

Working with Government Structures

Assessment Report

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THE
LUTHERAN
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1. Acknowledgements

The consultant, together with LWF Myanmar would like to thank all LWF Myanmar staff members; government officials from a number of line departments both in Mindat township, Chin State and Pyapon district in the Ayeyarwady Region; and community members from Dedaye township for their time and participation in the one to one interviews, group discussions and consultation workshop without whose cooperation, input and support this assessment would not have been possible.

The consultant would also like to thank both interpreters for all their support; and LWF Myanmar staff members for all their logistical support be it organizing travel authorization for Pyapon and Mindat; arranging interviews with key stakeholders; arranging accommodation, transport and other logistics; or making the trips to Pyapon and Mindat so interesting and productive.

It is hoped that the key recommendations contained in this report will help guide LWF Myanmar, the government of Myanmar and the community members themselves to devise and execute joint strategies and plans that will be beneficial for all and further strengthen the relationship.

2. Limitations of the assessment

- This study was mainly focused on assessing the LWF Myanmar relationship with government structures at District, Township, Village Tract and Village level in Chin State and Ayeyarwady Delta Region. For this reason and due to time it takes to travel to Chin State posing timing constraints, it was agreed with LWF Myanmar that the consultant would not travel to either Nay Pyi Taw or Patheingyi to consult with Central and Regional government officials respectively at this time. It is a recommendation, however, that strategic engagement on the central and regional level continues so as to strengthen the relationship further and to assist in forging better links between Central, Regional, District, Township, Village Tract and Village levels.
- The availability of government officials meant that most only stayed for some and not the entire workshop; and some were not available for individual interview in Pyapon. Therefore, not all government officials who have had involvement with LWF Myanmar were consulted for this assessment.
- Likewise, due to time constraints and availability of community members, 30 villagers from only one village in Dedaye township were directly consulted for this assessment.

3. Executive Summary

The Lutheran World Federation began working in Myanmar in 2008 as a part of an ACT (Action by Churches Together) Alliance Appeal to respond to the devastation of Cyclone Nargis, during which LWF Myanmar operated through its member church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Myanmar (ELCM).

LWF Myanmar is committed to the concept of strengthening the capacity of the primary duty bearer, the government, as well as other duty-bearers and rights-holders themselves in line with its strategic approach of rights-based empowerment.

LWF Myanmar invited an independent consultant to assess their approach to working with government structures in Myanmar. The purpose of the assessment was to identify key strengths and best practices; challenges and constraints; opportunities; and provide a set of key recommendations for improving the partnership.

Over 50 people, comprising of district, township, and village tract level government officials; community members and LWF Myanmar staff from Yangon, Pyapon, Dedaye, Twante, Bogale, Mindat and Hpa'an were individually and/ or group interviewed during the assessment. The initial data was collected, compiled and presented at a consultation workshop in Pyapon for 20 participants from various government departments and LWF Myanmar staff from the Pyapon office. The workshop gave key stakeholders a chance to further explore the findings and agree some key recommendations moving forward.

The overall results of the assessment indicate that there are a number of key strengths of the partnership that may be leveraged.

Firstly, having worked in the Ayeyarwady Delta Region of Myanmar since cyclone Nargis struck the area in May 2008, since March 2013 in Chin State and since mid 2013 in Rakhine State, LWF Myanmar is already well known to certain government line departments and a good rapport is already built. This provides at least a firm basis on which to develop the relationship, mutually agree strategic ways of working and potentially implement further joint initiatives moving forward.

LWF Myanmar has been very active and successful in strengthening coordination between village level up to township level, participating in regular village tract meetings and township meetings. There are a lot of other examples of some successful joint activities, most of which have been done since 2011, when government policies began to change. These include LWF Myanmar working directly with the District and Township authorities in 3 townships in Ayeyarwady and one in Yangon Region to fully establish working Child Rights Committees and linking these with Village level mechanisms.

Other examples include joint trainings, mainly with the Department of Livestock Breeding, where LWF Myanmar provided technical assistance. Additionally, LWF Myanmar very successfully facilitated the creation of community based disaster resource management sub-committees, comprising of a number of taskforces that sits under the Village Development Committee (VDC), together with the Relief and Resettlement Department in Bogale, Pyapon, Dedaye and Twante townships.

LWF Myanmar has built up over the years both in Myanmar and globally credibility in working with particularly vulnerable communities, as well as significant experience of

working with disaster affected – be that man made or natural- communities in emergency response, early recovery and longer term development. One Government official in Mindat said that he appreciated that LWF Myanmar took time to understand the community and their needs and that assisted them greatly.

Importantly, LWF Myanmar have recruited, preliminarily trained and put into place most staff members that are needed to meet their strategic objectives for the Delta Region, Chin and Rakhine State programs in Myanmar.

While these successes and strengths provide a concrete grounding, there are some key challenges and constraints that need to be acknowledged, understood and addressed so that the relationship may be developed and strengthened further.

The main challenges and constraints identified include:

- Limited trust between parties- the government and the community; and among community members
- Some confusion over tasks and duties of some roles within some government departments; on roles and responsibilities of both duty-bearers and rights-holders; and on policies and procedures of the government
- Limited resources of the government, compounded by additional pressures placed on the local authorities
- Lack of LWF Myanmar guidelines and action plan for working with government, making it difficult for staff to translate theory into practice and apply it to their work
- Differing levels of confidence in the LWF Myanmar field teams; difficulty for some staff members to know how to address or facilitate to address certain complex issues faced by community members and to understand dynamics of the communities within which they work
- Perception that INGOs are just donors and not strategic development partners
- In the case of Chin State, some traditional laws may conflict with some government enacted laws

The following key recommendations are designed to address some of these constraints that are or could impede progress:

