**Project Profile**

**The project title:** *“Coastal Livelihood and Environmental Assets Restoration in Rakhine (CLEARR)”*

**Implementing Partner:** Myanmar Environment Rehabilitation-conservation Network (MERN)

**Duration:** Duration of the project was three years from July 1, 2011 to June 30 2014. Before the end of the project, no cost extension of the project was submitted for six months up to December 31, 2014.

**Purpose:** “Food and livelihood security of coastal communities in Kyeintali Township increased through agricultural and livelihood support, cooperative mangrove rehabilitation and management, and improved capacity for livelihoods development and environmental governance.”

**Project sites:** The project area includes 62 villages in the township of Gwa and the sub-township of Kyaintali, in the southern part of the Rakhine state. The villages are all situated in the narrow coastal plain between the Bay of Bengal and the Rakhine Homa.

**Activities:** a) Cash for Work for community forestry activities (mangrove improvement, nurseries),

b) Regeneration Improvement Felling and Enrichment Planting as forest management

c) Establishment of Community Forest (mangroves as well as upland forests) as a source of livelihood for local communities

d) Revolving Fund to provide cash for investment in various livelihood activities

e) Livelihood activities (agriculture, livestock, fisheries, home gardens, non-agricultural income generation) via

f) Providing Fuel efficient stoves

g)Establishment of 2 bio-diversity hot-spots for conservation of critically

endangered Bruguiera hainesii mangrove species and sea turtles.

**Results/Achievements:** up to end of June2014,

* Regeneration improvement felling operation was undertake in 7,177 acres of mangroves and enrichment planting was carried out in 5121 acres at 32 villages
* 1322 acres of community forest was established in 15 villages
* 41 VCCs, 41 forest labour groups, 15 forest user groups for CF and two biodiversity hot spots of four villages were formed
* 131,491 cubic meter of firewood worth of 92,043,853 Kyat was harvested from RIF operation in 7,166 acres at 32 villages
* 2,796 households were supported by cash for work activities
* 837 villagers and 39 IP staff were trained in technical and management skills
* Fuel efficient stoves were provided to 6468 households.
* As a result of the project activities 1)131,491 cubic meter of firewood worth of 92,043,853 Kyat was harvested from RIF operation in 7,166 acres at 32 villages 2) 2,199 households have increased food security and livelihood productivity 3) 2,796 vulnerable households were supported by cash for work activities. (Field Visit Report, 24 Oct 2014)

