however this is essential for sustainable management to avoid overextraction and saline incursion.

In summary: Agriculture plays a central role in Myanmar's economy and society, providing livelihoods for at least 5.4 million households. The great majority of farm households in Myanmar are smallholders holding less than 5 acres of land. While rice is the main staple crop, there is a large diversity of other important crops produced by farmers across the country, particularly oil crops and pulses, and horticultural crops. Many small-scale farmers grow a variety of crops in different plots at different times of the year, take part in fishing and livestock-raising activities and rely on access to forests for a variety of household needs and diversified incomes. Landless households also rely on fishing, livestock raising and forest gathering, and have few alternative employment options other than to work as agricultural labourers in other people's fields or migrating to another area. In rural areas, the incidence of poverty is around 29 percent of households, however the median income is only a fraction above the poverty line, which indicates that even the better-off are still economically vulnerable. Insecure land tenure, lack of access to seeds, water and pasture, training and market development are key constraints of the sector.

SPECIFIC AREAS UNDER REVIEW: ANALYSIS OF GENDER GAPS AND EXCLUSION

Gender equality and social inclusion are of paramount importance for the eradication of poverty, the construction of an equitable economy and sustainable development. This section will firstly examine issues of gender, and subsequently the broader topic of social inclusion within agriculture and rural development applying a gender lens.

3.1 Gender situation analysis in rural sector

Gender refers to the socially, culturally and politically constructed roles of women and men in their societies. Gender equality refers to the equal access of women and men, not only to social services, but also to livelihood opportunities, production opportunities land and markets.

With regard to legal equality, the Myanmar Constitution clearly states equality before the law of all citizens irrespective of race, religion, culture, class or sex. Myanmar is currently carrying out political and economic reform, and has placed great importance on enhancing the participation of women in the political sphere, to make sure that all women have equal opportunities to men in shaping their lives and can enjoy their economic, social and cultural rights in a meaningful way. The government has expressed its strong commitment to the advancement and empowerment of women in the recent publication of the National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women 2013-2022 whose key objective is to develop enabling systems, structures and practices that improve women's livelihoods and reduce poverty.

Based on descriptive information, some suggest that 'Myanmar culture' does not entail gender discrimination. However, because Myanmar has diverse ethnic and religious profiles, there is no single set of norms governing gender relations across the country. Furthermore, there exist barriers in mainstream Myanmar society as well as amongst ethnic groups to the advancement of women.

It is true that women in Myanmar are now taking up leadership roles in politics traditionally reserved for men by serving as ministers or deputy ministers and taking up key roles in technical profiles including as directors-general or principals of institutions and are therefore at the forefront of Union-level reform. Similarly, women in the national and regional parliaments are actively engaged in law-making responsibilities. At present however only 6 percent of seats are held by women (OECD 2014).

It is also true that women's participation in government and public administration as a proportion of staff has increased slowly since 2004-2005, to the point where, in 2010-2011, of the total staff of 31 government ministries, 52.4 percent was women. At the mid-management level, women's participation also increased – from 32.5 to 37 percent from roughly 2008-2011. Data gathered during this study from the Department of Agriculture show that women are also well represented in senior levels of the department. Women represent 62 percent of all agricultural department staff including officers around the country, and 50 percent of senior-level staff in Nay Pyi Taw. One reason given for this by key informants is that the ratio of women to men graduating from agricultural universities is relatively high, increasing the number of qualified female candidates applying for government posts.

However nationwide, the main contact with the government for most smallholders and community groups is the local governance structures at the village, ward, township, district and state levels, the administrators of which are appointed and supervised by the General Administration Department (Haggblade et al. 2013). There are no women administrators across the country's 330 townships. Of the current 15 972 ward/village tract administrators, only 17 are women. Within the General Administration Department (GAD) staff as a whole, amongst gazetted officers, 89 percent is men and only 11 percent is women (Kyi Pyar and Arnold 2014).

Although there are no legal provisions which prevent women from acting as administrators, cultural values which circumscribe women's socially sanctioned roles and responsibilities still limit women's participation in public decision-making forums at all levels, but particularly at the local level. These operate within the household to shape familial relationships and contribute to the gendered division of household and farm labour. The notion of empowerment for women is reported by key informants to be a relatively new conceptual framework in Myanmar.

Married men in Myanmar are, in the main, considered the head of their households, according to existing patriarchal norms. Married women tend only to be considered household heads in circumstances where their husband is no longer present as a result of widowhood, divorce or separation. Most female-headed households therefore comprise a single adult, and are most often – in four out of five cases in rural areas – a consequence of widowhood. The incidence of female-headed households in Myanmar is 23.7 percent, they are more prevalent in urban areas (27.7 percent) than in rural areas (22.2 percent) (Census Report Vol 2 2015).

Studies have found that female headship is not positively correlated to poverty in Myanmar (UNFPA 2010). Nonetheless, other studies have found that they have lower average incomes than male-headed households (LIFT 2013). Women with only one income on which to depend, with poor access to land and other resources, are highly vulnerable to poverty.

Household heads are often erroneously referred to in English as the 'bread winners'. Persistent gender biases tend to obscure the economic role that women play in the household and in the rural economy. There should be no doubt – women in Myanmar work in all aspects of

agriculture, in every crop sector, taking part in different tasks in the cultivation of both primary and secondary crops of their household, often alongside their husbands – in their jointly held family farm. In addition, women take part in livestock rearing, in fisheries and in forestry.

Several studies provide evidence of women's participation in agriculture. Data on agricultural labour for example show, that 69 percent of all agricultural labour is female (UNFPA 2010). The Census of Agriculture recorded women's economic activity within agriculture, indicating their active involvement in planting, transplanting, care of crops, harvesting, picking threshing, marketing and care of livestock. This finding is also echoed by the results of the LIFT household survey. It should be noted however, that roles appear to vary around the country, as well as from household to household. In the CDZ, for example, more farm labourers are women, owing to a high rate of labour outmigration from this region, particularly amongst men.

Thus, although women are mostly hired as 'unskilled' daily labourers or referred to as 'unpaid' family labour, they should be recognized as either employed or self-employed 'farmers', notwithstanding their additional roles as parents, carers, house managers and food preparers. Perhaps because they are not immediately considered within the definition of farmers, women's roles in the agricultural economy were not always clearly outlined by policy-makers and administrators interviewed for this report. One consequence of the poor visibility of women's roles in the agricultural economy is that women face barriers in accessing government services, in particular training (as discussed in the next section).

In addition, women also face barriers in holding assets and gaining investment. As mentioned above, women's names have mostly been left off the new land register. This omission may not diminish women's landholding rights as understood at the intrahousehold level or within the community or ethnic group, in cases where both spouses are regarded as joint owners of household land by virtue of marriage. After all, women's rights to marital property are also protected within the national legal system under various marriage laws, and women and men have equal rights to enter into contracts and administer property (USAID n.d.). However, the omission introduces a gender bias within the national land-tenure registry. This has an important impact in practice, as it imposes barriers for women to exercise their land rights, in particular following widowhood, divorce or separation. The Gender and Equality Network (GEN) hosted a national forum inviting women from around the country to discuss the implications that the draft National Land Use Policy will have for them, their families and their communities and their perspectives for what needs to be included in the policy. The network has recently published a set of recommendations for incorporation into the draft Land Use policy to ensure the adequate and non-discriminatory protection of men and women's land rights (GEN 2015).

In most Myanmar households, women are given primary responsibilities in basic and important tasks of managing and allocating the family budget, child care, preparing food for their family and housework. However, the significant contribution that women already make to the economy is often less well-recognized amongst government staff, in spite of the roles women evidently take on as farmers, business owners, entrepreneurs, managers, administrative staff or wage workers.

On average, women receive less pay in agricultural work than men, sometimes substantially less. This is often explained based on the different nature and load of work achieved by different workers particularly in tasks requiring physical strength. However, rates tend to be applied based on a worker's gender rather than individual capacity or task. Instances of gender-based

discrimination, where equal work was not remunerated by equal pay, were reported to the research team. Available data reveal that both on- and off-farm unskilled daily wages for women were consistently below that of men for five townships monitored by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) throughout 2008, usually by a factor of 25-33 percent (UNFPA 2010).

Education opportunities for men and women are still limited beyond free primary education. Nationwide, data from the Integrated Household Living Conditions Assessment (IHLCA) reveal that only one in four rural communities have access to a secondary school within an hour's walk from home. In so-called brown areas, where security is an ongoing challenge, even though the school infrastructure may exist, it is too unsafe for children to attend. There is no indication of male bias in access to primary education at the national level (OECD 2014). However, studies cited from Chin State indicate that daughters in particular have dropped out of school to support their families. Data from various sources show a roughly similar enrolment rate for males and females attending secondary education at the national level.

According to national statistics, 11 percent of women are illiterate while only 4 percent of men are illiterate, although low levels of literacy prevail in Rakhine and Shan State where only two out of three adults are able to read and understand a text and solve a simple mathematical problem. Data from Eastern Shan in particular, indicate that only around half of rural people are literate, with women recorded as having substantially lower literacy than men (83 vs 55 percent). Illiteracy is a major barrier to access to information and opportunities, for example, as discussed in the following section; it is also a barrier to participation in training from the agricultural extension service.

Women in many communities are discouraged from venturing from home outside daylight hours. This restriction does not generally apply to men. Over time, lack of exposure to unfamiliar surroundings entrenches the barriers for women who may be keen to take up opportunities for training or networking, but are reticent to travel beyond their own community or familiar marketplaces to pursue them. These issues are discussed further in the following sections.

Violence against women continues to be a very pressing problem, particularly in conflict areas, and has been described as one of the most serious ongoing human rights violations in the country (OECD 2014). The scale and severity of the problem have been documented by various women's groups around the country. A new law is currently in draft drawing on the collaboration of the government and civil society groups such as the Gender and Equality Network.

In summary: Women in Myanmar are now taking up leadership roles in politics traditionally reserved for men. Women are also well represented in senior levels of the Department of Agriculture. However, in local governance structures, women are still notable by their absence. There are no women administrators across the country's 330 townships, and only 0.001 percent of village tract administrators are women. Persistent gender biases also tend to obscure the economic role that women play in the household and in the rural economy. It is clear that rural women in Myanmar work in all sectors of agriculture. However, both on- and off-farm unskilled daily wages for women remain consistently below those of men. Married men in Myanmar are, in the main, considered the head of their households, according to patriarchal norms. Thus, most female-headed households comprise a single adult – in rural areas, in four out of five cases, she is a widow. While studies have found that female-headed households are not more likely to be

poorer than male-headed households, they have lower average incomes than male-headed households.