- Principles of partnership need to be understood and agreed by all key stakeholders- the government, the community and all LWF Myanmar staff members
- The LWF Myanmar's strategic approach for working with government structures should be reintegrated back into the overall approach of rights-based empowerment to which it belongs to avoid confusion
- The working with government and other duty-bearers component of the overall rights-based empowerment approach should be translated into guidelines and a concrete action plan, with clearly defined targets and

measures of success, in consultation with all key LWF Myanmar field staff, the government, and the community themselves. This will then complement the comprehensive guidelines that exist for working with the rights-holders

- While all LWF Myanmar staff are trained when they join the organization and rights-based empowerment lies very much at the heart of what LWF Myanmar do, some LWF Myanmar staff members should be given necessary follow-up support to ensure that they comprehensively understand the rights-holder/ duty-bearers relationship and roles and responsibilities of each
- As part of the training, tools to conduct power analyses are shared with staff. However, in some cases, LWF Myanmar field staff members would benefit from further support to conduct analyses of influences within the communities they work to fully understand dynamics and 'power' structures; and on how to help address more complex issues
- LWF Myanmar field staff members should ensure that they are kept up to date with any changes in government structures, policies and/ or procedures. This could be further supported by the Yangon LWF Myanmar office
- LWF Myanmar should continue to proactively take part in coordination meetings and strongly encourage and promote information-sharing and complementarity from all other stakeholders so as to promote trust, accountability and collaboration
- LWF Myanmar should continue its strategic engagement with government on the central and regional level so as to strengthen the relationship further and to assist in forging better links between Central, Regional, District, Township, Village Tract and Village levels
- LWF Myanmar, together with all key stakeholders, should continue to proactively engage with the new Development Support Committees in all townships and village tracts to support a joint strategy and action plan that ensures alignment and coordination and that doesn't erode valuable work at village and village tract level done to date
- In addition to the staff retreats and existing team structures, LWF Myanmar could look at more ways in which less confident LWF Myanmar field staff may learn from more confident or experienced staff so as to build to build confidence and capacities
- Any training done must be mutually agreed and have a follow-up support component, whether for the government, LWF Myanmar staff members or community members to better ensure integration in every day activities
- Given the government's capacity constraints, it has been suggested by one government official and endorsed by others that the amount of people that have contact with the various line departments is limited and agreed by both parties

4. Introduction

The Lutheran World Federation came to Myanmar in 2008 as a part of an ACT (Action by Churches Together) Alliance Appeal to respond to the devastation of Cyclone Nargis, during which LWF Myanmar operated through its member church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Myanmar (ELCM).

In line with the rights-based empowerment process, which underpins one of two key strategic approaches that LWF Myanmar takes to its work, it is committed to the concept of strengthening the capacity of the primary duty bearer, the government, as well as other duty-bearers and rights-holders themselves.

LWF Myanmar invited an independent consultant to assess their approach to working with government structures in Myanmar. The purpose of the assessment was to identify key strengths and best practices; challenges and constraints; opportunities; and provide a set of key recommendations for improving the partnership.

The assessment was conducted using a mixture of individual interviews and small group discussions in Yangon, Mindat and Pyapon with a selection of over 50 LWF Myanmar staff; government officials; and community members. Initial findings were then presented at a consultation workshop in Pyapon, comprising of 20 government officials and LWF Myanmar staff from three townships where LWF Myanmar have operations – Pyapon, Dedaye and Bogale townships in the Ayeyarwady Delta Region.

This report attempts to summarize key findings of the assessment, as well as provide a more detailed description of the methodology applied; an overview of the Myanmar context; LWF Myanmar's strategy and strategic approaches to its work; and a set of key recommendations.

5. Purpose of the assessment

The purpose of the assessment was to identify, gather and document:

- Examples of working with government and best practices in fulfilling the strategic approach of working with government structures
- Challenges to be addressed for improving the LWF Myanmar – Myanmar Government partnership
- A set of key recommendations moving forward that will assist in strengthening the partnership with the Myanmar government

6. Methodology

LWF Myanmar hired an independent consultant to carry out the assessment.

After developing a sound understanding of LWF Myanmar's approach and strategy and key areas to be looked at in the assessment, the consultant then facilitated a series of individual interviews and small group discussions with a selection of government officials, LWF Myanmar staff members and community members that LWF Myanmar works with. These discussions took place in Yangon; Pyapon in the Ayeyarwady Delta Region; Sar Oo Chaung village in Dedaye township; and Mindat in Chin State and were designed to get input from them on what they thought were the key strengths; challenges and constraints; key opportunities; and what their initial recommendations would be. The consultant used a Myanmar interpreter in the interviews and discussions.

LWF Myanmar staff members interviewed included the Senior Management Team and the Administration Officer from the Yangon office; the Project Officers from Mindat, Pyapon and Hpa'an township in Kayin State; the Assistant Project Officers from Pyapon and Mindat; Team Facilitators from Mindat, Pyapon, Dedaye, Twante and Bogale townships; and Community Empowerment Facilitators from Mindat, Pyapon, Dedaye, Twante and Bogale townships.

Representatives from the Township Administrative Office; District Agriculture Department; District Health Department; the Township Municipal Committee; Township Department of Development; District Department of Development; and District Livestock Breeding Department in Mindat; and a representative from the Township Development Support Committee in Pyapon were also interviewed. Additionally, opinions were sought from 30 community members from Sar Oo Chung village in Dedaye township.

The consultant then compiled the data collected during the field visits in preparation for the consultation workshop in Pyapon on 24 October 2013. The consultation workshop included government representation from Pyapon Township Health Department; Pyapon District Planning Office; Pyapon Fire Brigade Department; Pyapon Hospital; Pyapon District Relief and Resettlement Department; Pyapon District Agriculture Department; Village Administrators from See'Kalay and Thae' Aeik villages; and a selection of LWF Myanmar staff members from all three townships in the Ayeyarwady Delta Region.

