

Country Strategy

2013 - 2018



THE
LUTHERAN
WORLD
FEDERATION

Lutheran World Federation - Myanmar
Department for World Service

Country Strategy 2013-2018

The Lutheran World Federation—Myanmar (LWF Myanmar)

The LWF is a global communion of Christian churches in the Lutheran tradition. Founded in 1947 in Lund, Sweden, the LWF now has 145 member churches in 79 countries all over the world. The LWF has more than 60 years of relief, rehabilitation, refugee work and sustainable development experience from a Rights Based perspective. The LWF has organized the Department of World Service (DWS) as a relief and development arm of the LWF. It serves all people irrespective of ethnicity, gender, religion, race or political conviction.

In 2008, LWF started working in Myanmar with relief and rehabilitation operations for the people affected by Cyclone Nargis in Ayeyarwaddy Delta. After the rehabilitation operations, LWF Myanmar continues working with the communities in existing project areas to support Integrated Rural Development Project, designed to improve community led initiative sustainable development.

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SECTION I: BACKGROUND AND JUSTIFICATION

I.1 NATIONAL CONTEXT

Myanmar is one of the least developed nations in Southeast Asia, but with a significant annual economic growth rate of 10.4% of GDP (Gross Domestic Product) in 2010 as reported by the World Bank and a human development index growth of 2.21 during the period 2000-2011. There are, however, some palpable disparities with rural areas (about 70% of the population) benefiting from the economic advancement to a lesser degree than urban areas. There are also groups of highly vulnerable populations such as certain ethnic communities and migrant workers. The country's total population is about 59 million, with 135 ethnic groups such as Burma, Chin, Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, Mon, Rakhine and Shan.

I.2 OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

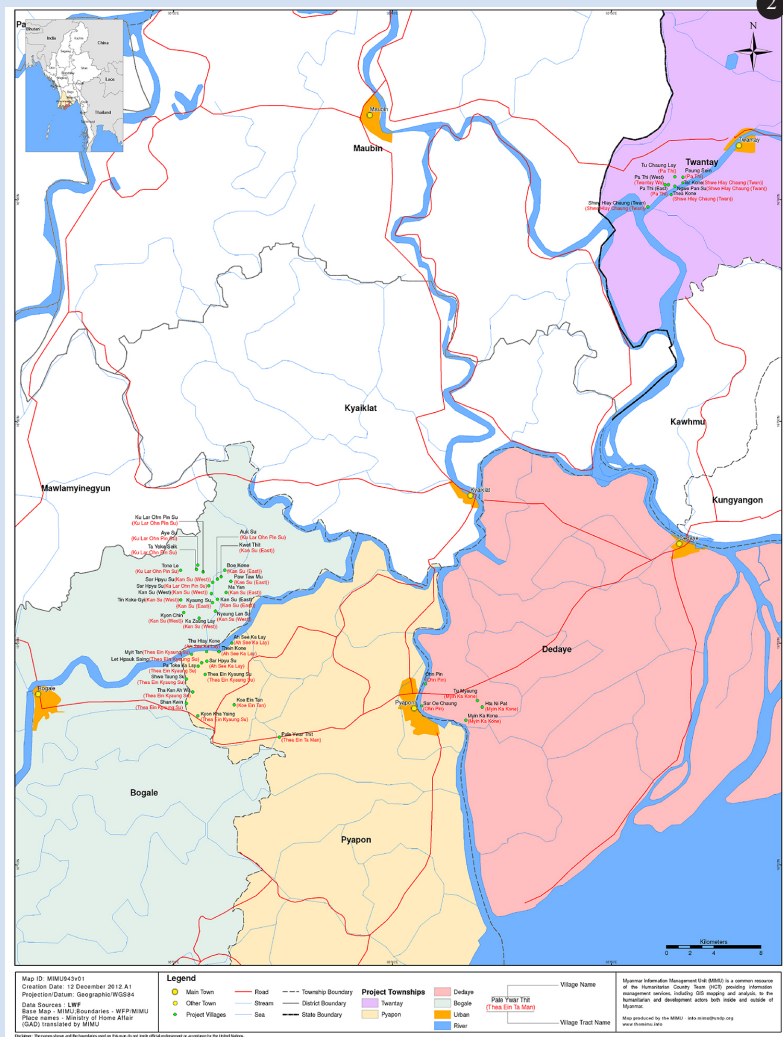
The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has been working in Myanmar since 2008 in responding to Cyclone Nargis in the Ayeyarwaddy Delta. LWF Myanmar works effectively with local authorities and civil society organizations. Work at the grassroots with partner households and interest groups and the VDCs (Village Development Committee) is where the majority of LWF Myanmar time and resources are spent. It is however important as well to build relations and cooperation with the elite -local leaders, traditional leaders and early adaptors and innovators as they are often the key to community motivation and effective implementation of local projects. Thus, vertical and horizontal networking and advocacy are part and parcel of the Rights Based Empowerment approach employed by LWF in Myanmar.