3.2 Social inclusion

Social inclusion refers to the removal of institutional barriers and the enhancement of incentives to increase the access of diverse individuals and groups to development opportunities. Empowerment, equal and meaningful participation in decision-making, access to and control over resources, benefit sharing, and balancing power relations are key areas for development.

Language barriers are major constraints to local people's empowerment and participation in decision-making spaces and access to government departments. As noted above, although the Myanmar tongue is the most widely spoken language, over a hundred different languages and dialects are spoken by different ethnic groups around the country. If government staff are frequently transferred around the country, there is less chance for officers to learn local languages and sensitivities. Those speaking only minority languages have correspondingly lower access to programme information and training.

3.3 Agricultural policy

Agricultural, livestock and fisheries policies were in the past a matter for internal decision-making within the relevant ministries and were not set out for public discussion. According to the Agricultural Sector Review (FAO 2003) the main agricultural sector objectives espoused by the government at that time were primarily to produce sufficient paddy for food self-sufficiency and a surplus for the promotion of exports. In addition, goals were set up to achieve self-sufficiency in edible oils and to expand the production of beans, pulses and industrial crops for export. There has been no support for the development of crop processing. The element of service delivery to farmers was not emphasized. Targets in terms of areas to be planted and volumes to be produced were specified periodically, based on centralized priorities, in sometimes ambitious terms (FAO 2003). Thus the principal objectives were designed without the participation or express inclusion of the needs of producers – farmers and farm workers and their communities.

Myanmar's agricultural policy however is in reform, and a series of new policy documents has been developed from 2012 including remarks by the President, a 20-year long-term plan and a five-year short-term plan. Changes have been made to place poverty reduction and rural development goals at the heart of agriculture sector development. Nevertheless, the enduring emphasis of policies for agricultural development remain on increasing production and disseminating technologies, in particular seeds and mechanized production systems, without a clear evidence-based analysis of whether, to what extent and how these policies are supporting smallholders.

For example, the policy on high-yielding and quality seed production emphasizes cooperation with foreign seed companies for seed protection technologies, the imposition of a seed quality control system that regions and states must implement, including setting up seed-processing plants; encouragement of private sector cooperation and investment in quality seed production; encouragement of the private sector to set up companies for everything from quality seed production to marketing; and building up quality seed production zones in respective regions and states.

However, it overlooks the need to continue support for access to low-cost seeds. In particular, there is no mention of community-based seed multiplication initiatives or farmer participatory plant breeding of which there have been several initiatives, including in Myanmar. The policy has nothing to say on the importance of improving indigenous seeds and maintaining seed diversity, for sustainable agricultural livelihoods, or other issues raised by groups working with the Food Security Working Group (FSWG) civil society network. While it is possible that private sector seed producers will be able to offer a broader distribution of high-quality seeds than the current, insufficient, reach at present, it is also important to recognize that if seeds markets are allowed to become dominated by just a few companies, that prices are likely to rise. Furthermore, without direct attention to social inclusion, seeds that respond well to higher inputs may be prioritized over seeds that can do well in the kind of suboptimal conditions which farmers typically have to work with. In order to promote the best chance of providing high-quality seeds at low costs, it is vital that a competitive market, including diverse public and private seed providers, is developed.

In the implementation and reporting of programme implementation, a business-as-usual approach also still appears to be applied. The annual agriculture brief of 2014 sets out a quantification and technical specification of crops produced. There is no information on which set of farmers produces different crops, through which methods or under which environmental or other constraints to reach these yields. In one of the few references to farmers, the text advises “farmers should make the effort to meet the market demand” for highly priced maize. This implies an analysis that what is lacking is a willingness of ‘farmers’ to put in an effort. A more comprehensive assessment of farmer constraints would help to broaden the analysis and eliminate apparent prejudices about farmer motivations. Indeed, not untypically for such documents, it refers (anthropomorphically) to ‘high-performing crops’, a term which obscures the human component within the agricultural process, and renders invisible the work, skill and knowledge that is developed by farmers, often in challenging suboptimal environmental or socio-economic circumstances.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation (MoAI) has offices throughout the country at state/division, district and township (and village tract) levels and comprises 75 000 staff (FAO 2003). The Department of Agriculture (DOA) alone has approximately 17 782 staff including at the ward (village tract) level. The Department of Forestry (DOF) has considerably fewer staff resources, and there is on average only one DOF officer for 34 townships (FAO 2003). In 2003 there were just 168 veterinarians and assistants in the Livestock Breeding and Veterinary Department.

3.4 Research

The government’s role in supporting research and development is managed through the Department for Agricultural Research (DAR), with a staff of 492 technicians nationwide. The department is focused on the development of high-yielding varieties of crops, agricultural techniques for the maximization of benefits and the sustainable use of the natural resources and conservation and utilization of crop genetic resources. In parallel with the DOA, it also aims at dissemination of improved crop varieties and agronomic technologies to farmers.

The DAR research priorities are centrally determined and ultimately depend on the direction of the Minister for Agriculture and Irrigation. It has been noted that there is a low adoption rate by farmers of several improved varieties and hybrid seeds released by research institutions in recent

years, which appears to be an indication that the promoted seeds, machinery and technologies are either not accessible, affordable, applicable or of direct interest to most farmers. As long as studies focus, for example, on technologies which imply heavy investment costs for farmers or are profitable only within larger farm plots, they will be of little benefit to most land-poor farmers who have insufficient access to credit to consider taking such a risk.

Dedicated staff are nevertheless conscious of the need to orient their work with consideration for the resource-poor farmers, searching for optimum yields with minimum inputs. Research is also beginning to incorporate new concerns over climate variability and market constraints. In the past, there have been many low-cost farming-oriented research programmes, including for example, studying the viability of low-nitrogen tolerant rice varieties, relevant soil moisture conservation techniques, organic production methods, vermiculture, effective micro-organisms, etc. However, such research findings are not necessarily brought into the core programming of the ministry.

There are too few opportunities for interested farmers to meet with research staff at the national and regional levels. While the department staff regularly present their work through annual field days in Yezin (near Nay Pyi Taw), at seminars, and occasionally receive visits by farmers from remote provinces when arranged by NGOs, the department is not so accessible for most farmers. Resources are very limited. There are only seven crop research stations located around the country, and as their field trials may not be focused on the crops grown by the farmers in the local area these are not regularly visited by smallholders. In an attempt to bridge the distance, the DAR operates a Farmers TV station. However, the effectiveness of these channels of communication has yet to be evaluated.

Key informants indicate that recently there has been a change in approach towards a more participatory research approach, introducing farmer field trials, keeping data on different farmers' assessments of crop suitability. However, this kind of participatory approach will require another set of skills from DAR researchers, who tend not to have been trained in the sociological aspects of farming. Research staff are unused to having to find the right vernacular language, for example, to describe the technical components of the work they are introducing. It is still normal for studies of the research department to be published and presented only in English, which make for a very limited readership.

The DAR's focus remains on increasing productivity in crop cultivation. There is currently no work on postharvest processing and recycling technologies, whereas, if successfully developed, these could be of benefit to a broader set of smallholder farmers as well as the rural landless population. So far there has been limited attention to the design of appropriate machinery which responds to farmers' needs and constraints. There may be potential for example for researching machinery using lighter materials that may be better adopted by women farmers and farm workers. The potential scope of new research projects is examined in section 5.

3.5 Extension

The DOA offers various services to support farming, in particular the provision of information and certified seeds. However, it has been noted that the bulk of delivery of services is concentrated on government model farms, such that most small-scale farmers do not gain direct access to these services. Allocations to the DOA amount to only 4.5 percent of the MoAI's

expenditure, which accounted for 8.05 percent of total national spending in 2010 (Oxfam 2014), in other words, the DOA has been allocated only 0.36 percent of total national spending.

Several key informants reported the inadequate access of farmers to certified seed. Most farmers carry out informal seed exchange according to traditional networks. It has been estimated that the formal distribution of certified rice seeds hardly reaches 10 percent of the sown area, which may cover only 2 percent of demand for these seeds. For other seeds, even major crops such as pulses and oilseed that are of critical relevance to the CDZ, the provision of improved seeds is estimated to supply only 0.1-0.25 percent of the demand.

The DOA has in the past provided training to farmers so that they can produce their own good quality seeds. Several initiatives have shown that farmers can develop capacity in seed selection, and projects have helped to set up village-based seed multiplication and seed banks. See for example, the work of the Metta Foundation, Association of Volunteers in International Service, the Network Activities Group and the Australian Center for International Agricultural Research.

The role of private sector companies in seed multiplication and marketing, particularly for hybrid maize and vegetables, is being promoted under the new agriculture sector policy. Hybrid seeds should be carefully monitored for cost-effectiveness and environmental sustainability, as although these are likely to increase overall production, at least for a period of time, they tend also to require a package of inputs, fertilizer, pesticides and external technical knowledge that makes them unattractive for smallholder farmers. The preservation of a diverse local seedstock will continue to have an enduring importance in Myanmar as indigenous seeds are likely to be more resilient to climatic and pest hazards, as well as corresponding to local custom, taste, (which in some cases hold the potential for higher prices than newly conventional varieties).

The Agricultural Extension Division, which focuses on provision of inputs and dissemination of sustainable farm management techniques to farmers, is also understaffed and under resourced. It has a staff of 4 534, with roughly equal numbers of men (48 percent) and women (52 percent). Around 83 percent are based in the field. All staff are technically qualified, holding at least an Agricultural Diploma, and most have university degrees. However, they have few opportunities for periodic retraining. Staff work with low stipends and allowances, and are not provided with motorized transport despite the large areas they are responsible for, all of which impose serious constraints upon officers' ability to support smallholder farmers. Budget constraints characterize all extension services, including those operated by other departments including the Department of Forestry and the Department of Livestock.

Training offered is based on central directives and these are expected to be applied in broadly defined areas throughout the country. As such, advice does not tend to be adapted to take into account farmers' constraints, local conditions or emerging markets, nor does the curriculum leave room for alternative needs of farmers to be covered. It has been noted, for example, that a variety of soil moisture conservation techniques is not disseminated by extension services in relevant areas such as the CDZ. NGOs note that due to an overriding focus on the promotion of rice production, this crop is being promoted by the government in certain parts of the CDZ, despite other crops, such as cotton, being more profitable for smallholders, and more sustainable, in the local environmental context (Oxfam 2014).