The workshop was conducted in English with simultaneous Myanmar interpretation. Key findings were presented to the whole group, following a round of introductions and an explanation of the purpose of the assessment; process and progress to date; and purpose of the workshop. The key findings included strengths; examples of good practice; constraints and challenges; opportunities; and some initial recommendations. The participants were then broken into 3 groups. Each group had at least one government official. It was hoped that the groups would have been able to further explore and agree strengths; challenges and constraints; opportunities, as well as key recommendations. However, most government representatives needed to leave at lunchtime so it was mutually agreed to focus on key recommendations moving forward that could contribute to strengthening the partnership. They then presented back to the whole group and after each, a short discussion session was held and recommendations were collectively agreed.

During the afternoon, the LWF Myanmar staff further explored in two groups, strengths and examples of best practices. Each group had at least one Assistant Project Officer and one Team Facilitator and at least two Community Empowerment Facilitators. Once they had discussed and agreed in groups, they presented back to the whole group. A discussion followed each presentation and strengths and best practices were collectively agreed.

The results of the workshop were then integrated into the initial findings in order to produce this report.

7. Overview of Myanmar Context

Myanmar is a country with a population of around 58 million people, with an annual growth rate of around 1.5%¹. The country is one of the most ethnically, religiously, and culturally diverse in the world with around 135 national groups. The lack of reliable data makes it almost impossible to accurately know Myanmar's total population or the exact make-up of its ethnic groups. The Burman (Bamar), the largest single ethnic group is thought to make up over two-thirds of the population and dominates the composition of both the government and the government army. Most of Myanmar's ethnic minority groups inhabit areas along the country's mountainous frontiers. The Karen and Shan groups are thought to comprise about 10% each, while the rest each constitute 5% or less of the population. Around 80% of the population is believed to be Buddhist, while the remaining 20% are a mix of Christian, Muslim, Animist or other. Multiple languages and dialects are spoken amongst these different groups.

While rich in natural resources, Myanmar remains one of the poorest countries in Asia. It is thought that over a third of the population are unable to generate enough money to meet their basic daily living needs. According to a UNDP report, Myanmar's Human Development Index was ranked 149 (out of a total of 187 countries) in the world in 2011 placing it in the low human development category.²

From 1962 to 2011, the people of Myanmar lived under military rule. The general election held in November 2010 was in accordance with the new constitution, which was approved in a referendum held in May 2008, and formed the fifth step of the seven-step "roadmap to democracy" proposed by the State Peace and Development Council in 2003. The Union Solidarity and Development Party won the election and in March 2011, a new civilian-led, military-backed government was sworn in under President Thein Sein.

Many parts of Myanmar have also been home to violent armed conflict, largely but not exclusively, between the government army and the armies of various ethnic minority groups, on and off for over 60 years, essentially since the country gained independence from Great Britain in 1948. After a period of ceasefire, heavy fighting began again in various areas in August 2009, triggered by a dispute relating to the government's request that the ethnic minority armies become the Border Guard Force under their control. These conflicts calmed down in 2010 in the run up to the elections but then intensified again in February 2011.

Ceasefire agreements were brokered with most groups in December 2011 and January 2012 but fighting continues in some parts of the country. For all groups, the crucial political dialogue is yet to begin in earnest. Although a very different situation, tension also exists in Northern Rakhine State between the stateless Rohingya and the Arakan, as well as the rest of Myanmar. This has escalated into general tension between Muslims and Buddhists in the country, arguably fuelled further by misreporting in the international (and to an extent national) media.

The past sixty years has seen very limited investment in health, education (3.25 percent and 6.26 percent of the total budget respectively in FY2011)³ and other basic services across the country. With heavy censorship throughout the country for much

¹ Ministry of Health 2010

² <http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/>

³ US Policy on Burma- Statement Before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific, Washington, DC- 25 April 2012

of this time, access to information has also been very limited, and in turn, as has freedom of thought and expression.

Amidst some negative events that continue to plague the country, positive changes have occurred in the country since November 2010. We have witnessed increased investment in some sectors; the very obvious relaxing of censorship laws; concrete steps taken towards a comprehensive education sector review; the revision of some key laws; significant changes in the cabinet; release of most political prisoners; steps taken to build a framework for economic and social reform; and a peace process being instigated and supported by the President. Additionally, having been released from house arrest, six days after the election in 2010, Aung San Suu Kyi was elected to the first parliament in decades in the April 2012 by-elections.

However, considerable challenges lie ahead for Myanmar that need to be understood, taken into account and addressed accordingly.

On the macro-level, workable long-term agreements need to be made between the government and the various ethnic minority groups. A viable solution also needs to be found that addresses the tensions between ethnic and religious groups.

The dictatorship that the country has been under for so long, reinforced in part by traditional culture, and to an extent exposure to violence, has had a profound impact on the people of Myanmar and society as a whole and in turn on their attitudes, behaviours and actions towards each other. Very much resembling the characteristics of a dictatorship, top-down and autocratic leadership is very common in civil society⁴ and decisions are often made by one person in a family, an organization or community, leaving little space for people to influence or become involved in decisions that affect their lives. Teaching styles in schools generally prohibit engagement and participation- a fundamental process in ensuring an environment that is conducive to both sustainable development and peace⁵. Culturally, it is seen as rude to ask a teacher a question. Fear to speak out, particularly in front of elders and village leaders, is also proving to be a serious obstacle in implementing participatory methods of community engagement. When differences of opinion or conflict arise, this often leads to a split in the organization rather than a compromise. Furthermore, conflict in families, communities and organizations is often managed (and hardly solved) by use, or threat of use, of force.⁶ This has proven to be the case across Myanmar.

The consequences of years of suppressed and restricted thinking are manifesting themselves in a variety of ways, often demonstrating many people's limited ability to think critically, laterally and therefore rationally- most recently in the inter-communal conflicts that have broken out in various parts of the country. Limited trust is also leading to unhealthy relationships based on fear and suspicion, across the country, that often prevent collaboration, another process that lies at the heart of both peace and sustainable development.⁷

The issues mentioned and widespread gaps in capacity within the government and within communities themselves are potential threats and impediments not only to the long-term peace process but also the democratic transition and development processes in the country.

