

# Evaluation Report

Commissioned by Deutsche Welthungerhilfe e.V.

Country:	Myanmar
Project title:	Improved food and livelihood security for poor families in Pauk Township, Dry Zone, Burma / Myanmar
Project No.:	MMR 1029-08 / EU FOOD 2008/163-638
Project holder:	Welthungerhilfe and REAM (Renewable Energy Association Myanmar)
Approved budget:	1.000.000.- Euro
Committed funds:	150.000.- Euro Welthungerhilfe (70.000,- Euro Happel Foundation); 850.000.- Euro European Union
Co-financer (line):	European Union
Project period:	01.11.2008 until 30.04.2012

Country:	Myanmar
Project title:	Improvement of livelihoods of the disadvantaged population in Pauk Township
Project No.:	MMR 1069-11 / BMZ PN 2011.1895.9
Project holder:	Welthungerhilfe
Approved budget:	900.000.- Euro
Committed funds:	154.000.- Euro Welthungerhilfe (154.000,- Euro Happel Foundation); 746.000.- Euro BMZ
Co-financer (line):	BMZ
Project period:	28.9.2011 until 30.04.2014

**Pauk, Yangon, Berlin**

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# **I. Summary**

## **1. Brief description of the project and framework conditions**

The project area, Pauk Township, is part of the dry zone (700-1000 mm annual rainfall, very unreliable weather conditions) and located in Pakokku District, Magway Division. Since 2004, the local NGO Renewable Energy Association Myanmar (REAM) distributes food aid to Pauk Township, at present to 22% of all villages. In the recent years, work migration within Myanmar or to the neighboring countries has considerably increased.

Project MMR 1029, Improved food and livelihood security for poor families in Pauk Township, Dry Zone, Burma / Myanmar, EU co-funded, has been originally planned for three years (Nov. 2008 until Oct. 2011), but got a six-month no-cost extension due to several reasons: The project start delayed as the counterpart organization MAS signed the official papers one year late (Oct. 22, 2009). Project implementation was negatively affected by that the German Head of Project could not stay all the time in the project area (he often did not receive a travel authorization), two floods (Oct. 2010, Oct. 2011), which had to be responded by WHH with emergency aid (project MMR 1063, MMR 1072, and MMR 1073), difficult road conditions and access to the area (no tarred roads in Pauk Township; in the rainy season, project villages difficult (if at all) to be reached; the bridge over the Yaw River as only connection between Pakokku and Pauk was flushed away in Oct. 2011). In addition, the cooperation between the two project partners WHH and REAM had not been easy.

Project objective was an improved and stabilized food and livelihood security of ca. 4,800 landless and land-poor families in 41 villages of Pauk Township. Project measures included establishing village development committees and saving and credit groups, income generating activities, support in agriculture (seed banks, farmer field schools (FFS), demonstration fields, provision of agricultural tools and machinery), (agro-)forestry, environmental and hygiene awareness, water supply, and the introduction of energy-efficient stoves and improved latrines.

Project MMR 1069, Improvement of livelihoods of the disadvantaged population in Pauk Township, started already in October 2011. However, the first six months project staff was very busy with emergency projects and finalizing the activities of project MMR 1029. End of May 2012, the new WHH Project Director arrived in Pauk. Project MMR 1069 had been originally planned for 25 months, but, in July 2012, BMZ agreed to increased funds and a project extension of six months (-30.4.2014).

Six of the 19 villages supported by project MMR 1069 have also been covered by project MMR 1029. Many of the new villages had been selected as project village as they were heavily affected by the flood 2011. Project objective is that 2,900 impoverished households from 19 villages in Pauk Township have sufficient foodstuff for a balanced diet of their families and have improved their health situation as hygiene-related diseases are reduced. In addition to the measures of project MMR 1029, project MMR 1069 also supports infrastructure, flood control and erosion control measures.

As the mid-term evaluation and the final evaluation planned in project MMR 1029 could not be conducted, the present assignment served as ex-post evaluation of project MMR 1029 and as mid-term evaluation of project MMR 1069. The report should focus on project MMR 1029 as project MMR 1069 only had started in May 2012.

## **2. Relevance**

Project objective - food security - as well as project measures were highly relevant for the target group (especially saving and credit groups and seed banks), for the project partner REAM, WHH in Myanmar and also for overall WHH. Objectives are in line with those of the new government in Myanmar.