Formal evaluations are not made by training staff to assess the reach and barriers to adoption of the training they offer. However, informally, staff build up a picture of the problems faced.

Extension Division staff networks are in a good position to become a liaison with farmers to learn and discuss their concerns; they could reply to relevant concerns via training programmes and identify priorities. However, at present, they are not given this mandate.

Farmer field schools are organized by extension staff. However, in view of the budget constraints they face, contrary to their name, classes may be held in township offices. In practice, this means that farmer field schools are commonly attended only by men, even in areas where women form most of the farm labour force, such as in many parts of the CDZ. At one school visited, male participants explained that they sometimes felt unable to respond to many questions asked of them by the 'women labourers'. The women were expected to adopt the techniques disseminated, but did not have the opportunity to attend the training themselves.

The criteria for selecting participants of the farmer field schools is based on those who are literate in the Myanmar tongue, having reached a certain level of primary school education. Farmers interviewed indicated that as they are motivated by profit, their interest in the training will be moderated by the extent to which they see the potential benefit, regardless of their level of education. Although the training cannot reach all those who are interested in learning, there is dissemination of information through social networks and sharing within the village, which was reported to extend to all farmers within a village.

Extension staff interviewed have made efforts to reach as many farmers as possible on the limited budgets available to them. In one township visited for example, in 2014-2015, with a staff of only 12 officers, training had been held 40 times per year, reaching 2 850 trainees (no gender-segregated data), 200 public speaking events had been held with an estimated 15 620 people in the audience, including taking advantage of annual harvest fairs and other public spaces. It is estimated by local staff that one in 10 households in the township has been reached in this way, using a training of trainers' approach. Staff have made the most of connections with NGOs and have taken efforts to ensure coordination amongst relevant line agencies.

Little consideration appears to have been given in the design of training programmes to the inclusion of women farmers. According to key informants within the DAR, as well as women interviewed during the team's field visits in different parts of the country, women have a strong interest in accessing technical information, and taking part directly in training, but mostly they are not given the opportunity. Cultural biases noted earlier, reserve such opportunities for the heads of the households, which in most cases are men. Rural women in many communities are discouraged from leadership, and are sometimes assumed to be uninterested and unavailable due to the heavy demands of housework and child care. Many women lack confidence to leave the village to attend training, especially where little encouragement and support are offered. On the other hand, there have been many successful examples of women's empowerment in areas where NGOs are operating gender-sensitive rural development activities as discussed in the following section.

There are serious consequences for the exclusion of certain sets of small-scale farmers (for example women farmers) from training and extension. Key informants have noted that in Shan State, for example, the lack of access of women farmers to training has contributed to exacerbating the problems of poor soil nutrient and pest management practices on their upland vegetable farms. Without access to impartial information, farmers take advice from traders. Concerns about a loss of soil fertility are addressed by applying greater amounts of chemical fertilizer, which can establish a negative feedback loop of declining soil fertility. Equally,

elsewhere, extension advice urging the importance of safe handling of pesticides does not appear to be reaching farmers, as it is common for example to see workers in the Delta zone applying chemicals to their fields from backpack sprays, without any protective clothing.

3.6 Rural finance

Access to research, training and advice could significantly increase smallholder farmer productivity. However, if increased costs are implied by the promoted technologies, the increased availability and sound design of lower-cost credit schemes will also be critical to facilitate smallholder access. At present there appear to be no crop insurance schemes available to farmers.

Indebtedness is a common feature of the rural household economy in Myanmar. Data from the LIFT survey indicate that 81 percent of households had taken out a loan during the last 12 months, reaching to 90.5 percent of households in the coastal/delta area, with a lower percentage (75 percent) in the hilly areas. Key informants estimated that farming households typically have five or six different types of debt. There is also evidence that the total amounts of household debt are increasing. The LIFT survey found that 12.5 percent of households reported debts of over 1 million kyat (approximately US\$1 000) in 2013, where none had debts of over 700 000 kyat two years earlier (LIFT 2013).

An important concern is that the most common use of credit appears to be to purchase food. A third of households in the LIFT study reported that food was the most important use of the loans they had taken out in the last year. Landless households were more likely to borrow money for food than those who held land. Under these circumstances, food insecurity may be alleviated in the short term, feeding a family to grow, but the economic difficulties of these households are likely to be prolonged or deepened. On the other hand, the survey also found an increasing set of households was taking out loans for agricultural inputs, investments which have a chance of generating a shorter term return. Credit that is used to fund productive investments appears to be significantly more common amongst farming households than non-agricultural rural households, according to the 2009 IHLCA survey.

In many parts of the country, there appears to be no difficulty in accessing sources of credit, whether formal or informal. However, there are some areas where credit supply is very limited indeed. For example, in Eastern Shan state, less than 2 percent of families reported taking either formal or informal credit for agricultural purposes, a reflection that credit is socially frowned upon in that area (MNPED et al. 2011). Elsewhere, Chin State, Northern Shan and Tanintharyi report limited access to credit (5.6, 8.9 and 11.2 percent respectively).

Where available, credit sources are diverse and may include microfinance, village savings and loans, informal family lending, money lenders, shopkeepers, private companies, cooperatives, presale credit (traders) and government schemes. Some of these schemes are described in the following section.

Whereas formal sources of credit such as from government and semi-government banks offer low annual interest rates (8.5 percent p.a.), these are relatively difficult for farmers to access, as they involve lengthy procedures and reportedly only offer small sums. Less than 20 percent of households in Myanmar are able to access formal financial services, counting microfinance schemes (Ferguson 2013).

Some sources of formal lending make loans available only to the head of the household. There is a danger if women do not participate in the decision-making for such loans, particularly where loans are secured on the principal household assets such as land, so it is very important to ensure that spousal signatures are obtained. Limited available information indicates that women have primary responsibility for managing household finances, indeed they are often referred to as 'Home Ministers', and would normally be expected to have a strong role in decisions relating to household and farm financing, although this area has not been researched.

Microfinance schemes are legally entitled to charge up to 2.5 percent interest per month or a maximum of 30 percent per year for short-term loans. These rates also apply to the microfinance operations of the cooperatives. While this is expensive by international standards, these schemes are considerably cheaper than the prevailing informal lending rates which can typically charge 50 or 60 percent in interest *per annum*, even when mortgaged on farm assets, and considerably more when unsecured. At very high rates, poorly managed household debt can easily spiral out of control.

Various microfinance schemes have been instituted which have been targeted at women and have contributed to women's economic and social empowerment in recent years. They show that increasing women's access to capacity building, community mobilization techniques and affordable credit can have significant impacts on women's participation in economic decision-making (UNFPA 2010). The Sustainable Microfinance to Improve the Livelihoods of the Poor Project in the Delta, CDZ and Shan State (UNDP Human Development Initiative) implemented by PACT was specifically targeted at women. An evaluation in 2012 found that in addition to apparent increases in material assets as a result of access to credit from the scheme, other transformational impacts were beginning to be noted. The opinions of women clients were reported to be taken into account more than in the past at household and village levels; women clients of the microfinance programme are now running their own businesses which is contributing to family budgets, community development and participation in social events. The evaluation found that participating women have become more confident and their roles in community decision-making have become stronger. However, women have not reached parity of influence with men. (Dorsay 2012).

Many existing formal microfinance services have maintained ceilings on the size of loans available to micro and small producers because of the real or perceived low earning potential of small producers. This has limited possibilities of large expansions in production. Women entrepreneurs in interviews with the Gender Situation Analysis (GSA) team stated that a key priority is to raise their loan ceilings. Women producing high-value market crops, such as chilies, garlic and specialty melons are able to borrow about 300 000 kyats per acre, whereas they assessed other crops that needed inputs amounting to three to four times this amount. However, it will be important to keep monitoring the impact of such lending.

3.7 Other services

The Department for Agricultural Mechanization is promoting mechanization as a means to increase nationwide cropping intensity. Similar to the social exclusion concerns mentioned above, the selection of machinery for promotion does not appear yet to be based on systematic assessment of farmers' needs for farm equipment. Very few farmers can afford the machinery that is available on the market; one survey found that currently only 2.1 percent of farmers studied owned or co-owned farm machinery, and only a very small fraction of these farmers are

poor households (UNDP 2013). The potential impact on the local wage labour force of a wider adoption of labour-saving machinery does not appear to be a major focus of the departmental programme. Losses from the replacement of draught animals with tractors, including the loss of access to manure and consequent impacts for soil fertility management on small-scale farms, will need to be carefully weighed up against the benefits, and clear impartial information needs to be provided to small-scale farmers accordingly.

At present irrigation is estimated to reach only 15.5 percent of the net sown area of the country. Very small-scale Water User Groups (WUGs) have been formed to take responsibility for maintenance and repair of the larger irrigation schemes. However, decisions relating to the timing and quantity of water have in the past all been taken in a top-down manner by the government, leaving WUGs excluded from the process. When WUGs are unable to draw sufficient benefit from the irrigation, they are not well maintained. Appropriate small-scale water extraction and drip irrigation schemes that conserve water resources do not appear to be being promoted on any significant scale. Other sources of irrigation such as pump schemes are increasingly costly in correlation to the price of diesel fuel, and out of reach of poorer farmers.

Cheaper sources of fuel are not readily accessible. Access to electricity is improving, and ILHCA data have indicated that rates of access amongst the poor are increasing faster than for other sectors. In the country as a whole, around 50 percent of households had access to electricity from either government, communal or private sources (MNPED et al. 2011). However, there are significant differences amongst the states and divisions, with less than a third of households in Rakhine, Ayeyarwaddy, Magwe and Bago having access to electricity from any source. Government provision does not cover a large proportion of the population. The LIFT survey found that government provision accounted for only 12 percent of households, with households in coastal and delta regions in particular being reliant on private electricity generation, with only 1.5 percent of households using government-sourced electricity (LIFT 2013).

3.8 Forestry

It has been estimated that, in an average rural household, a large component, 40 percent, of their livelihoods are dependent on forest resources. In particular, many households obtain their primary household energy from the forests, as well as a range of foods, medicinal herbs and materials. Many wooded areas serve as grazing areas for livestock, particularly held by the landless. However, access to forest areas is by no means secure, and as forest resources dwindle from overuse and private appropriation, increasingly restrictions have been put in place to prevent local people from gaining access. Depending on the forest classification, local people may be strictly excluded from accessing these resources according to law. While conservation activities are necessary to maintain the health of public resources, the loss of access to these resources can place considerable stress on neighbouring communities.