⁴ Leadership Styles of Civil Society Organizations in Myanmar- Local Resource Centre- May 2012

⁵ Learning to abolish war- Teaching towards a culture of peace- The Hague Appeal for Peace- 2002

⁶ Civil Society Gaining Ground – Opportunities for Change and Development in Burma- Transnational Institute- November 2011

⁷ Learning to abolish war- Teaching towards a culture of peace- The Hague Appeal for Peace- 2002

8. Description of LWF Myanmar's strategy

LWF Myanmar's strategy comprises four strategic objectives:

Strategic Objective 1: Community Empowerment- To strengthen local leadership and improve governance for equitable and sustainable development

The intention is to empower individuals, households, groups and Village Development Committees (VDCs) to be able to lobby for their rights and empower duty bearers to respect, protect and fulfil the needs of the people. LWF Myanmar conducts a range of activities to increase the knowledge and skills of different groups and the VDCs to manage their own development processes. The groups and VDCs are trained in project cycle management; book-keeping; proposal writing; report writing and other areas identified. They are offered key concepts in participation, inclusion, community mobilization and leadership.

Strategic Objective 2: Sustainable Livelihoods- To empower communities to obtain improved and sustainable socio-economic livelihoods

Socio-economic livelihood is related to elements that improve lives. Generally these are related to income, food, shelter, education, health, clean drinking water and others as formulated in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). LWF Myanmar facilitates partner communities to access such services from the government line departments and supports them to improve such services in a sustainable manner. Wherever possible, efforts are made to also facilitate linkages to the private sector and local markets. Gender, environment and climate change issues are taken into consideration in all activities and at all possible stages.

Strategic Objective 3: Emergency Response and Disaster Risk Management- To enable communities to manage and mitigate disaster risks, and prepare for and respond effectively to disasters and emergencies

In consultation with the government and other stakeholders, LWF Myanmar responds to emergencies and the reintegration and rehabilitation needs of refugees, returnees and IDPs. LWF Myanmar attempts to strengthen community based disaster risk management (CBDRM) mechanisms and facilitate household and community disaster preparedness plans. Awareness raising and activities to conserve the environment and climate change adaptation is an integral part of this objective. At the beginning and end of each project, an in-house environmental impact analysis (EIA) is done.

Strategic Objective 4: Organizational Development- To strengthen LWF Myanmar to be effective, efficient and relevant to the context

To achieve the other three objectives, it is necessary for LWF Myanmar to be an accountable, transparent, contextually relevant, effective and efficient organization. For this purpose, LWF Myanmar will regularly review its strategies, policies, guidelines, and management structures and develop its staff. It strives to maintain good relations with government line departments from village to central level by engaging them in meetings, trainings, workshops and through sharing information and resources. LWF Myanmar participates in alliances, forums, and networks that add value to its work.

Cross cutting issues

LWF Myanmar has adopted gender and environment and climate change as the two main cross cutting issues. Irrespective of the type of projects, LWF Myanmar ensures that gender and environment and climate change issues are captured. Rights-based empowerment cannot be fully achieved unless both females and males of all ages are genuinely capacitated. Similarly, sustainable development cannot be achieved if appropriate attention is not given to the issues affecting the environment and climate change.

Currently LWF Myanmar is active in 50 villages across Twante township in Yangon Region and Pyapon, Dedaye and Bogale townships in the Ayeyarwady Delta Region; in 13 villages in Mindat township in Chin State; and with IDPs in Sittwe in Rakhine State. LWF Myanmar has also opened an office in Hpa'an, Kayin State.

9. Description of LWF Myanmar's strategic approaches

LWF Myanmar essentially takes two strategic approaches to its work. Firstly, a right-based empowerment approach, which should include both the rights-holders and the duty-bearers and secondly, an integrated approach. However, in an attempt to emphasize that working with duty-bearers is a key part of the rights based empowerment approach and due to sensitivities around the use of certain language in the past, 'Working with Government Structures' has become a separate approach rather than as part of the overall rights-based empowerment approach.

1. Rights-based empowerment approach

Empowerment is a process that draws out and builds people's capacity and confidence, both as individuals and members of families, groups and communities to achieve results for themselves. Rights-based empowerment means building up awareness on all levels, both among the rights holders and the various duty bearers, to respect, protect and fulfil the rights defined by the country's constitution, laws, policies, and international conventions, instruments and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that are ratified by the government.

LWF Myanmar continues with inclusive and participatory methods to equip people, community based organizations and groups with the knowledge, skills and attitudes that broaden their confidence and facilitate their empowerment to take control of their lives. LWF Myanmar believes that each individual is endowed with inherent capacities that often require stimulus to emerge. LWF Myanmar tries to emphasize to individuals, CBOs and groups, the importance of access to and control over resources through village level community managed structures, including access to services and resources from the relevant government line departments at township and village levels. Simultaneously, LWF Myanmar attempts to facilitate increased engagement with government line departments in its activities and those of the CBOs, groups and households. LWF Myanmar shares appropriate resources for programs and activities undertaken by government line departments designed to fulfil the rights of the people.

2. Working with Government Structures

In line with the rights based empowerment process, LWF Myanmar is committed to the concept of strengthening the capacity of the primary duty bearer. With its present projects, LWF Myanmar coordinates with government line departments to strengthen service delivery. Resource sharing in the form of using the technical expertise of the government line departments is promoted. In the process bonds of understanding

and productive relationship are developed between rights holders and duty bearers when they work together on projects of mutual concern. The role of LWF Myanmar therefore is not to fill the gaps between rights holders and duty bearers but to facilitate the closing of those gaps. LWF Myanmar attempts to join hands with the communities to advocate with the line departments for their well-being. It is expected that the empowerment process will generate more demand by the partner communities for government services, but their advocacy work shall be non-violent. Accepting that the government line departments have limited capacity to provide those services, LWF Myanmar strives to collaborate with the line departments to assist in fulfilling these services, where possible.