I.3 LWF IN THE COUNTRY

LWF came to Myanmar in 2008 as a part of an ACT (Action by Churches Together) Appeal to respond to the devastation of cyclone Nargis, during which LWF operated through its member, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Myanmar (ELCM), to respond to the emergency relief needs of those suffering from the effects of the cyclone.

A one-year food security project LIFT (Livelihoods and Food Security Trust) Fund that was implemented in 18 Villages in Bogalay Township ended in February 2011. Since July 2010, LWF Myanmar has also implemented the three-year Integrated Rural Development Project (IRDP) from its two Project Offices located in Pyapon and Bogalay. The Project supports the same 51 villages affected by Cyclone Nargis located in the Townships of Pyapon, Twantay, Dedaye and Bogalay, in the Yangon and Ayeyarwaddy Divisions.



Comparative advantage of LWF

In working together with the communities in Yangon, Pyapon and Bogalay over the years the program has:

- built credibility locally and nationally in working with vulnerable communities;
- built significant experience of working with cyclone affected communities and livelihood issues;
- consolidated LWF's commitment to community empowerment and rights-based approach as a relevant and effective model for work in the area;
- built up a network of committed and motivated staff;
- established an excellent rapport with the host government at the local level.

I.4 LWF AS AN ACTOR

LWF is a founding member of the ACT Alliance (Action by Churches Together Alliance), and member of SPHERE, Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP), the Association of the World Council of Churches related Development Organizations in Europe (APRODEV), Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance (EAA), World Council of Churches (WCC), and the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC).

The LWF Myanmar Program benefits from that accrued knowledge and experience. As a member based federation, it also has close connections to the four local Lutheran Churches and access to considerable human resources and support from the LWF Related Agencies and the network of South and Southeast Asian Country Programs AZEECON (Asia Zone Emergency and Environment Cooperation Network).

SECTION 2: COUNTRY PROGRAM

VISION

“People of Myanmar living in a just society, in peace and dignity, united in diversity, and empowered to achieve their universal rights to meet basic needs and quality of life”.

MISSION

“Inspired by love for humanity, the LWF Myanmar program responds to and challenges the causes and consequences of human suffering and poverty by facilitating the empowerment of people to achieve their rights”.

OVERALL GOAL

“To contribute to the alleviation of poverty in Myanmar through rights based empowerment for sustainable development”.

CORE VALUES

Dignity and Justice;
Inclusion and Participation;
Accountability and Transparency;
Compassion and commitment



2.1 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

While formulating the objectives, the views expressed in the VDC and Government representative workshop, staff workshop SWOT analysis and the findings/recommendations from the IRDP midterm evaluation were taken into account. The evidences of changes corresponding to the strategic objectives are also defined, forming the basis for development of specific projects.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1: Community Empowerment – To strengthen local leadership and improve governance for equitable and sustainable development

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2: Sustainable Livelihoods – To empower communities to obtain improved and sustainable socio-economic livelihoods

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

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4: Organizational Development – To strengthen LWF Myanmar to be effective, efficient and relevant to the context

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE I: Community Empowerment – To strengthen local leadership and improve governance for equitable and sustainable development

The intention is to empower individuals, households, groups, and VDCs to be able to lobby for their rights and empower the duty bearers to respect, protect, and fulfil the strategic needs of the people. LWF Myanmar will conduct a range of activities to increase the knowledge and skills of groups and the VDCs to manage their own development processes. The groups and VDCs will be trained in project cycle management, book keeping, proposal writing, report writing and others. They will be offered concepts on participation, inclusion, community mobilization and leadership.