Shifting cultivation (*Taungya*) is often singled out in negative terms as a major cause of deforestation, whereas it must also be recognized as a system that provides livelihood resources for as many as 2 million rural households (Srinivas and Hlaing 2015). Research has shown that *Taungya* systems with an adequate rotation can be ecologically sustainable and contribute significantly to communities' food security (FSWG 2011) and that traditional tenure arrangements for *Taungya* allocation have fostered egalitarian access to land in highland communities (San Thein 2012). A restriction of *Taungya* practices, unless very carefully approached with the inclusive participation of local populations, is likely to bring about

livelihood deterioration and hardship amongst the poorest in relevant highland areas. NGOs who have been working with highland communities for over a decade have noted that in a change from shifting cultivation systems to permanent culture, communal land tenure systems will most likely decay and be supplanted by private property rights. As land markets emerge, the poor are often the first to sell or mortgage their lands. Technical and financial assistance to the poor in such a process of change should emphasize building capacity for alternative sustainable livelihoods, including appropriate training in agroforestry and the effective use of inputs in more intensive production systems (San Thein 2012).

Participatory approaches are beginning to be put into practice within the forestry sector. According to the Community Forest Instruction 1995, it has become possible for a community to secure a 30-year lease over an area, subject to the approval of community management practices. However, progress has been slow. To date, 572 forest user groups have been formally approved and issued with certificates, managing a total of 104 146 acres of forest. Many more applications are pending approval. Implementation progress has been highest in Shan, Rakhine, Magway and Mandalay (Tint et al. 2011).

3.9 Off-farm opportunities

In Myanmar, the poor and land poor are most at risk of exclusion from government livelihood programmes. It was noted in the course of field visits that landlessness is not always identified as a relevant problem context by local officials, as the landless migrate from the area and no longer number amongst those under their direct responsibility. As noted earlier, in fact, numbers of landless households are high throughout the country, particularly amongst the younger generation.

A lack of off-farm rural employment opportunities is contributing to a high degree of migration, however migration does not appear to be the specific focus of attention from the government agency relating to rural livelihoods. The rate of outmigration appears to be very high in the CDZ where, as noted earlier, in particular men have left due to very few wage-earning opportunities in the water-stressed area to look for work in construction and in the coast, where daily wages are significantly higher. In the national picture, migrants comprise almost as many women as men. Rural outmigration heads to urban or peri-urban areas or abroad. Rural-to-rural migration is strong according to available data (latest survey in 2004), even amongst the youth, which suggests that migrants are not necessarily drawn to urban livelihoods, but rather that there is insufficient support in the rural areas of origin for households to make a living (UNFPA 2010).

While youth employment, particularly for young men, is not being adequately addressed, rural development programmes also do not appear to pay direct attention to the economic livelihoods of older farmers. UNFPA (2010) found that most of the elderly in the rural areas remain economically active well into old age. Citing data from 2001, they reported that 55 percent of elderly men and 22 percent of elderly women were economically active. In 2006, the numbers had not changed substantially, with the economic activity rate recorded at 52.7 percent for elderly males and 25.6 percent for elderly females. However, with increased landlessness, there are fewer opportunities for the older generation to make an economic contribution. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) also noted that low wages and low returns are reducing the capacity of younger wage earners to fulfill their former social role in supporting their parents' generation. Ironically, land may be sacrificed in order to support their children to get an

education, but when their children's low wages can hardly sustain one family, the older generation is left in a very vulnerable situation.

In summary: With very limited budgets, most agricultural programmes, including inputs distribution, research and extension are not realistically resourced to be able to reach most of the small-scale farming population. However, programmes are also not clearly designed to foster inclusion. Where top-down approaches to programme design and implementation still exist, these are failing to address the priorities, needs and constraints of small-scale farmers. Changes have been instituted to place poverty reduction at the heart of the agriculture sector and rural development policies, but much work is needed to re-orient programmes and activities to achieve these goals. In particular smallholder farmers should be expressly the core focus of the analysis, planning, implementation and monitoring of agricultural programmes, through decentralized participatory approaches that address problems and opportunities specific to different areas. There are insufficient opportunities for government technicians to be able to communicate and discuss directly with groups of small farmers. The distribution of high-quality seeds is well below demand, even for the major pillar crops, although there are efforts to diversify the sources of seed, through village-based seed multiplication programmes. Women, in particular, are excluded from access to training from government agencies, despite evidently being in demand for such information. Systematic evaluations have not yet been carried out to be able to assess the effectiveness of programmes for small farmers of both genders. Indebtedness is a common feature of the rural household economy in Myanmar however, worryingly credit is most often used to purchase food, which is an indicator of the perpetuation of poverty. There is some indication that the number of households taking loans for agriculture is increasing, although data are not conclusive on this point, but loan sizes are clearly increasing. Most households do not access formal loans, but source money from family and friends and money lenders. Well-designed microfinance schemes that are reaching women have resulted not only in increased material assets, but are beginning to influence other transformational impacts on women's empowerment within the community. Landlessness and rural outmigration are not being directly addressed by government rural development programmes, which need to pay more strategic attention to increasing rural employment.

INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT

4.1 New approaches to rural development

The institutional environment in Myanmar is undergoing a period of change, although this process is only at a preliminary stage. The new NSPARD is aimed at contributing to the national goal of decreasing the rate of poverty by half from 32 percent in 2005 to 16 percent by 2015, and commits to taking a people-centred approach to rural development. A central committee has been formed, chaired by president and working committees established at all administrative levels down to the township/village level. The Central Working Committee on Poverty Alleviation and Rural Development is chaired by the Vice-President, Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Livestock, Fisheries, and Rural Development (MOLFRD). Rural development and poverty alleviation working groups have also been set up at state/region levels.

Different government organizations have committed to adopting NSPARD into mainstream national plans including the Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry of Forestry, the Ministry for Finance and Revenue, Ministry of Cooperatives, Ministry for Information and Culture, Ministry

for Industry and the Ministry for Home Affairs. Unfortunately, it was not possible to review these activities within the limited time available for this report.

Regarding the development of the agricultural production sector, the MoAI is distributing high-yielding paddy strains, disseminating knowledge on scientific agricultural methods, establishing research farms, transforming conventional farms into mechanized farm systems, providing money and capital, and emergence of small- and medium- agro-industries and businesses, amongst other activities. Many of these activities have been reviewed in the previous section.

MOLFRD has expressed its support to ensuring all-inclusive stakeholder participation in carrying out rural development activities for poverty alleviation. Following two national consultations with civil society groups and international development organizations as well as business groups, the national strategy presents priority working proposals including (in summary): the organization of diffused expertise, technology, experience, capital and funds; adopting a decentralization approach for rural development; solving cases related to land tenure of small farmers; the collaborative application of lessons from microfinance, ICT development, renewable energy development, environmental conservation, agriculture and livestock breeding technology development; the development of SMEs in partnership with the private sector; improving human rights conditions for local people, adopting a rights-based approach; and strengthening community-based organizations.

Among the three departments under MOLFRD, the DRD is responsible for the development of infrastructure such as roads, bridges, domestic water supply and electricity connections and improving the socio-economic life of the rural populace. It is committed to a participatory approach working with rural communities and households, village socio-economic and governance organizations, local government agencies at the township and district levels, national-level governmental agencies including ministries and departments, other national institutions, civil society groups, NGOs, the private sector and the international development community including multilateral and bilateral development agencies and international NGOs and philanthropic organizations. Senior officials are committed to adopting a gender-sensitive approach.

The DRD's Evergreen Village Development Project (in the Myanmar tongue 'Mya Sein Yaung' [MSY]) was implemented in 1 350 villages in 130 townships, 47 districts of all states and regions, during 2014-2015 providing US\$30 000 to each participating village, which in most cases is being used as a revolving fund for microcredit. It is aimed at increasing employment opportunities and household income, ensuring food security through supporting subsistence livestock farming, developing rural industries by improving basic rural infrastructure, and improving the capacity of rural communities and developing a resilient society in the event of natural disasters.

Funds are managed in a decentralized way, with communities given relative autonomy in the priorities they choose to support, under the supervision of township financial management committees. Committees are formed that, in a departure from the prevailing leadership norms discussed in the previous section, must include two or three women within a five-to-nine person team, elected by ballot at a community meeting. The inclusion of such rules within the design of the scheme may be having a significant impact. Committee members interviewed in two locations reported that without this gender-inclusive stipulation in the rules of the project, it is likely that women would not have been elected to their posts, however women's participation

was seen as a positive contribution. As it is an ongoing project, impacts and lessons have yet to be systematically evaluated.

However, where funds are thinly distributed to all members of the community, it is possible that the impact of this project will be piecemeal or fragmented. Additional initiatives will be needed, in particular for generating rural incomes, through a more strategic approach to increasing rural employment opportunities. At present there is no rural employment strategy. With an increase in landlessness and the strong outmigration from certain areas, this must be an area for urgent attention.

As noted in the previous section, cooperation between civil society networks and government is being developed, in a process that is beginning, tentatively, to build a degree of trust. However, this process needs to be strengthened over time, with an increase in consultative processes, forums and dialogues involving farmers' networks, technicians and legislators, which influence meaningful action towards poverty alleviation and sustainable development.

4.2 Advancement of women

The Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement is the focal ministry for the advancement of women and provides six major services – Women Welfare Services (which runs vocational training centres for women, Women Development Centrest, Child Welfare Services, Youth Welfare Services, Resettlement and Rehabilitation of Vagrants, and Rehabilitation of the Disabled and Care of the Aged Services. The ministry is also a focal point for follow up of the Rights of the Child. Allocations for social welfare (Department for Social Welfare and Development, DSWD) declined from under 0.2 percent of expenditure in 2011-2012 to 0.1 percent in 2014-2015 (UNICEF and MDRI, 2015).

The National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women was developed through a collaborative process with the involvement of civil society groups and networks focusing on gender. The plan highlights 12 priority areas of action including developing enabling systems, structures and practices that improve women's livelihoods and reduce poverty, requiring gender dimensions to be included in research and surveys, awareness-raising, programme implementation, budgets and policies. While the plan is intended as a 'whole of government' plan, it does not appear to be well known throughout the government. As far as is known, there are no gender focal points appointed within the ministries to coordinate the implementation of the strategic plan, and no specific allocation of budgets to activities to support the advancement of women within ministerial programme implementation.