3. Integrated approach

An integrated approach entails holistic programming that deals with all facets of people's lives, addressing the rights and needs of individuals, groups and communities. Just as the rights-based empowerment approach aspires to fulfil rights, the integrated approach aspires to comprehensive development and encompasses the same broad agenda of well-being and life with dignity. Consideration is given to the ways in which various components inter-link with, or affect other components, situations and the environment.

10. Summary of agreements between LWF Myanmar and the Myanmar government

LWF Myanmar has been operational in Myanmar since 2008, and had an official Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement until it expired in March 2013. LWF Myanmar received its official 5-year registration as an International Non-governmental Organization with the Ministry of Home Affairs on 21 November 2013 and it will be valid until 31 December 2018. Registration was a pre-requisite for renewing its MOU. The MOU process is expected to be completed by early 2014.

11. Key findings of the assessment

The following chapter of the report is broken into four sections. The first section summarizes key strengths of the partnership and comparative advantage of LWF Myanmar; the second describes best case studies; the third looks at challenges and constraints, which are broken into two- external and internal to LWF Myanmar; and the fourth section looks at key opportunities that could be leveraged at this pivotal point in Myanmar.

11.1 Strengths

There are several key strengths that if leveraged could help further strengthen the relationship between LWF Myanmar, the Myanmar government and the communities themselves.

Firstly, having worked in the Ayeyarwady Delta Region of Myanmar since cyclone Nargis struck the area in May 2008, since March 2013 in Chin State and since mid 2013 in Rakhine State, LWF Myanmar is already well known to certain government line departments and a good rapport is already built. This provides at least a firm basis on which to develop the relationship, mutually agree strategic ways of working and potentially implement further joint initiatives.

LWF Myanmar has been very active and successful in strengthening coordination between village level up to township level, participating in regular village tract

meetings and township meetings. Other examples of some successful joint activities are described in the next section and most of these have been since 2011, when government policies began to change.

Additionally, LWF Myanmar has built up over the years both in Myanmar and globally credibility in working with particularly vulnerable communities, as well as significant experience of working with disaster affected – be that man made or natural-communities in emergency response, early recovery and longer term development. One Government official in Mindat said that he appreciated that LWF Myanmar took time to understand the community and their needs and that assisted them greatly.

Importantly, LWF Myanmar have recruited, preliminarily trained and put into place most staff members that are needed to meet their strategic objectives for the Delta Region, Chin and Rakhine State programs in Myanmar. In addition to this, they are a founding member of ACT, an alliance of 125 churches and related organizations that work together in humanitarian assistance, advocacy and development; and are a member of SPHERE; Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP); the Association of Humanitarian and Development Organizations in Europe that work closely together with the World Council of Churches (APRODEV); Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance (EAA); the World Council of Churches (WCC); and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). LWF Myanmar benefits from the accrued knowledge and experience and has access to considerable technical and human resource support. As a member-based federation, it also has close connections with the four local Lutheran Churches in Myanmar.

11.2 *Best practices*

Working together for the rights of the child

In November 2011, LWF Myanmar began its Child and Youth Development Program in Pyapon, Bogale and Dedaye townships in Pyapon District and Twante township in Yangon Region. November and December 2011 were spent learning from other organizations, namely UNICEF and Save the Children. LWF Myanmar also leveraged its already established relationship with the Myanmar Youth Forum, which is recognized by the new government and funded by some INGOs.

As with the rest of the country, the three townships officially had a child rights committee on paper but they were not active. From January 2012, LWF Myanmar began discussions with the local level authorities about child rights and the existing child law, which is currently being revised. The government authorities seemed interested but were not sure how they could put it into practice.

When the regional level Relief and Resettlement Department arrived in Pyapon for other reasons, LWF Myanmar invited them to attend the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) Day planning meeting. The meeting was conducted by children, which pleasantly surprised the participants. Following the meeting, the District Commander gave his authorization for the day to go ahead and even facilitated a meeting with Child Rights Committee members.

Twelve people attended the meeting to discuss the CRC Day and at the end agreed for the day to go ahead. In November 2012, LWF Myanmar held celebrations in Pyapon, Dedaye, Twante and Bogale and a total of 800 people, comprising District and Township level government officials; INGO and NGOs; and youth group and village child club members.

The event showed photos of child club activities over the year; conducted hygiene promotion sessions; and other activities. During the day, the children themselves read their rights, to applause from other participants.

After the celebration, the Child Right Committees in all townships, comprising of Department of Social Welfare; Education; Health; Police; Fire Brigade; Justice; and a leader of a government affiliated organization came to LWF Myanmar to explore how they could further work together.

Now LWF Myanmar gives support and training to village authorities, Village Development Committees, Youth Groups and Parent and Teacher Associations with the blessing of the CRCs and helped to set up a comprehensive process that ensures every stakeholder is clear on the procedures. The Youth Group and PTAs are responsible in each village, coordinated by the Village Development Committees to disseminate the information to the Child Clubs, ensuring that children out of school are also included.

Joint training initiatives

LWF Myanmar has conducted various training and awareness sessions together with various government departments, including Health, Social Welfare, Agriculture, Relief and Resettlement and Livestock Breeding, based on a comprehensive needs assessment at the village level.

LWF Myanmar has been working with the Livestock Breeding Department since July 2012. They agreed to jointly conduct training, led by the government with technical support from LWF Myanmar. So far, they have conducted training on livestock techniques for chicken, pigs and ducks in villages in the four townships in Ayeyarwady and Yangon Regions in July 2012 and May and October 2013. Additionally in Bogale, they worked with the same department on training on livestock health for communities.

These trainings work very well, and will continue, continually ensuring that they are what the community want and need.