***Lessons***

* *Under various social and economic limitations, if a livelihood intervention strategy focuses solely on individual component, it will be less successful and produce a diminished impact. For this reason, a project, like CLEARR, with multi-interventions in several areas, should have followed “an integrated agro-ecosystem and livelihood systems approach” to promote livelihood security and food security among the coastal communities. LIFT should be a guide in this regard.1*(Final Evaluation, 2015)
* *When to follow a consortium approach in project implementation, the efficient and effective coordination mechanism must be in place to accomplish the integrated management of collective efforts. 2, 3*(Annual Narrative Report, 2013) , (Final Evaluation, 2015)
* *To generate a sense of ownership and to build social capital among the beneficiaries, the community based approach, which strengthens civil societies, is the most reliable strategy and the only means to this end. 4,5*. (Annual Narrative Report, 2013), (Field Visit Report,18 Feb, 2014)
* *Knowledge sharing can enhance lessons learned, widen experience and promote the existing know-hows.6* (Semi-Annual Report, 2014)
* *For a poor country like Myanmar, which has a very low infrastructure development and weak financial sector, mobile banks can be a great help to rural financing and accessibility to credit. 7* (Field Visit Report, 21 Oct, 2014)
* *However, gender perspectives should not be left out in implementation process and the project activities should also be in line with gender sensitive policies so that women empowerment can be promoted through gender mainstreaming.8*(Semi-Annual Report, 2014)
* Transparency goes hand in hand with accountability in the process of trust building. *If the project design had addressed this issue, teething difficulties could have been avoided in the inception phase. 9, 10*(Field Visit Report, 18 Feb 2014) , (Final Evaluation Report, 2015)
* *Empowering community through participatory ways and means is the first step as well as an essential element for grass-root development and the social change-from-below.* In a case of water supply development, MERN could achieve the sustainability of a dam by establishing a water management committee with community members and they were supported by the project team as well as technically backstopped by a hired consultant. (Annual Narrative Report, 2013) 11
* *To guarantee the sustainability of a community based natural resource management (CBNRM), the public sector engagement is crucially important for tenure rights and land ownership. In fact, only the law enforcement bodies can safeguard the community owned assets by means of legally binding actions against those who violate the property right.12*(Field Visit Report,18 Feb, 2014)
* *However, lack of basic skills in monitoring and management on the side of CBOs could be a serious issue for sustainability and long term impact.13,14,15*(Field Visit Report,18 Feb, 2014) , (Semi-Annual Report, 2014) , (Final Evaluation Report, 2015)
* *Although the project utilized PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal) tools in community mobilization process, time pressure on the implementing staff resulted in a poor analysis on all key resources and the project activities were not properly understood among the communities.16, 17*(Semi-Annual Narrative Report, 2014) , (Final Evaluation Report, 2015)
* *Indigenous knowledge and local practices are as much important as new innovations and external solutions. They could play a role for resource efficiency and hence, must be included not only in designing a project but also in the implementation process.18, 19*(Field Visit Report, 21 Oct, 2014), (Final Evaluation Report, 2015).
* *Being new to the existing livelihood systems, external solutions and interventions must take the preconditions into account. Otherwise, they could run risky by generating a big opportunity cost and discouragement on the project among the community members.*
* As seen in most beneficiary interviews, raising piglets was not as much profitable investment as other livestock development activities. 20, 21(Field Visit Report, 21 Oct, 2014), (Final Evaluation Report, 2015).
* *When to introduce an innovation or a new technology for a livelihood intervention, the implementing partner itself should possess a strong experience and expertise in utilizing these new techniques and methods. Otherwise, the project will not achieve its targets and goals and may generate unintended negative consequences. 22, 23*(Field Visit Report, 21 Oct, 2014), (Final Evaluation Report, 2015)
* *Limited skills in project management on the side of IPs, especially in human resource management and financial management, could make a big hindrance to implementation progress reducing the efficiency of the process.* At the start of the project, there was a very high turn-over rate of project staff and uncoordinated problems in financing the activities. 24, 25(Semi-Annual Report, 2014), (Final Evaluation Report, 2015)
* *The lack of clear, concise and proper logframes as well as weak M&E staff made an adverse effect on the operational management, particularly in the areas of planning, monitoring and reporting. LIFT could be a supportive element in this context.*26(Final Evaluation Report, 2015)
* *The essence of monitoring is not only to ensure reaching the set targets but also to keep a project on the right track when it is progressing towards outputs, outcomes and goals at the purpose level and beyond. In this regard, the whole process must be observed and examined both quantitatively and qualitatively.27, 28*(Final Evaluation Report, 2015)

**References:**

**a) Annual Narrative Report, 2013**

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**b) Field Visit Report,18 Feb, 2014**

[\\unopsmm540001\Division Data$\LIFT\Program\Public\ProgramShare\z\_Staff\Aye Thein San\Field Visit Report for PO\2014\Than Tun](file:///\\unopsmm540001\Division%20Data$\LIFT\Program\Public\ProgramShare\z_Staff\Aye%20Thein%20San\Field%20Visit%20Report%20for%20PO\2014\Than%20Tun)

**c) Field Visit Report, 21 Oct, 2014**

[\\unopsmm540001\Division Data$\LIFT\Program\Public\ProgramShare\z\_Staff\Aye Thein San\Field Visit Report for PO\2014\Than Tun](file:///\\unopsmm540001\Division%20Data$\LIFT\Program\Public\ProgramShare\z_Staff\Aye%20Thein%20San\Field%20Visit%20Report%20for%20PO\2014\Than%20Tun)