One year after the UN Conference on Women in Beijing, the Myanmar National Committee for Women Affairs (MNCWA) was formed on 7 October 1996. It is currently chaired by the Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement. Local-level committees are set up in every township with 14 committee members, both men and women, which promote training, particularly on that related to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and gender awareness. There are also committees set up at district levels which have 50 members. At the township level, members of each committee represent the GAD, the police force, the Attorney General, the Department of Education, the Department of Health and so forth. There are no representatives from the DAR or related agencies.

Two relevant quasi-governmental but self-funded organizations are the Myanmar Mother and Child Welfare Association (MMWCA) and the Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation

(Mwaf). These have strengths in being mobilized around the country and being able to reach thousands of women in townships around the country, focusing on areas such as health and education, and vocational training. However, neither organization has a focus on the agriculture sector. Both operate microfinance schemes, along similar terms and conditions, however these are currently not focused on farming support and offer relatively small loans.

In fact there has been very little attention, until recently, to women's agricultural livelihoods within the programme of work of gender advocacy groups, whether these are within government, quasi-government or the non-governmental sectors. Livelihood initiatives for women offered by the DSWD have tended to focus on a limited range of vocational training courses offering training in sewing, embroidery, weaving, tailoring, flower decoration, fruit decoration, baking, hair cutting and database management. There is very little linkage between vocational training and market demand. There are no 'vocational' training courses offered in agriculture, processing or marketing.

4.3 Civil society and international NGOs

Myanmar has a growing civil society sector working in all states and regions of the country. Community-based organizations are working on small-scale livelihood and other development projects. Local NGO groups are actively working to empower and support CBOs and advocate for the resolution of emerging problems in relation to food security and sustainable development. The staff of local NGOs are important resource people in understanding local contexts, however they are often understaffed, and work with very limited resources. Farmers' organizations are still nascent in the country, given that restrictions on the freedom of association were only lifted in the 2008 Constitution, and as they grow, they will need to develop transparent and participatory processes of representation of men and women farmers in different communities.

A few international NGOs have been working in Myanmar for over a decade; many commenced in 2008 to carry out disaster relief and rehabilitation work in the aftermath of the devastating Cyclones Nargis and Giri, while a growing number has been established since the lifting of international sanctions. NGOs, both national and international, including Action Aid, Groupe de Recherches et d'Echanges Technologiques (GRET), the Metta Foundation, Network Activities Group, and Oxfam to name but a few, are engaged in gender-sensitive, sustainable agricultural development and agro-enterprise projects; some interesting initiatives are described in the next section.

Networks such as the Food Security Working Group (FSWG) are fostering coordination amongst various member groups which include CBOs, local NGOs and international NGOs, and works in partnership with various institutions including Yezin Agricultural University (YAU) and the World Food Programme. The working group focuses on building capacity of members and networking to identify issues for research, dialogue and policy advocacy in support of small farmers. It is currently carrying out a farmer organization mapping exercise. Two subgroup programmes have been established on agricultural policies and land. The Policy Study Group is working on analysis of the Seed Law, the National Framework on Rice Policy, the Agricultural Investment Law and the Farmer Protection Law. The Land Core Group is aimed at promoting pro-poor land reform to support sustainable economic, social and environmental development that balances the contributions of smallholder farmers and large-scale investment to national growth. It has been working on alliance building, research and analysis of upland land-tenure

issues, contract farming, land and gender, and the incorporation of civil society group perspectives in the formulation of the National Land Use Policy.

The Gender and Equality Network (GEN) coordinates more than 100 civil society organizations, national and international NGOs, UN agencies and technical resources persons working to bring about gender equality and women's rights in Myanmar. The network is aimed to help establish more enabling systems, structures and practices so that women and men are treated equally and women's rights are realized throughout Myanmar. Much of their focus has been dedicated to awareness-raising, and advocating legal reform to bring about the elimination of violence against women, which is a critical ongoing issue facing women and girls around the country. The network has played a key role within the development of women's empowerment policies in Myanmar.

4.4 Cooperatives

Cooperatives have been in existence in Myanmar for several decades. The movement was brought into line with the market economy in 1992 with the introduction of the Cooperatives Law. However, beset by a long history of top-down governmental control and lack of participation, the image of cooperatives has suffered. Currently, the Ministry of Cooperatives (MOC) is newly committed to changing this perception and breathing new energy into the cooperative movement.

There are two types of cooperatives in Myanmar, most are created under the cooperative law, and are governed by the MOC. The second type is independent and set up on the initiative of NGOs, but these are still small in number. There are a total of 31 090 cooperatives already established in Myanmar, which is an average of approximately one cooperative for every two villages. The current policy aims to expand the establishment of cooperatives to number at least one in every village. As of October 2014, the overall membership of cooperatives was recorded at 3 118 623 members, implying an average of 100 members in each cooperative. Most cooperatives are set up to provide microfinance loans to members for agriculture and livestock rearing, as well as hire-purchase opportunities to gain access to farm machinery. Most loans issued by cooperatives are provided for individual activities and businesses. In some cooperatives, there may be no collaborative activities or joint ventures carried out by members at all. Accordingly, as reported by key informants, the meaning of the term 'cooperative', in the eyes of community members tends to be understood as a channel for funds.

Although one of the MOC's central objectives is to improve the socio-economic lives of rural and urban people at the grassroots level, the Department of Cooperatives has never undertaken an assessment of social inclusion within its cooperatives. Some cooperatives suffer from the perception of elitism or exclusivity, which may be real or may be a function of the lack of participation, or transparency, fostering mistrust. Careful policy attention should be paid to assessing whether members of the community are systematically excluded from cooperative membership, so that alternative opportunities can be provided to them more equally.

'Social cooperation problems' have been identified by key informants in the department as one reason why some cooperatives are not successful, however more information must be gained from a deeper evaluation. A renewed interest in cooperatives internationally is generating many lessons for improving governance, management, transparency, accountability and ownership,

that will be of value for the development of an inclusive and successful cooperatives sector in Myanmar.

Key informants report that there are exceedingly few women represented on the boards of primary cooperatives, and very few women members. According to two cooperative societies visited, only one member is allowed per household, and predictably, this means that household heads are put forward for membership. As discussed earlier, this may explain why effectively most members are men and, as a consequence, most cooperative decision-making spaces are controlled by men. There are no data on membership by female-headed households, or whether widows retain shareholdings in a cooperative after bereavement. A total of 41 cooperative societies have been registered to provide services (unspecified) in relation to women (Ferguson 2013). According to key informants in the MOC these are mainly involved in offering microfinance, encouraging the production of handicrafts and investment in sewing machines. Cooperatives such as the Thirimay Women's Development Cooperative are being supported by NGO groups and are focusing on landless and smallholder women farmers (Relief International 2015).

In summary: The policy context in Myanmar is undergoing significant change, although this process is only at a preliminary stage and will need to be followed up by re-orientation of programmes and projects. Policies such as the NSPARD and the NSPAW have been developed through consultative processes. New programmes implemented by the DRD are introducing a decentralized approach that gives relative autonomy to community groups to decide on how to use funds, managed by new more gender-balanced committees. Additional initiatives will be needed, however, to develop a strategic approach to increasing rural employment opportunities. With an increase in landlessness and the strong outmigration from certain rural areas, particularly amongst the youth, this must be an area for urgent attention. On the other hand, there has been no specific programme for the implementation of the National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women in rural development. The plan does not appear to be well known throughout the government. Very little attention has been given to women's agricultural livelihoods within programmes of work on gender, although gender is being addressed by groups working on smallholder farmer development initiatives. Myanmar has a growing civil society sector working in all states and regions of the country and carrying out community-centred development projects. Networks that span CBOs, local NGOs, international NGOs and other actors have been established and are effective coordinating mechanisms on relevant issues relating to food security, land tenure, agricultural policy and gender. Finally, cooperatives have been established for a long time in Myanmar, but have mostly focused on distributing loans and offering hire purchase services, rather than joint venture initiatives. Social inclusion has not yet been considered within cooperatives development and there are exceedingly few women represented on boards of primary cooperatives, and very few women members.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS TO SECTOR DEVELOPMENT

The government has much work ahead to improve the access of smallholder farmers and the landless to the programmes and services it aims to provide and to lift families out of poverty. As described in section 3, most rural farmers do not have access to extension training, relevant research, low-cost loans, appropriate machinery, irrigation services, high-quality seeds and other inputs, or electricity. Poverty is still high in rural areas and extreme hardship (food poverty)

exists in some regions. Landlessness is increasing, and many households have insecure and declining access to forests on which they depend for so much of their livelihoods. Access to services is patchy, and significant differences have been noted amongst different regions. Women in particular are excluded from extension service training opportunities, have less access to decision-making forums than men, and have been unjustly overlooked in the farmland tenure registration programme.

5.1 Changes in policy frameworks already instituted or underway need to be followed by re-orientation of programmes and projects that place smallholders and landless at the centre of focus

There is a momentum within relevant sections of the government to adjust the approach to working as previously identified in this report, with the new national goals for the MoAI, the decentralized participatory approach of the MOLFRD, the commitment to the advancement of women throughout all government programmes, a revitalization of cooperatives, new approaches to farmer field research etc. This new policy environment represents a key opportunity at this time.

However, the change in agricultural policy goals notwithstanding, top-down approaches still exist, for example in setting priorities for agriculture, extension, research and irrigation etc. In the past, this has meant that inappropriate crops were promoted in unsuitable climates; acquired knowledge about relevant resource-saving techniques was not widely shared to the right farmers; technologies unaffordable to the rural poor, such as hybrid rice, were emphasized, diverting attention from improving other varieties that would be of greater interest to a broader set of farmers.

The policies set out in the long-term plan for agriculture have the character of directives and appear to leave little room for regional variation and responsiveness to local conditions. The focus of the plan is on the promotion of foreign and domestic private sector involvement in the agriculture sector and to develop agro-industries and export markets. Few of the action plans appear to give attention to small-scale and resource-poor farmers. There is little indication that the priorities, needs and constraints of small-scale farmers will be taken into account in the implementation of the action plans.