Evidence of change:

- Community Based Organizations (CBO) like VDCs, interest groups of vulnerable poor households lead development processes (through participatory planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation by self-assessment) on their own (to the level of graduation);
- Knowledge and skills of duty bearers to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of the rights holders is enhanced and peoples trust in the government is increased;
- Village authorities, village leaders and communities jointly establish democratic mechanisms and manage issues related to gender based violence, abuse, discrimination, human trafficking, and other rights violations in the community;
- Women and youths have increased access and control over household, group and VDC decision making processes.



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, drinking water and others as formulated in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). LWF Myanmar will facilitate the partner communities to access such services from the government line departments and support them to improve such services in a sustainable manner. Wherever possible, efforts will be made to also facilitate linkages to the private sector and local markets. Gender and environment & climate change will be taken into consideration in all activities and at all possible stages.

Evidence of change:

- Increased number of households have improved their livelihoods through agriculture and non-agriculture activities including vocational training,
- Households benefit from group managed savings and credit schemes,
- Access to quality education improved and school enrolment is increased (including for girls),
- Access to preventive and curative health services improved, and people adopt measures to protect themselves from HIV & AIDS, Malaria, Dengue and other health risks,
- Improved access to drinking water and households use acceptable sanitation and hygiene practices,
- Basic infrastructure needs of the villages are improved,
- Households and communities follow disaster preparedness plans, conserve their environment and adapt to climate change.



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

Evidence of change:

- Functional community based disaster risk management (CBDRM) sub-committees;
- Efficient and effective coordination and cooperation with government departments for sustainability;
- Increased disaster preparedness capacity of households and communities including climate change adaptation;
- Most vulnerable communities/groups/people protected from disasters and enabled to rebuild their lives.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE4: Organizational Development – To strengthen LWF Myanmar to be effective, efficient and relevant to the context

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

Evidence of change:

- Updated organizational structures, systems, policies, guidelines and program strategy, policies, and guidelines are in place;
- Comprehensive staff development plan is generating competent staff able to perform assigned responsibilities efficiently;
- Efficient and effective advocacy, coordination and cooperation with government departments at local, State/ Region and National level;
- Active participation in local, national, regional and international alliances, forums and networks;
- Timely, relevant and clear information accessible to all stakeholders (LWF/DWS, Related Agencies, Donors, Government, CBOs, Focus Groups, and staff, etc.);
- The resources required to complete this strategic plan are mobilized and managed responsibly;
- Commitment to support local Lutheran Churches for diaconal work.



CROSS CUTTING ISSUES

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



2.2 STRATEGIC APPROACHES

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 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) which are ratified by the government.

LWF Myanmar shall continue 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 which often require stimulus to emerge. LWF Myanmar shall emphasise, 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 government line departments at township and village levels. Simultaneously, LWF Myanmar shall facilitate increased engagement with government line departments in its activities and those of the CBOs, groups and households. LWF Myanmar shall appropriately share resources for programs and activities undertaken by government line departments designed to fulfil the rights of the rural poor. It is important to emphasize that, the primary carriers of the empowerment process are the LWF Myanmar staff who live in the partner villages.



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 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 will 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 our advocacy work shall be non-violent. Accepting that the government line departments have limited capacity to provide those services, LWF Myanmar will collaborate with the line departments to fulfil the services, if possible.



Integrated Approach

The integrated approach entails holistic programming which 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.

Therefore, considering the need for improving the livelihoods of the focus groups, LWF Myanmar will ensure that the needs of the communities are treated in an integrated manner.



2.3 FOCUS AREAS

LWF Myanmar shall continue its geographic focus on the Ayeyarwaddy Delta with a consolidated engagement while expanding into new township/villages, possibly in Kayin State, Chin State, Rakhine State and Magwe Region during this strategic period.

In the new expansion areas, entire townships will be targeted rather than scattered villages. This will make it easier to apply the integrated Rights Based Empowerment Approach, because all government resources and services are managed at the township level. However, it should be noted that LWF Myanmar will only operate in areas where it is welcomed.

Criteria for entry into new geographic focus areas:

- The poorest, most remote and underserved townships.
- Proximity to existing LWF Myanmar partner townships, village tracts and villages.
- Most likely resettlement destinations for refugees and IDPs.
- Areas where the LWF Myanmar's comparative advantage fits with the needs of the people and where adequate resources are not available from other humanitarian and development organizations.
- High risk disaster prone areas with few or inadequate coping strategies in place.
- Areas where adequate resources are not available from other humanitarian and development organizations or areas with few government services.