### **3. Effectiveness**

Two of the risks feared when planning the project did occur: (1) unusually extreme weather patterns (two years of floodings, one year drought) and (2) limited access to the project area for expatriate project staff and consultants. Therefore, even though most indicators at objective and at result level have been fulfilled, the project objective could not be reached. Despite remarkable success in many aspects (e.g. saving groups, seed banks, village development committees), a significant improvement and stabilization of food and livelihood security did not happen for the ca. 4,800 landless and land-poor families in the project villages. Beyond doubt, the project supported the target groups to better cope with the situation and, thus, could buffer the result of the weather extremes. However, increasingly more persons in the project villages regard migration as the only way to assure the survival of their families and leave the area.

### **4. Efficiency**

Cost-benefit and cost-performance ratio of the project and its measures are, in general, good. Landless households have been equipped with simple tools (knives, hoes) to enable them to earn income as agricultural laborer. Instead of distributing subsidized energy-efficient stoves as planned, the project decided to train villagers to produce stoves on their own. By this way, 5130 stoves were produced at very low costs. Some measures have been less efficient (income generating activities, FFS, supporting few individual farmers in agriculture).

### **5. Outcomes and impacts**

Impressive changes have occurred at the members of the saving and credit groups, who are by 80% women. Even though the weekly amount of money saved is small (most often ca. 0.10 EUR), the women have created an opportunity for themselves to obtain credit within their village and at a low interest rate. They do no longer depend on Pauk money lenders with high interest rates. These women are different to when the project started: They have increased self-reliance, act differently, speak up in public, are better able to plan their lives and they support their group members.

Another measure which greatly met the needs of the target population and, therefore, had significant effects was establishing seeds banks (with granaries) in the villages, managed by village development committees. The project provided seeds<sup>1</sup> as rotating funds to the villages. Before the project started, farmers had to sell their products directly after the harvest to pay for their debts and, at the time of seeding, they had to borrow the seeds again, at a high interest rate (the double amount as the seed borrowed had to be paid back). The seed banks of the project resulted in availability of seed in the villages and at a low interest rate (in most cases 12.5% per planting cycle). The amount of seeds in the seed banks has constantly increased due to the interest paid, and increasingly more people benefit from the seeds.

Further positive outcomes have been achieved in the field of water supply, energy-efficient stoves and latrines. Also, some income generating activities had positive effects for those who were trained (e.g. in motorbike repair). However, as described above, the situation in the villages with regards to food and livelihood security, income and agricultural production is not better than it was at the beginning of the project.

### **6. Sustainability**

The saving and credit groups and the seed banks seem to be the project's measures with the highest sustainability. Half a year after the project ended, women still meet weekly to deliver their saving amount due and to get credits. The amount of seeds recorded in the books of the village development committees has increased constantly. Farmers are highly interested in continuing the seed banks.

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<sup>1</sup> Green gram, groundnuts, pigeon peas, lablab beans, maize, sesame and chick peas.

## **7. Most important recommendations**

Project MMR 1069 is recommended to continue the participatory processes started already, to provide more systematic support to the village development committees, to support saving and credit group members in productive activities as well as in identifying village volunteers and involving them in the project. External consultants are needed for the flood control measures. Contact to the local government is a sensitive issue and should be further continued if appropriate.

As the project is not in the position to halt the present process of environmental degradation which has led to the floods - for this, large areas need to be covered –, at all possible levels, partners for cooperation should be identified and the problem tackled jointly. The issue has to be brought to the attention of the Myanmar Government.

## **8. General conclusions and “lessons learnt”**

Apparently, visiting the WHH partners in India contributed to the success of the saving groups in Myanmar. The saving groups of the project have been extremely successful. Also the seed banks met an urgent need of the local population and will continue to be managed by the village development committees. Establishing these village development committees has contributed significantly to the success of the project. Such institutions will continue to support village development long time after the project has ended.

In an area based on agriculture, suitable measures should be implemented to promote agricultural production. The project did not support the farmers trained as FFS trainers in conducting FFS in their own villages. Furthermore, too much attention was paid on supporting agricultural “demonstrations” of individual farmers which later on did not replicate.

In a food security project aiming at landless and landpoor families, activities should be implemented to promote the food security of these families. The home gardening activity planned turned out to be implemented as medium-scale vegetable production of a few (not poor) households instead of promoting planting vegetables in protected sections of the home yards of the landless and landpoor.