5.2 Weak regulatory framework for investment: need to ensure land and labour rights are protected

While the private sector could provide much needed capital for the development of agriculture, the governance context is still weak – environmental protection systems, responsible investment regulation, land-use planning and effective channels for redress of concerns that are accessible to the poor – are all important frameworks needed to ensure that farmers are protected from environmental impacts, unscrupulous business practices, involuntary loss of land and have access to justice. The lack of appropriate business regulatory frameworks is a key constraint.

5.3 Women's existing participation in the agriculture sector is not fully recognized

Another key constraint is that women's roles within agriculture sectors have not yet been fully understood. Women clearly need to be incorporated expressly into the vision for agriculture and included in programmes and service delivery. Because of the invisibility of women in the agricultural field most women's livelihoods projects are related to handicrafts etc. Women, in

particular, are excluded from access to training from government agencies, despite evidently being in demand of such information.

An analysis of the barriers that women face in attending training to overcome these constraints could result in relatively simple adjustments being applied, for example to the location and timing of training events, which could make a significant difference in sustainable agricultural development outcomes for women farmers. For example, in one community, NGOs found that women were able to be motivated to join township-level project committees when the timing and location of committee meetings were adjusted so that they corresponded with market days in which women were already travelling out of the village and were available from late morning onwards after the market was waning. However broader attention to the empowerment of women would also help to break down some of the cultural barriers to women's mobility and leadership. Activities to promote gender equality will need to be given attention within the GAD, as noted in section 7.

It would be important to undertake a clear evidence-based analysis of whether, to what extent and how each of these policies is expected to support the diverse set of smallholders and farm labourers, in order to begin a process of re-orienting programmes and projects to place smallholders and landless at the centre of the agricultural long-term policies through a decentralized participatory process.

5.4 Decentralized approaches beginning to be put into practice: should be monitored, evaluated, expanded

Poverty reduction has been placed at the heart of rural development policies and decentralized approaches are being applied through existing programme initiatives including the MSY projects. This is developing experience within the government of a new approach to decision-making on rural development spending. The mandatory quota of at least two to three women within the village-level project management committees appears to be building understanding amongst both women and men of the leadership capacities of women within rural communities. These approaches represent a key opportunity of new ways of working, from which many lessons should be generated for the further expansion of these approaches into other sectors.

5.5 Several gaps which if addressed could have a broad-based impact in raising rural productivity and creating jobs

There are many areas of work that have enormous potential for rural development, which have not yet been directly addressed by existing programmes. The growing problem of lack of off-farm rural employment opportunities needs urgent strategic attention. Programmes could be developed for example to develop postharvesting capacity (storage, drying, milling) at viable local levels, reducing postharvest losses, the expansion of local-level food processing (adding value, making use of unsold harvests, making linkages between local producers of different ingredients).

In order for broad-based benefits to be maximized, work should begin to promote inclusive business models. These are founded on empowering communities and workers included within profitable business ventures, whether this be through community or worker ownership, or enhanced opportunities for additional business development, or other community benefits. In addition, the development of equitable market mechanisms, which enhance the negotiating capacity of smallholders, better allowing them to obtain a fair share of value created within the

supply chain, will be essential. Without strong and sustained attention to social inclusion, smallholder farmers and landless labourers may gain very little from new government programmes to promote postharvest industries and supply chain development.

5.6 Pilot initiatives being tried and tested: plans can start to be considered for expansion

Many interesting pilot initiatives have been developed, so far mostly introduced by NGOs, both local and international, in the field of developing access to markets and improving small farmer incomes that point the way to broader programme interventions.

Community business development (initiatives that function similar to cooperative shops) to provide members with access to inputs – animal feed, machinery, diesel, fertilizer, spare parts, etc. Stores are open to non-members, while only members have access to credit. At least in initial phases, collective profits are not paid out as dividends to individual shareholders, but contribute to other community infrastructure development including paddy storage – that are community owned.

Inventory credit schemes to enable farmers to access pre-season funds/provide farmers with access to funds at harvest time.

Commodity exchange centres which function as new transparent commodity auction houses, to improve market efficiency. Encouraging market integration/value chain approaches.

Thein Sein, 8th President of Myanmar, 2011-2016 (translation): “Formation of associations lies at the centre of the process [of the rural development and poverty alleviation action plan].” At present, in many communities, there are no functioning groups that are tasked with common activities (such as community-based livelihood activities), although ad hoc working groups may be formed for specific events such as temple activities and funerals. In other communities, cooperatives have been established, but are seen as remote structures, that are a channel for funds, without genuine participation of their owners. The lack of functioning group formation in many areas is a key constraint.

However, particularly in areas where NGOs have been promoting group formation, valuable knowledge is being gained in processes and practices needed for developing functioning community-based management institutions. This includes encouraging groups to develop systematic work plans for their activities whether this is in producing and improving local seeds for example, or successful development of community-based postharvesting facilities to increase the value of members’ outputs, and encouraging the monitoring and steady improvement of their activities and services. As community organizations are developed they can become a useful focus for training, extension and discussion. Once groups or networks of community organizations can be established, support may be more efficiently provided at the network level and resources shared amongst a broader set of beneficiaries.

According to experience from NGOs working on community-based business initiatives, forming the groups is the less difficult part of the process, as it is possible to encourage existing social networks to establish communities of trust that are willing to work well together. More difficult is steering the groups in the right direction for business. In some cases, especially where many contracts have to be secured and managed throughout the year, for example in sales of handicrafts, it may be important in some cases, to hire and more importantly keep a qualified manager to oversee the work. Ideally managers would be recruited from local communities,

however such people are not easy to find. Managers recruited from elsewhere need a high degree of dedication, and may not remain in post for the long term.

This implies that it is important to provide opportunities for training in small-scale enterprise and business management courses to a pool of suitable candidates identified within the different regions. These training opportunities could focus on youth who may have a long-term interest in working to support their communities, giving scholarships to attend university or colleges, and opportunities for study trips or apprenticeships with other community enterprises.

5.7 Network formation

Networks are being established at many levels. Civil society networks are beginning to be established through which lessons can be quickly shared and development activities coordinated. Within local administration, coordination committees are beginning to be a valuable mechanism for sharing information which can be put to use in expanding the reach of activities aimed at the public.

However autonomous farmers' associations are just beginning to emerge; still not yet well developed, these will need to develop transparent decision-making processes and ensure a gender balance in representation.

5.8 Dedicated human resources within agriculture sectors, staff of extension service and research departments, understaffed and under resourced

With very limited budgets, extension services of several different agencies, including inputs distribution, research, extension, livestock and fisheries, which are critical services in responding to the needs of small-scale farmers, are not realistically resourced to be able to reach most of the small-scale farming population. Low wages are precipitating the departure of dedicated and qualified staff. Over the last two years, government budgets are being more actively debated, discussed and modified within Parliament and made public through the media, which is an opportunity to argue that key departments, which are expected to offer important services to small-scale farmers are properly resourced relative to other departments.

Poor intersectoral coordination is another key constraint, however this issue is beginning to be addressed particularly at township levels in some areas. This needs to be given more attention to minimize duplication and maximize the efficiency and reach of limited resources.

Extension officers are not enabled to be a point of liaison to provide feedback on a regular basis on the impact of policies on farmers with attention to inclusion and gender. Research officers should be given responsibilities to focus on the needs, as identified by farmers, and on addressing the key constraints identified.

Technical departments have qualified staff, but periodic retraining is not available. In particular, it would be important to promote greater exposure to lessons learned by government counterparts and NGOs in other countries.

Other non-government training initiatives are proving successful. NGOs have established farm training centres with a participatory farmer-centred curriculum, with strong focus on including women within technical training programmes. Curriculums are adjusted to respond to emerging needs. In some cases, communities have delegated members of their own communities, young agricultural graduates, to attend schools on their behalf in order not only to be able to make the most of the training opportunity, but also to ensure that graduates are given a role in supporting

their communities, with the benefit that trained local resource people are on hand to help with emerging questions throughout the year.

RECOMMENDED AREAS OF INTERVENTION AND INVESTMENT

When working on social inclusion, many of the issues to consider are related to improving processes and focus within existing programmes. This implies a reform or adjustment to ways of working to introduce a participatory approach with decentralization of power to local levels and to bring target beneficiary groups to the forefront of existing programmes and investments. However, four important new ‘interventions’ and ‘investments’ can be recommended here and are further described in Annex 1.

6.1 Re-orient agricultural programmes to focus on sustainability of the small-scale production sector

The re-orientation of policy goals that has already been carried out will need to be followed through by a change in processes of working at all levels to ensure that smallholders and the landless are a core focus of the analysis, planning, implementation and monitoring of agricultural programmes. In particular, considerations of gender equity, social inclusion and environmental sustainability should be paramount in order to achieve the overall national goal of poverty alleviation.

This needs to begin with a participatory problem analysis which could be initiated by NAPA, to be followed with a continuing iterative process involving more regular opportunities for farmers, technicians and policy-makers to discuss and analyse activities together, to ensure local needs and constraints are addressed in annual programming.

This means not only putting in place participatory processes for listening to farmers’ needs, constraints and priorities, but also approaches for addressing these concerns in a decentralized way – allowing for adjustment of programmes in relation to different areas. Critically important also is to ensure that policy goals do not inadvertently restrict the capacity of smallholder farmers to continue farming. In particular, goals for the expansion of large-scale agricultural investment, dam construction and other public or commercial projects should not jeopardize the tenure security of small-scale farmers. The important point is to ensure a process of dialogue is begun at the planning stages of such projects which is founded on recognition that local people have human rights to continue to carry out their existing farming livelihoods and feed their families. In this regard, the *Tenure guidelines* adopted by the World Committee on Food Security can be very instructive.

The processes for the drafting of the national land-use policy and the draft investment law may already be completed by the time NAPA is launched, but these policies should be reviewed if they are not adequate to protect the tenure security of men and women farmers for the land on which they depend. Where problems have already occurred, a process of remedy will be needed to ensure that livelihoods are restored to the satisfaction of local people.

6.2 Participatory research and extension support programmes

Research facilities need to be expanded to accommodate and facilitate new research projects that respond to locally identified priorities. These would expand the existing focus from primary crop production to start work on technologies for the minimization of postharvest losses and the

processing of agricultural products. New facilities should be located in the regions/states where these technologies are expected to have the broadest application.

Research results and promoted technologies should be made more accessible to a wider set of beneficiaries through a new outreach programme.