LWF Myanmar conducted a pre-service 25-day training for 20 Community Facilitators in Mindat township in Chin State, which built on their experiences in the Delta. In order to ensure that from the beginning, LWF Myanmar staff members in Mindat, Chin State were familiar with what each government department did, as part of this training, they invited 11 government departments to give a presentation on what they did. It also gave them a chance to meet face to face and get to know each other.

Strengthening disaster management

Working closely and directly with the Relief and Resettlement Department, LWF Myanmar facilitated the creation of community based disaster resource management sub-committees, comprising of a number of taskforces that sits under the Village Development Committee (VDC).

Bogale township village sub-committees each have 6 task forces: Early Warning (EW); Light Search and Rescue (LSR); Basic First Aid (BFA); Assessment and Relief Management (ARM); Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH); and Shelter Management (SR). Pyapon, Dedaye and Twante village sub-committees have 5 of the same except Shelter Management (SR).

11.3 *Challenges and constraints*

There are considerable challenges and constraints that need to be understood, acknowledged and addressed if the partnership between LWF Myanmar, the government of Myanmar and the communities themselves is to be developed and strengthened. As mentioned above, this section is broken up into challenges and constraints that can be described as external to LWF Myanmar but may still impact the organization and those that are internal to the organization.

External challenges and constraints

One of the biggest challenges identified in this assessment is that there is limited or a complete breakdown of trust among parties. Even with the positive changes that have occurred in the past two years there is still reluctance and in some cases refusal of some community members to engage with the government, which poses considerable challenges for LWF Myanmar. One example given was that one village tract administrator was proactively giving the community a chance to tell him their needs but they were still too scared to speak out after years of no response. This trust issue is not exclusively between the government and civil society but also among civil society. The interviewees reported a number of instances where they have sensed tension among community members themselves in meetings they have attended that was prohibiting collaboration and reaching agreement among them. Feedback from LWF Myanmar staff members suggested that they often faced difficulties in helping the communities with complex issues or knowing where to direct them for help. Some also expressed difficulties in understanding 'power' dynamics of the communities, which can differ enormously from one village to another and necessary to understand.

Another challenge that repeatedly came up was the following: there seems to be some confusion on some levels within some government departments on their tasks and duties. This naturally creates frustration and constraints for all parties involved—the government officials themselves, the community members and LWF Myanmar who supports them. Even where there is clarity, there is limited resources for the government to perform their tasks and duties. These include human, technical, financial and material resources. Additional pressures being applied to the local government departments within the new Framework for Economic and Social Reform without appropriate support allocated is adding to their already burdened workloads and stretching capacity well beyond limits.

It also needs to be acknowledged that Myanmar is only at the beginning of its transition from autocratic rule to more democratic and people-centred ways of working. There is still limited understanding of how this might be applied in practice both within the government and within the community. One example given was that one community was refusing to finish a footpath that they had started. LWF Myanmar encouraged the Village Tract Administrator to intervene. His response was that he could no longer tell the community what to do and that it was their choice. As one LWF Myanmar staff member said 'The community members are coming to know their rights but maybe not with an understanding of their responsibilities'. This could also prove a challenge to all key stakeholders if not addressed.

Another key challenge faced by LWF Myanmar is the perception of the government and to an extent the communities that INGOs are 'donors' that give things away, rather than strategic development partners. Some other Cyclone Nargis interventions

may have contributed to this perception and the increased investment is likely to further exacerbate the issue if not managed.

Finally, while Chin State and Ayeyarwady Delta Region shared many challenges, one key issue faced in Chin is the role traditional Chin law plays in people's life. This has a potential to conflict with government-enacted law now and in the future. One example given was in reference to land-ownership. Some LWF Myanmar staff members expressed concerns on their limited understanding of this and how this might be managed.

Internal challenges and constraints:

All staff members of LWF Myanmar that were interviewed had received training on the rights-based empowerment process that includes working with government at the time of joining the organization. While LWF Myanmar staff members seem reasonably comfortable with the community side of the approach, there still seems to be a great deal of confusion among staff members around the working with government structures component, which if not addressed could have a negative impact on their relationships with the communities, as well as the key government departments.

First and foremost, it needs to be recognized that many of the key concepts of the rights-based empowerment approach may still be very new to many of the LWF Myanmar local staff in the same way as they are for the community within which they operate and the government itself. Additionally there are differing levels of confidence within the LWF Myanmar field staff and part of this has led to still some reluctance of some to engage.

Another important issue became particularly evident in the workshop was that certain LWF Myanmar field staff members do not thoroughly understand the different duty-bearer/ rights-holder relationships and that the government is the primary and legal but not the sole duty-bearer. This could pose significant issues when they are expected to engage positively with government line departments and empower and facilitate communities within the rights-based empowerment framework. If there is not mutual understanding, it could be perceived by the government as lack of empathy and understanding of the challenges they are facing and/ or that unreasonable expectation is being applied on them, which could cause unnecessary tension.

Additionally, historically in Myanmar in general, engagement with government has been limited in many cases to obtaining permission to conduct activities rather than a more strategic engagement. The absence of clear guidelines or an action plan to support its strategic approach of working with government structures in the same way as it has guidelines for working with the community not only makes it harder for staff members to translate theory into practice and determine how their roles relate to it but has led to ad-hoc activities being conducted with various line departments. Moreover, at the time of defining its strategy, LWF Myanmar agreed that it might be useful to define the approach to working with government structures separately from the overall approach to which it belongs in order to emphasize it. However, doing so seems to have reinforced the perception that it is something separate from the rights-based empowerment approach and therefore having an impact on how the LWF Myanmar staff members perceive their roles within it. Of the three field positions that mention government departments, the tasks are mainly focused on coordination,

networking and reporting. It should be noted that this is how many government departments still define themselves and it may be some time before this changes.

As described in the external challenges and constraints section, the lack of clarity of the tasks and duties of some government departments makes it difficult for LWF Myanmar staff to identify the correct department to liaise with or direct the communities to, which based on discussions with the community members is causing some frustration. It is also imperative that the LWF Myanmar field staff members keep themselves up to date with any changes in government policies and procedures.