2.4 FOCUS GROUPS

LWF Myanmar will work with disaster-affected and socio-economically vulnerable people. The program focuses on strengthening community organizations like VDCs, interest groups, CBDRM sub-committees and socio-economically vulnerable households. LWF Myanmar is aware that there may be elderly, differently abled people and people living with or affected by HIV and AIDS among the focus groups. In such situations it will ensure that these people have equal access to new opportunities and/or services.

The main focus group categories are:

- Disaster-Affected People (Survivors of natural disasters, IDPs and returnees, especially the most vulnerable)
- Socio-Economically Vulnerable People (households identified by the communities through well-being ranking process. And other politically, socially, or culturally marginalized, vulnerable women, children (age 6-15 years) and Youths (age 16-25 years))
- Community organizations (VDC, CBDRM sub-committee, groups, networks and other active CBOs in the working area)
- Government structures at all levels (government village authority, schools, health centres as well as government line departments directly related to basic services like education, health, WASH, agriculture, irrigation, livestock and basic physical infrastructure)



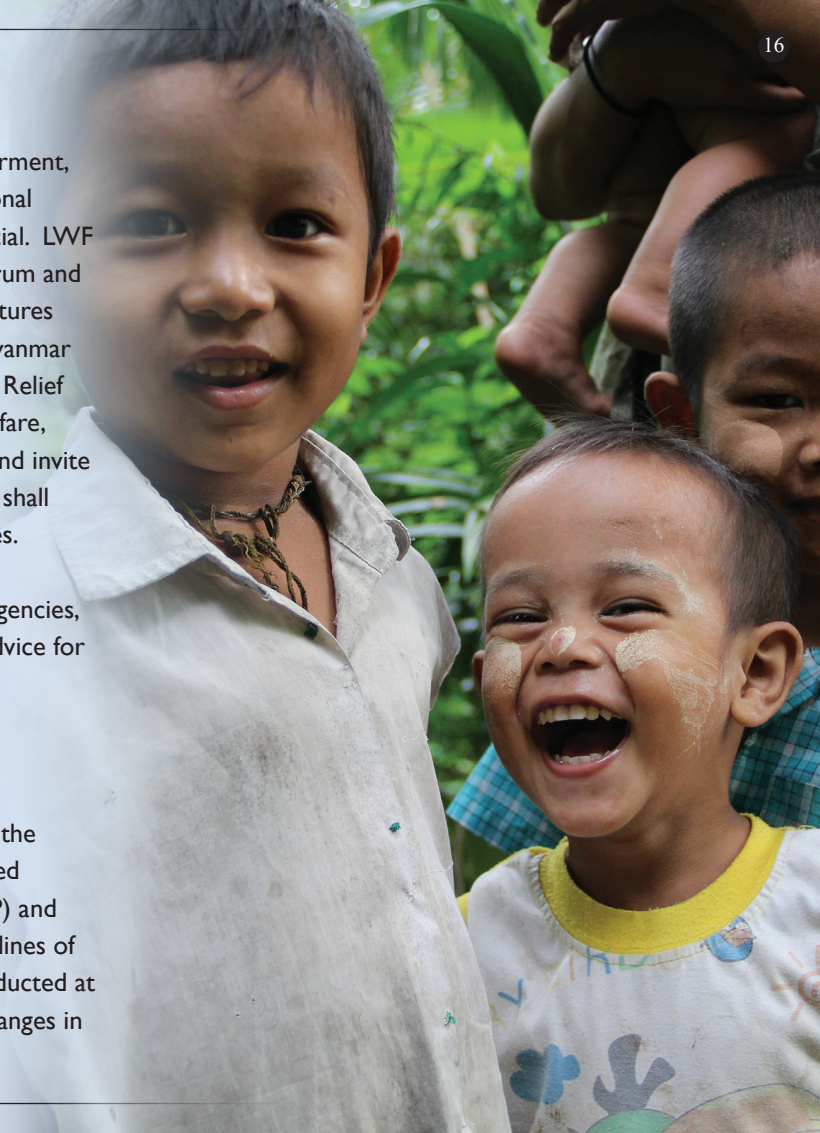
2.5 STRATEGIC ALLIANCES

LWF Myanmar is aware that for effective rights-based empowerment, building strategic alliances with like-minded local and international organizations for collective action and maximum impact is crucial. LWF Myanmar will continue its active participation in the INGO Forum and thematic working groups as well as other UN and INGO structures involved in humanitarian as well as development work. LWF Myanmar shall at appropriate times consult its host line department, The Relief and Resettlement Department (RRD) of Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement (MoSWRR) in programming matters and invite RRD participation in the programming process. LWF Myanmar shall further maintain a relationship with the four Lutheran Churches.