**d) Final Evaluation Report, 2015**

[\\unopsmm540001\Division Data$\LIFT\Program\Public\File Repository\1.2 Countrywide (16 IPs)\3. COASTAL (1 IP)\1. MERN\4. Report\Final Report](\\\\unopsmm540001\\Division Data$\\LIFT\\Program\\Public\\File Repository\\1.2 Countrywide (16 IPs)\\3. COASTAL (1 IP)\\1. MERN\\4. Report\\Final Report)

**e) Semi-Annual Narrative Report, 2012**

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**f) Semi-Annual Report (Narrative), 2014**

[\\unopsmm540001\Division Data$\LIFT\Program\Public\File Repository\1.2 Countrywide (16 IPs)\3. COASTAL (1 IP)\1. MERN\4. Report\2014 Report\Semi-Annual Report](file:///\\unopsmm540001\Division%20Data$\LIFT\Program\Public\File%20Repository\1.2%20Countrywide%20(16%20IPs)\3.%20COASTAL%20(1%20IP)\1.%20MERN\4.%20Report\2014%20Report\Semi-Annual%20Report)

**Quotes:**

1. “LIFT should adopt and promote a “livelihoods systems” framework for situational analysis, planning, and progress monitoring in livelihoods development: such an approach would allow to tailor solutions to specific livelihoods strategies, and to improve M&E and learning.” (Final Evaluation, 2015)

2. “A good project management structure and coordination mechanism is very important for this type of multi-sectoral project implemented by a consortium of a number of implementing members.” (Annual Narrative Report, 2013).

3. “From the start the project faced serious coordination difficulties. The definition of respective roles of implementation partners was at the root of many issues…Field operations must be under a single line of command; implementation partners should support the field staff with technical advice, not implementing parallel field programmes. (Final Evaluation, 2015)

4. The project established several CBOs (Community Based Organizations) including: Village Conservation Committee (VCC), Forest Labor Group (FLG), Community Forest User Group (CFUG), Agriculture Group, Livestock Group, Fishery Group and Income Generation Group. These groups are nearly 100 in 41 project villages and they will take care of sustainable management of: FR (Revolving Fund) as well as CF (Community Forest) and, other project activities. (Annual Narrative Report, 2013).

5. “VCC prepared their Micro Project Proposal (MPP) in advance for mangrove operations so they can effectively conduct their activities in a timely manner. The communities have been able to get work during the traditional jobless season. (Field Visit Report,18 Feb, 2014)

6. “ The project conducted sharing workshops with the project beneficiaries in order to learn from each other. During the workshops communities share their experiences, lessons learned and challenges faced. The experiences from these workshops has boosted capacity and improved many activities. (Semi-Annual Report, 2014)

7. For the security of village revolving funds CLEARR project linked with the Global Treasure Bank (formerly Livestock Breeding and Fishery Bank) at Thandwe (District capital) to open mobile bank at CLEARR project office at Kyeintali. (Field Visit Report, 21 Oct, 2014)

8. “Keeping the funds in the safe deposit box in the villages also encouraged chances for female participants to participate. They showed less interest in saving the money at the banks since those men who withdraw money there tend to favor excessive spending. Since the money was kept in the project areas, most of the funds they receive falls directly on the hands of the females thus it served as one of the motivation that drove them.” (Semi-Annual Report, 2014)

9. “All the beneficiaries (Forest Labour Group members) were not aware of the amount of budget provided for each activity and total amount of revolving fund (all villages visited).” (Field Visit Report, 18 Feb 2014)

10. “The revolving funds mechanism is highly relevant and would have benefitted from more explicit and careful design.” (Final Evaluation Report, 2015)