Finally, the LWF Myanmar MOU process is still in progress and as a result, LWF Myanmar staff members are often hindered from progressing in discussions with some government departments.

11.4 Opportunities

Despite the challenges and constraints, there are key opportunities that if seized could enhance the relationship between all key stakeholders.

Myanmar is going through an important transition period. The government has embarked on a Framework for Economic and Social Reform, as well as a comprehensive education sector review. The country is making steady steps towards democracy and is at the beginning of the long road to peace. Various laws have been revised and enacted, which will hopefully facilitate operations on a local level. Sanctions being partially or fully lifted have led to increased investment in the country from the private as well as public sector. To assist in the development process, new 'Development Support Committees' have been set up, lending the possibility of strengthening cohesion and coordination and ensuring that the already well established and functioning village development committees contribute to them. Importantly, these changes have brought more openness and flexibility to work together on all sides.

At the local level, mechanisms for coordination do exist and provide a good platform on which to build. The regular meetings as part of these coordination mechanisms, which LWF Myanmar attends and contributes to regularly could be utilized to identify areas where all stakeholders can work together towards a common goal, thereby promoting trust building, collaboration and cooperation.

12. Conclusion and key recommendations

The overall results of the assessment show that while there are some key strengths and examples of best practices that may be replicated and further developed, the process highlighted significant challenges and constraints.

The following key recommendations are designed, in consultation with key stakeholders involved in the assessment, to address some of the key constraints, while leveraging some of the opportunities afforded at this current time in Myanmar:

- Principles of partnership need to be understood and agreed by all key stakeholders- the government, the community and all LWF Myanmar staff members. The agreed principles should reflect those agreed by a number of humanitarian and development partners in 2007 at the Global Humanitarian

Platform⁸ and in 2005 in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness⁹, and which the Myanmar government requested all development partners to adhere to in January 2013.

- The LWF Myanmar's strategic approach for working with government structures should be reintegrated back into the overall approach of rights-based empowerment to which it belongs to avoid confusion
- The working with government and other duty-bearers component of the overall rights-based empowerment approach should be translated into guidelines and a concrete action plan, with clearly defined targets and measures of success, in consultation with all key LWF Myanmar field staff, the government, and the community themselves. This will then complement the comprehensive guidelines that exist for working with the rights-holders.
- While all LWF Myanmar staff are trained when they join the organization and rights-based empowerment lies very much at the heart of what LWF Myanmar do, all LWF Myanmar staff members should be given necessary follow-up support to ensure that they comprehensively understand the rights-holder/ duty-bearers relationship and roles and responsibilities of each and possess the right attitudes
- As part of the training, tools to conduct power analyses are shared with staff. However, in some cases, LWF Myanmar field staff members would benefit from further support to conduct more comprehensive analyses of influences within the communities they work to more fully understand dynamics and 'power' structures; and on how to help address more issues
- LWF Myanmar field staff members should ensure they keep themselves up to date with any changes in government structures, policies and/ or procedures.
- In addition to the supervision, training, mentoring, and coaching they receive, some LWF Myanmar field staff would benefit from more hands-on support on how to help address more complex issues and be given clear procedures on what to do if they don't understand an issue or do not know where to direct community members to. For example, more support to identify and build networks of organizations that have experience in complex issues such as land rights and organize for them to visit the village to give a talk. Perhaps more learning from where successful networks have been built could be shared with staff
- LWF Myanmar should continue actively taking part in coordination meetings and strongly encourage and promote information-sharing and complementarity from all stakeholders so as to promote trust and accountability. These meetings should be used as an opportunity to focus on common goals so as to promote collaboration.
- LWF Myanmar should continue its strategic engagement with government on the central and regional level so as to strengthen the relationship further and to assist in forging better links between Central, Regional, District, Township, Village Tract and Village levels

⁸ <http://www.globalhumanitarianplatform.org/pop.html#pop>

⁹ <http://www.oecd.org/development/effectiveness/34428351.pdf>

- LWF Myanmar, together with all key stakeholders, should continue to proactively engage with Development Support Committees in all townships and village tracts to support a joint strategy and action plan that ensures alignment and coordination- for example, for school construction. The General Administration Department should be supported to define guidelines and regulations to ensure efficiency and effectiveness.
- In addition to the staff retreats and existing team structures, LWF Myanmar could look at more ways in which less confident LWF Myanmar field staff may learn from more confident or experienced staff so as to build confidence and capacities
- Any training done must be mutually agreed and have a follow-up support component, whether for the government, LWF Myanmar staff members or community members to better ensure integration in every day activities.
- Given the government's capacity constraints, it has been suggested by one government official at the workshop, and endorsed by others that the amount of people that have contact with the various line departments is limited to 2 or 3 at each level.