In addition, pilot participatory research projects should be carried out in each agro-ecological zone to be designed in collaboration with groups of men and women farmers who would be engaged in the study. These should not only focus on crop production but specifically also include relevant research opportunities for landless farmers.

Budgets need to be expanded to reflect the importance of the agriculture sector to the nation's development and the lifting of rural living standards. However, increased resources should be carefully tied to the effective implementation of projects. Systematic evaluations must be carried out to be able to assess the effectiveness of programmes for small farmers of both genders. These should not focus only on the completion of tasks, but on the evaluation of impact.

6.3 Encourage development of socially inclusive agribusinesses

Examples of such businesses are community seed enterprises, community rice banks, community machinery hire businesses, small-scale food processing and marketing businesses, crop residue recycling businesses. There is a need to develop linkages with other community-based businesses to form larger networks or cooperative enterprises. The purpose is not only to create market access for community produce but also to generate off-farm employment, particularly for the younger generation (women and men).

Training opportunities need to be offered for selected individuals to develop experience in group initiatives and small-scale enterprises. Interest amongst the youth should be stimulated and opportunities should be created for young farmers' cooperatives and inclusive agribusiness managers to talk with youth groups. University students should be encouraged to work in home towns or farming communities.

With improved governance structures that provide appropriate incentives for a qualified and well-supervised management team, cooperative enterprises could lead the way in setting up distribution, logistics, wholesale, retail and ultimately consumer cooperatives. Cooperatives need to be more inclusive and in particular increase the participation of women within these enterprises to bring about root and branch reform of the sector.

Invest in women's business initiatives. Women's roles in the supply chain may be undervalued. In order to build up the economic capacity of women, women should be able to get involved in managing the supply chain. There is a need to first identify where the problems lie – with a gender lens.

Once functioning community businesses are established, the focus could turn in later years to the establishment of networks and clusters of communities can begin to grow and work together to present a sizeable supplier of community produce.

6.4 Develop equitable market access for the resource-poor

In addition to collective marketing initiatives such as development of community marketing enterprises, it is important to promote other initiatives for public support, including the establishment of transparent market spaces where prices are publicly declared and transactions

are monitored, based on the experience of commodity exchange centres. Mandatory spaces could also be promoted within existing fresh markets or market halls for products from validated community enterprises, learning from the lessons of the One Tambon, One Product (OTOP) promotion initiatives in Thailand.

6.5 Training and forums for improved cooperation and mutual learning among sectors

In order to provide a dedicated space for the empowerment of ministerial staff and other target groups, it would be useful to contribute to the hosting of an annual agriculture sector conference with international inputs from research, extension and civil society sectors in ASEAN countries to discuss and share lessons learned in relevant initiatives in Southeast Asian and other tropical countries as well as to increase discussion on key questions for socially inclusive sustainable agricultural development. Adequate resources will be needed for supporting translation of all sessions from regional languages into the Myanmar tongue as well as English.

If possible, study visits should be arranged for small groups of mid-level staff and field staff to other ASEAN countries to develop knowledge on topics not yet addressed within agricultural programmes in Myanmar; for example postharvesting technologies and market development initiatives. Topics to be explored at the annual conference should be disseminated in a publicly available document and study visit reports should also be made available to the public. In addition, study visits/internships should be instituted for young farmers and graduates to learn about rural employment opportunities in farming communities in ASEAN countries.

RELATION TO OTHER RURAL SECTORS

Clearly the topic of this report is a cross-cutting issue that has relation to all sectors within the NAPA. Many of the related sectors have already been outlined in the report, in particular agriculture, livestock, forestry, rural finance, rural employment, land tenure and cooperative development.

This section identifies linkages to other sectors which may not be directly within the scope of the NAPA. There are three particular areas to highlight.

Firstly, it is vitally important to set in place regulatory frameworks to ensure responsible private sector investments. Investment policy needs to ensure investors are held accountable for the impacts they impose on local people and that appropriate remedial action can be taken. This is related to the need for appropriate protection for farmers within the national land-use policy, which is within the scope of the NAPA.

Secondly, there is need to bring about a broad programme of women's empowerment in the GAD. This is the arm of government that most men and women in rural areas must connect with, and at present it is overwhelmingly made up of male representatives.

Thirdly, the need to ensure that each line agency in the rural sector makes a policy and programme assessment to identify what needs to be done to improve women's empowerment. In this context, the LIFT gender strategy is a very good tool which could present a starting point for designing a more systematic approach to incorporating gender into programmes and projects. It will be important to appoint gender focal points and an adequate budget for these activities. However, it should be clear that gender activities and gender budgets should not be limited to 'gender awareness raising, the importance of obtaining gender-segregated data, and the

promotion of activities involving women. Such a programme should develop into a programme of women's economic empowerment activities to support the priorities identified by women as being necessary for the development of their families and communities, benefiting both men and women.

ANNEX 1: INTERVENTION DESCRIPTIONS OF INVESTMENT PROFILES

Intervention 1: Re-orientation of agricultural programmes

Justification	<p>It is critically important for the long term sustainable development of Myanmar that the country pursues broad-based inclusive policies for rural development and economic growth. The rural population, which are mostly engaged in agriculture, must be at the heart of government policy making regarding the rural sphere. Although the alleviation of poverty, and the importance of smallholder farmers, tend to be expressly referred to in policy objectives, it has not previously been clearly elaborated how smallholder farmers, and which groups of smallholder farmers, are to benefit from the opportunities and services to be promoted by government.</p> <p>Programmes have been developed in the past without specific and detailed attention to social inclusion or gender equity. As a result, inappropriate interventions have been supported which do not support the development of the smallholder sector consistently around the country (including the promotion of crops and technologies that are inappropriate to local conditions, training in techniques that are irrelevant to local populations, provision of services that do not fulfil local needs, etc) and in some cases have overlooked smallholders to the extent that serious negative impacts for rural communities have been brought about by the operation of government policies (including infrastructure development projects in rural areas) or there has been no attention applied to relevant needs and concerns (including the prevention of post-harvest losses and investment in post-harvest value adding).</p> <p>Up to this point there has been limited participation by groups working directly with smallholder farmers in the design and planning of agricultural and rural development policies. Through more participatory mechanisms, policy makers can gain a deeper understanding of the obstacles and threats faced by men and women farmers and the extent to which the programmes being promoted are addressing these problems, similarly whether the opportunities and services being provided are reaching target groups as anticipated.</p> <p>Clearly, experience is still growing in Myanmar in carrying out and working through the results of consultation processes. Equally, farmers' organisations are newly emerging and in the process of development. However, it is important to begin to put in place participatory processes and to strengthen these year on year. An inclusive participatory process will need to be given high priority and adequate support, and must be allowed time to function properly.</p>
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Priority	Immediate, to be initiated in 2015
Scope	Nationwide
Activities	<p>Preparation of a series of short concise briefing documents assessing each of the government's policies/programmes in agriculture, land tenure, rural development. Key programmes to be described would include Agricultural Research, Agricultural Extension, Irrigation, Mechanisation. Each would provide a clear identification of government resources (budgets, field stations, human resources) available for their implementation, the targeted number of farming households who are expected to benefit from these programmes in each region, district and township. A narrative section should detail the ways in which these programmes are expected to achieve the objectives of improving rural incomes, generating decent jobs, protecting the environment and sustaining rural communities. These documents are to be published for purposes of public information and as a background papers for discussions within national consultations.</p> <p>Hold consultations nationwide to develop participatory problem analyses of the priority policy issues from the perspective of farmers and landless agricultural labourers (needs, concerns, and constraints) in each region that need to be addressed. Discussions should be genuinely participatory, include men and women farmers and based on recognition of farmers rights. Consultations should allow for discussion of crop promotion including the promotion of crop diversity, mechanisation, irrigation / water harvesting and soil moisture conservation, local seeds development, regulation of pesticides, and sustainable agricultural practices. Participants should include landed and landless farmer representatives, representatives of civil society groups who are working directly with farmers. In the first instance, it would be very important to include those organisations who have been working closely with farmers, including many of the NGOs who are linked in to the Food Security Working Group (FSWG). Support could be enlisted from NGOs to help design and implement the process for a series of nationwide consultations. Research staff, extension workers and policy makers should be encouraged to attend consultations, though the emphasis should be on listening to contributions from farmers and civil society groups. Spaces should be provided for women farmers to join women-only discussions, in addition to encouraging their full participation in plenary and other small group discussions.</p> <p>Time should be dedicated within these consultations to review other policies which restrict the capacity of smallholder farmers to continue farming. In particular, this should allow for farmers to raise their concerns about the expansion of large-scale agricultural</p>

	<p>investment, dam construction and other public or commercial projects that put in jeopardy the tenure security of small-scale farmers. These concerns should lead to a follow-up process of dialogue for the planning and management of such projects, founded on recognition that affected people have universally recognised rights, human rights, to be allowed to continue their existing livelihoods and feed their families.</p> <p>Summarise the results of the consultations highlighting regional and local differences, the different perspectives of specific sectoral groups, as well as major issues emerging. In particular issues affecting women and other previously excluded groups, including ethnic farmers' groups should be highlighted. Proposals should be developed to set up approaches for addressing these concerns in a decentralised way - allowing for adjustment of agricultural programmes to respond to the needs of different agro-ecological areas and ethnic communities.</p> <p>Continuing iterative process providing regular opportunities for landholding and landless farmers, technicians and policy makers to discuss and analyse activities together, such as an annual policy forum, to ensure local needs and constraints are addressed in annual programming. A change in processes of working will be needed at all levels to ensure that smallholders and the landless are in centre focus of the analysis, planning, implementation and monitoring of agricultural programmes on an annual basis.</p>
Expected duration	2 years initially, to be funded in the following years under a more permanent process within regular budgets.
Cost	To be assessed.

Intervention 2: Participatory research and extension support programme

Invest substantially in research and extension capacity that reflects the needs and constraints of small-scale farmers, expands expertise in local seed development, post-harvest preservation and value adding, through a farmer-centred approach.