11. “Every VCC conducts participatory monitoring and evaluation on each of their activities with the participation of all members with the assistance of project field staff. The members can see their weak points and can find measures for improvement. The project initiated this activity to encourage VCCs to be able to monitor their activities by themselves.” (Semi-Annual Report, 2014)

12. “CF certificates were received from the Forest Department in less than two year time because of MERN good relation with the Forest Department.”(Field Visit Report,18 Feb, 2014)

13. MERN presented that the amount of revolving fund has been reduced in five villages (expenditure is more than income). This issue is directly related with the capacity of staff in managing RF/ weak in monitoring of RF. (Field Visit Report,18 Feb, 2014)

14. The project approach has empowered the various committees and group members and allowed them to manage by themselves. Communities however have limited capacity and experience so monitoring, guidance and training is needed for future sustainability. (Semi-Annual Report, 2014)

15. Monitor the consolidation of community based enterprises –CBNRM, revolving fund, etc: a set of indicators of robust community organizations can be used to monitor progress. (Final Evaluation Report, 2015)

16. “In some activities participants own time restraints (especially at important seasonal events) have led to difficulties in areas of Farming, livestock and forest conservation so early and timely planning of activities is needed.” (Semi-Annual Narrative Report, 2014)

17. “Village development process should not be rushed; start from the formulation phase using well targeted PRA tools and principles: PRA results should be fully shared with beneficiaries for ownership” (Final Evaluation Report, 2015)

18. “In Kyaukkyi village, …one HH (in front of VCC chairperson’s house) established crab fattening pond before the project…His average income was 20,000 to 25,000Kyat in one/one and half month period. MERN did not learn the sample way of crab fattening from him to replicate the activity.” (Field Visit Report, 21 Oct, 2014).

19. “Start from what people do, detecting local innovations before introducing external solutions: by assessing the indigenous and locally developed innovations and adaptation strategies, support can be brought to innovations already tested and understood locally.” (Final Evaluation Report, 2015).

20. “One of the challenges for sustainable livestock development is genetic factors for livestock sector in this region. Some local pigs are slow in growth rate due to inbreeding” (Semi-Annual Narrative Report, 2012).

21. “Projects need to question the adequacy of proposed innovations using cost benefit and risk analysis for specific livelihoods systems : new technologies and approaches should be assessed ex ante for cost benefit in several relevant livelihoods contexts, then tested in the field before replication.” (Final Evaluation Report, 2015).

22. “In general trials are undertaken when researchers or development organizations introduce a new technique or new variety of seeds/ animal species to a new area. Without having strong evidence of success in aquaculture (mud crab, mussels, clam and marine fish (ngakhway), MERN established demonstration ponds.” (Field Visit Report, 21 Oct, 2014).

23. “Start innovation at smaller scale, expand progressively based on experience: new approaches should be tested in a core area before being replicated and expanded.” (Final Evaluation Report, 2015)

24. As the required knowledge and expertise in development projects is limited in Myanmar due to its past isolation, we would suggest to others that provision for extensive training and awareness raising in all areas of development project cycle management be included for staff, implementing partners and communities in future projects. (Semi-Annual Report, 2014)

25. Apply adaptive management: change what does not work, expand and consolidates what does: issues detected should be associated with proposal for remediation; clear procedures are needed to define which kind of adaptive changes would need donor approval. (Final Evaluation Report, 2015)

26. “Use simple operational logframes describing the intended changes in livelihoods and the processes involved: logframes must be appropriate for day to day management with adequate targets and indicators, and clear assignation of roles.” (Final Evaluation Report, 2015)

27. “Achieving targets is important, but this does not guarantee achieving outputs and purpose of project if there is no adaptive management: qualitative monitoring of outcomes and processes must be ensured coupled with qualitative assessment.” (Final Evaluation Report, 2015)

28. “Monitor the adoption and effect of project innovations on livelihoods with a network of reference households: it is necessary to have qualitative information on the changes produced by adopting innovations, and following them on a sample of reference households is the most cost effective way to do it.” (Final Evaluation Report, 2015).