**Annex I- List of interviewees and contact details
LWF Myanmar Staff**

No	Name	Job Title	Location	Contact Details
1	David Mueller	Regional Representative, LWF Myanmar	Yangon	09-5069417 davidlwf@gmail.com
2	Krishna Rawal	Program Manager/ Coordinator, LWF Myanmar	Yangon	09-421120571 rawalkrishna0@gmail.com
3	Francesca Traglia	Program Coordinator, LWF Myanmar	Yangon	09-421173756 francescalwf@gmail.com
4	Sofia Malmqvist	Rights Based Empowerment Advisor, LWF Myanmar	Yangon	09-421163158 sofia.lwfmyanmar@gmail.com
5	Lwin Aung Zaw	Administration and Logistics Officer, LWF Myanmar	Yangon	09-5165456 lwf.mm.alo@gmail.com
6	Aung Naing Lwin	Project Officer, LWF Myanmar	Hpa'an	09-49759839 aungnainglwin.uthant@gmail.com
7	Moe Naing Oo	Project Officer, LWF Myanmar	Pyapon	09-422461854 moenaing111@gamil.com
8	Chan Ko Aung	Assistant Project Officer- Livelihoods	Pyapon	
9	U Hla Moe	Assistant Project Officer- Infrastructure (Assistant Engineer), LWF Myanmar	Pyapon	
10	U Soe Thiha Tin	Assistant Project Officer- Empowerment, LWF Myanmar	Pyapon	
11	Kyaw Thu Linn	Acting Team Facilitator, LWF Myanmar	Pyapon	
12	Zin Mar Han	Community Empowerment Facilitator, LWF Myanmar	Pyapon	
13	Hein Maung Maung	Community Empowerment Facilitator, LWF Myanmar	Pyapon	
14	Nyo Nyo Than	Acting Team Facilitator, LWF Myanmar	Bogale	
15	Aung Myat Moe	Community Empowerment Facilitator, LWF Myanmar	Bogale	
16	Thet Ko Naing	Community Empowerment Facilitator, LWF Myanmar	Bogale	

17	Nant May Than Htay (Esther)	Team Facilitator, LWF Myanmar	Dedaye	
18	Kyaw Myo Thant	Community Empowerment Facilitator, LWF Myanmar	Dedaye	
19	Zaw Zaw Htike	Team Facilitator, LWF Myanmar	Twante	
20	Tin Tin Myo	Community Empowerment Facilitator, LWF Myanmar	Twante	
21	San Thein Maung	Project Officer, LWF Myanmar	Mindat	09-422463389 laymyoesan@gmail.com
22	Maung Soe Thein	Assistant Engineer, LWF Myanmar	Mindat	
23	Law Sheing Mang	Assistant Project Officer- Livelihood, LWF Myanmar	Mindat	
24	San Thang	Community Empowerment Facilitator, LWF Myanmar	Mindat	
25	Tam Khui Shing	Community Empowerment Facilitator, LWF Myanmar	Mindat	
26	Kee Hung	Community Empowerment Facilitator, LWF Myanmar	Mindat	
27	Nilar Htwe	Community Empowerment Facilitator, LWF Myanmar	Mindat	
28	Ning Law Shing Hung	Community Empowerment Facilitator, LWF Myanmar	Mindat	
29	Yaw Awi	Community Empowerment Facilitator, LWF Myanmar	Mindat	
30	K Zin Htwe	Community Empowerment Facilitator, LWF Myanmar	Mindat	
31	Yaum Naing	Community Empowerment Facilitator, LWF Myanmar	Mindat	
32	Ma Na Kee Lung	Community Empowerment Facilitator, LWF Myanmar	Mindat	
33	Than Lwin Soe	Community Empowerment Facilitator, LWF Myanmar	Mindat	

Government Officials

No	Name	Job Title and Department	Location
1	U Thein Tun	Development Support Committee Member	Pyapon
2	U Ngwe Doe	Township Commissioner, Township Administrative Office	Mindat
3	U Tin Aung Shein	Chairman of Township Municipal Committee	Mindat
4	U Hla Htwe	Assistant Director, District Livestock Breeding Department	Mindat
5	U Ling Kwee	Township Officer, Township Department of Development	Mindat
6	U Win Myint	Assistant Director, District Agriculture Department	Mindat
7	U Aung Myo Win	Township/ District Medical Officer, District Health Department	Mindat
8	U Tin Ko Htut	District Officer, District Department of Development	Mindat

List of Attendees- Consultation Workshop – 24 October 2013; Pyapon

No	Name	Job Title and Department/ Organization	Location
1	U Myint Aung	Township Medical Officer, Township Health Department	Pyapon
2	U Nyan Soe	Assistant Director, District Planning Office	Pyapon
3	U Than Naing	District Fire Brigade Officer, Fire Brigade Department	Pyapon
4	Dr. Aung Aung	Assistant Surgeon, Pyapon Hospital	Pyapon
5	U Chan Myae Aung	Deputy Officer, Relief and Resettlement Department	Pyapon
6	U Nyein Chan Mg	Relief and Resettlement Department	Pyapon
7	U Soe Myint	Assistant, Agriculture Department	Pyapon
8	Zaw Zaw Htike	Team Facilitator, LWF Myanmar	Pyapon
9	Hein Maung Maung	Community Empowerment Facilitator, LWF	Pyapon

		Myanmar	
10	Kyaw Myo Thant	Community Empowerment Facilitator, LWF Myanmar	Dedaye
11	Kyaw Thu Linn	Team Facilitator, LWF Myanmar	Pyapon
12	Nant May Than Htay (Esther)	Team Facilitator, LWF Myanmar	Dedaye
13	Zin Mar Han	Community Empowerment Facilitator, LWF Myanmar	Pyapon
14	Aung Myat Moe	Community Empowerment Facilitator, LWF Myanmar	Bogale
15	Soe Thiha Tin	Assistant Project Officer (Empowerment), LWF Myanmar	Pyapon
16	Myint Lwin	Village Administrator, Thae' Aeik Village	Pyapon
17	U Sein Myint	Officer, District Agriculture Department	Pyapon
18	U Zaw Moe Htike	Township Deputy Fire Brigade Officer, Township Fire Brigade Department	Pyapon
19	U Tun Swe	Village Administrator, A See' Kalay Village	Pyapon
20	Chan Ko Aung	Assistant Project Officer, LWF Myanmar	Pyapon

Annex II- Itinerary of the Consultant

**Itinerary
Polly Newall
Aye Mon Nyein**

1-4 October	Interviews with Yangon office
9-10 October	Interviews with Pyapon, Bogale, Dedaye and Twante staff in the Pyapon office
12-13 October	Travel to Mindat
14-15 October	Interviews with Mindat LWF staff in the Mindat office; and government officials in Mindat
16-17 October	Travel to Yangon
24 October	Consultation workshop in Pyapon office Interviews with community members in Sar Oo Chaung village in Dedaye township