Justification	<p>Currently, within the Department of Research, there are highly dedicated professionals who are keen to support the development of the small-scale farming sector, however facilities with which they work are poor and morale is low. Technical staff are not empowered to contribute to the development of their work programmes. DAR research priorities are centrally determined, and ultimately depend on the direction of the Minister for Agriculture and Irrigation.</p> <p>In the past, research studies have not always had direct relevance to, been accessible or applied by low-income farmers. There appears</p>
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	<p>to be a low adoption rate by farmers of several improved varieties and hybrid seeds released by research institutions in recent years, which implies that the promoted seeds, machinery and technologies are either not accessible, affordable, applicable or of direct interest to the majority of farmers. Technologies which demand heavy investment from farmers or are profitable only within larger farm plots, are of little benefit to the majority of land-poor farmers who have insufficient access to credit to consider taking such a risk. Farmers who fail to repay their loans are at risk of landlessness. Research needs to factor in increasing climate variability more systematically and consider ways to lower the additional risks that a changing climate poses for smallholders, as well as the need to start to investigate methods and technologies that are designed to build resilience and promote sustainable practices. There are currently too few opportunities for research staff to meet directly with farmers from around the country.</p> <p>Equally, within the Department of Agriculture, a top-down approach is dominant, and the seeds and inputs distribution programmes, as well as the extension services are not successfully addressing the needs of the majority of small-scale farmers. Training offered is based on central directives, and are expected to be applied in broadly defined areas throughout the country. As such, advice does not currently tend to be adapted to take into account farmers constraints, local conditions, or emerging markets, nor does the curriculum leave room for alternative needs of farmers to be covered. In general, women farmers have not been given the opportunity of extension service training.</p> <p>The current seeds production policy emphasises cooperation with foreign seed companies for seed protection technologies, the encouragement of private sector cooperation and investment in quality seed production; encouragement of the private sector to set up companies for everything from quality seed production to marketing, but overlooks the need to dedicate support for community-based seed development and village seed banks. For low-cost high quality seeds, it is vital that a competitive market, including diverse public and private seed providers is developed. In addition, the preservation of a diverse local seedstock has an enduring importance in Myanmar, particularly as indigenous seeds are more likely to be resilient to climatic and pest hazards.</p> <p>It is important to ensure that men and women farmers have access to low-cost inputs and technical advice that responds to their needs in different agro-ecological areas and amongst different groups. Budgets for research and extension need to be expanded to reflect the importance of the agricultural sector to the nation's development</p>
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	and the lifting of rural living standards.
Priority	To be initiated in the short term, by 2016
Scope	Central and regional facilities of DAR to be improved and roles of staff of DOA (AE Division) in NPT and around the country to be fundamentally re-visioned.
Activities	<p>Research facilities to be expanded where necessary to accommodate and facilitate new research projects that respond to locally identified priorities. These would, include in particular, an expansion of existing focus from primary crop production to start work on technologies for the minimisation of postharvest losses and the processing of agricultural products. New facilities should be located in the regions/states where these technologies are expected to have the broadest application.</p> <p>Outreach programme to be instituted to focus on promoting the dissemination of research work in accessible forms to interested farming communities around the country, and should specifically be accessible to women, in collaboration with local NGOs, farmers' groups and DOA extension workers.</p> <p>New pilot participatory research projects to be carried out by DAR field staff in demonstration plots within selected communities in each region/state, based on locally expressed research needs. These projects should be developed in each agro-ecological zone, focusing on different sectors and designed in collaboration with groups of men and women farmers. Advice should be sought from NGO groups who have been working on participatory research methods with smallholder farmers. In addition, pilot research studies should focus on techniques that generate agricultural opportunities for landless farmers, including livestock or fisheries development, as well as in post-harvesting and other research projects which do not require access to privately held land.</p> <p>Specific attention and budgets should be given to ensure the access of women to training sessions either by the research department, the extension division of DoA, or the extension services of the Department of Fisheries, the Department of Forestry or the Department of Livestock. It should be clear that in some cases, women may be included within existing programmes at no additional cost, through a simple adjustment of training programme timing and locations, however in other cases, additional resources can be justified to ensure they are effectively included. The concepts of gender equity and social inclusion may still be relatively new amongst government officials, thus training may be required to build capacity of relevant staff to understand the role of gender and social inclusion in the development of national economy and ensure</p>

	<p>that working practices are adjusted in practice to foster inclusion.</p> <p>Community-based seed multiplication initiatives already developed in the country, which are best placed for improving indigenous seeds and maintaining seed diversity, can be expanded.</p> <p>Increased resources should be tied to careful monitoring to ensure the effective implementation of projects in terms of improving livelihood outcomes for men and women small farmers and landless labourers. Systematic evaluations must be carried out and should not focus only on the completion of tasks, but on the evaluation of impact on beneficiaries and their communities in particular.</p>
Expected duration	2016-2025
Cost	To be assessed.

Intervention 3: Small-scale socially-inclusive agribusinesses

Development of socially inclusive agri-businesses, growing from small-scale to networks

Justification	<p>There is an urgent need for policy initiatives to address the lack of rural employment. For the development of healthy and resilient rural communities, diverse income streams are needed that promote viable long term employment. What may be termed “vocational” development in rural communities, or sectoral skills development, is urgently needed, not only on-farm but also off-farm to generate off-season employment for farming households and opportunities for landless households.</p> <p>However, “vocational” development through training individuals in agricultural or handicraft skills is not the only way to generate rural employment. Community and small enterprise business development is also important, but has not yet been given policy support in Myanmar. Experience has been developed, however, over a period of as much as 3-4 years in some cases through the project work of a number of NGOs which have begun to support community seed enterprises, community rice banks, community machinery rental businesses, etc. These projects have already generated important lessons, and have shown that these are able to generate not only jobs but also important community development benefits and capacity building. In particular, women have played a strong role in community enterprises developed under these initiatives. There appears to be scope for the development of many additional potential business opportunities for promoting the establishment of small-scale food processing and marketing businesses, including in fisheries and forestry sectors, as well as</p>
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	<p>crop residue recycling businesses etc.</p> <p>With greater access to information and networks through increased possession of mobile phones and connection to internet, new opportunities for business development are becoming accessible to a wider group of rural people, particularly the younger members of the community.</p>
Priority	Short term 2015-2020
Scope	Focus in areas where there is high rural unemployment and potential for community business development.
Activities	<p>Training opportunities need to be offered for selected individuals to develop experience and skills in managing small-scale enterprise development. In particular, efforts should be made to grow interest amongst the youth, including offering opportunities for inclusive agribusiness managers to talk with youth groups and potentially setting up youth group cooperatives. Encourage university students to work in home towns or farming communities.</p> <p>Promoted businesses should be socially inclusive, and should encourage the participation of women. Priority should be given in policy and investment support (including through revolving funds) to projects which will generate benefits for community development and which ensure that have transparent ownership, governance, and accounting mechanisms.</p> <p>One component of this programme should focus on socially inclusive business development within the cooperative sector. With improved governance structures, that provide appropriate incentives for a qualified and well supervised management team, cooperative enterprises could lead the way in setting up distribution, logistics, wholesale, retail and ultimately consumer cooperatives. Cooperatives need to be more inclusive and in particular increase the participation of women within these enterprises to bring about a root and branch reform of the sector.</p> <p>Invest in women's business initiatives, remove gender-based barriers for accessing formal investment credit. It would be necessary first to identify where the problems lie, why women are not able to capture greater value within the supply chain, and encourage women's participation in managing supply chains, for example in sectors they are already familiar with such as vegetable marketing.</p> <p>Once functioning community businesses are established, the focus should turn in following years to the establishment of networks and clusters of communities can begin to grow and work together to present opportunities for bulk supply of community produce.</p>

	Develop linkages with other community based businesses from larger networks or cooperative enterprises. The purpose is not only to create market access for community produce but also to generate off-farm employment particularly for the younger generation (women and men).
Expected duration	5 years, providing support for pilot projects in townships around the country
Cost	To be assessed

Intervention 4: Develop equitable market access for the resource-poor

To promote market access for community and smallholder produce through dedicated market spaces and more transparent market mechanisms.

Justification	The lack of stable markets, even for pillar crops such as rice, was identified as a major problem by key informants in all sectors interviewed. With limited storage capacity, and with individual sales carried out soon after harvest, it is difficult for farmers to obtain good prices in time to pay back their loans. Other programmes proposed above are designed to promote the development of farmer knowledge and build their capacity to engage in fairer markets. However, a specific programme to improve access to fair markets is also needed.
Priority	To be initiated in the short- term, by 2016
Scope	Nationwide through pilot interventions in each state/region, gradually increasing to interventions in each district and township.
Activities	Activities: 1. Within this programme, it may be possible to support additional collective marketing initiatives such as development of community marketing enterprises, where these are not promoted in the previous intervention. However, this programme could promote other initiatives for public supported including the establishment of transparent market spaces where prices are publicly declared and transactions are monitored, based on the experience of commodity exchange centres. It could also promote mandatory spaces within existing fresh markets or market halls to be made available for products from validated community enterprises, learning from the examples of OTOP promotion initiatives in Thailand.
Expected duration	5 years
Cost	To be assessed.

Intervention 5: Training and forums for improved cooperation and mutual learning between sectors

Empower ministry staff and others to increase exposure to research findings, lessons, new initiatives.

Justification	<p>Until recently, opportunities for ministry staff and others in Myanmar to gain experience and access knowledge from international sources has been very limited. Staff have very few opportunities for re-training. Budget constraints characterise all extension services, including those operated by other departments including the Department of Forestry, and the Department of Livestock.</p> <p>Topics should emphasise the application of research and include themes on the sociological aspects of farmer-led research and extension, as well as issues which have not been covered in detail in mainstream curriculums of agricultural degrees and diplomas available in Myanmar within the past ten years.</p>
Priority	Short term 2015-2020
Scope	Participants should be invited from around the country and should include mid-level management and field level staff as well as senior policy makers. Academics, civil society groups and farmer representatives should also be welcome.
Activities	<p>Annual agricultural sector conference with international inputs from ASEAN countries from research, extension and civil society sectors to discuss and share lessons learned in relevant initiatives in South East Asian and other tropical countries as well as increase discussion on key questions for socially inclusive sustainable agricultural development. Adequate resources will be needed for supporting translation of all sessions from regional languages into Myanmar language as well as English.</p> <p>Study visits for small groups of mid-level staff and field staff to other ASEAN countries to develop knowledge on topics not yet addressed within agricultural programmes in Myanmar, for example post-harvesting technologies, and market development initiatives. Topics to be explored at annual conference, justified in a publicly available document and study visit reports to be also available to the public. Study visits/internships for young farmers and graduates to learn about rural employment opportunities in farming communities in ASEAN countries.</p>
Expected duration	1 forum annually. 2 study visits annually. 2 study visits and 6 internships annually.
Cost	Broad expected cost: to be assessed