Close relationships will be maintained with the LWF Related Agencies, through reporting, sharing of experiences and the seeking of advice for improvements.

2.6 TIME FRAME

The duration of this Country Strategy is six (6) years covering the period 2013-2018. The country strategy shall be operationalized through a three-year country operational program plan (COPP) and subsequent project plans of variable durations as per the guidelines of DWS. A mid-term review of the country strategy shall be conducted at the end of the third year in 2015 (or earlier if warranted by changes in the operational context).



2.7 SUSTAINABILITY

The LWF Myanmar rights based empowerment process entails the creation of empowered groups and households. Empowerment implies that partner communities are able to manage their development processes on their own and have full knowledge of their rights and responsibilities. At the same time they must also have the skills to seek services and resources from the duty bearers. During this process, it is equally important that they are gender sensitive, environmentally sensitive and conflict sensitive.

The program intends to close the gaps between duty bearers and rights holders by facilitating mutuality and partnership. It is not LWF Myanmar's role to fill the gaps or take on the service provider role of the state. Thus LWF Myanmar facilitates people centred, community based, integrated, rights based empowerment that is neither service delivery nor sector based.

LWF Myanmar has no plans to exit or localize the program during this strategic period. However, it is the intention of LWF Myanmar to use this country strategy period (2013-2018) to build on the first three years of experience and expand its geographic focus area while simultaneously building up the capacity of the local staff towards the eventual localization of the program as an Associate LWF/DWS Country Program. No time table for localization is set at this time but the issue shall be a critical element in the final evaluation for this strategic planning period.



SECTION 3: RESOURCES

LWF Myanmar expects to expand its operations outside the delta region, within the next six years. To manage this, the program will maintain a consolidated presence in the Delta to both see the graduated empowerment process through, but to also use this readily accessible project area as a training and demonstration laboratory for our staff, partners in new regions, and to the development community in Myanmar.

Currently the LWF Myanmar Program is highly dependent on the LWF Related Agencies for financial sustainability. The program however needs to scale up to a more efficient and effective level with wider influence and impact if it is to remain viable and sustainable. To do this it will need to maintain and increase its income from its traditional Related Agencies and diversify its income base to include many others sources.



SECTION 4: MANAGEMENT

4.1 RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

Risk analysis exercises identify external and internal risks and recommend mitigation actions on an annual basis.

External Risk

The main external risks, most recently identified, relate to current political and economic transitions currently taking place in Myanmar and the uncertainty as to how those transitions will affect INGO work in the country. They also take into consideration the challenging operational context and the weak transportation, electricity, communications and banking infrastructure. The importance of establishing and building on relationships at many levels and the application of standard INGO operational protocols are highlighted in the recommended actions to respond to the external risks.

Internal risks

The main internal risks relate mostly to organizational development. As such local human resource development is a key mitigation recommendation. Staff development also reduces the risk of theory – practice gaps experienced due to the introduction of the locally unfamiliar rights based empowerment approach of LWF Myanmar. Likewise there is a need to contextualize all LWF Myanmar protocols, systems, policies, and guidelines which will ensure cohesion of program implementation and its relevance and effectiveness.



4.2 REVIEW MECHANISMS

LWF Myanmar Program has a comprehensive system of monitoring. It monitors project plans versus achievements, budget versus expenditure as well as ensuring all activities conform to the objectives. The purpose is to ensure relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the work and to enhance accountability and sustainability.

However, the most important issue is to ensure accountability to the primary focus groups: to ascertain and demonstrate that the resources and efforts invested really respond to the priority concerns of the focus groups and bring about meaningful positive change in their lives. Township, village tract and village authorities, and committees and individual partner households learn to use participatory methods to plan, monitor and evaluate their capacities and the results of their projects which are also linked to national plans and strategies. The results give impact indicators linked to the program objectives.

4.3 MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

Finance, Program and Personnel guidelines, policies and best practices ensure relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, accountability and transparency. LWF's experience of over 60 years of relief, rehabilitation and development work and deep contextual analysis ensures all essential functions are covered.

LWF embraces a highly participatory and inclusive management style that makes use of expatriate and local staff in decision making processes. The active participation of all staff empowers them in the same way as the primary focus groups.



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