

November 2018

SUCCESS STORY:

Supporting Farming Communities in the Dry Zone

Ko Htin Aung Kyaw is a 26 year-old farmer in Mone Taung, a village in Minbu Township in the Magway Region of Myanmar. He lives there with his five family members, four of whom work together farming sesame, peanut and mung beans.

Tragically, when he was 15 years old, Ko Htin Aung lost his right hand to a straw cutter while preparing cow feed. Presently he manages his family's 3.2 acre farm growing seasonal crops.

He initially heard about the P4 project, managed by the DaNa Facility and Interchurch Organization for Development Cooperation (ICCO), and funded through DFID, in May 2018 when representatives from the ICCO and Network Activities Group (NAG) visited his village and held orientation sessions on mung bean cultivation. Ko Htin Aung was interested in the P4 project and continued attending training sessions provided by ICCO and NAG. There are many challenges to growing mung beans in the central dry zone region where he lives. Lack of access to quality seeds, limited technical knowledge and limited access to premium markets are major issues for farmers. With the support offered by DFID, his knowledge on seed multiplication farming, good agriculture practices (GAP) and collective marketing has dramatically improved. He said, "Our family mainly grows sesame and peanuts, but now I can see the potential of mung beans and through the P4 project have begun cultivating this crop with ICCO's help."

He has been actively involved in practical seed multiplication farming, supported by Department of Agriculture (DoA) experts and by NAG. After using new techniques learned during training, Ko Htin Aung's mung bean seed yield for the pre-monsoon crop season increased from 40 to 43 baskets compared to last year. The seeds were then sent to the DoA's testing laboratory in Magway and deemed higher quality than those tested last year. Yet, there are still challenges with this season's seed multiplication process, with unfavourable rainy weather during harvesting season resulting in a high level of moisture contained in the seeds. To address this challenge, with support from the Regional Farmer Development Association (RFDA), farmers aim to improve the drying process during the next crop season.



Ko Htin Aung Kyaw and his mung bean farm

In addition to increased yields, Ko Htin Aung has also succeeded in earning more income by selling his mung beans at a higher price, through collective marketing organised by the RFDA in Magway. The market price given by traditional local mung bean brokers was 29,300 Kyats, however farmers selling collectively through the RFDA were paid 35,000 Kyats per basket, resulting in a net gain for Ko of more than 330,000 Kyats (around \$200) for his 43 baskets.

Importantly, Ko Htin Aung says he has gained technical knowledge in farming which he values more than his increased profit. He said: "I want to stay involved in the project, not just for the increased profit, but also the knowledge of good agricultural practices. I also saved money on production this year by using the right amount of pesticides and fertilisers and using them in the right way to grow higher quality crops. I can now use the savings to invest more in my farm and with what I've learned grow better quality products, getting better prices. I've also saved one basket of quality seeds from my seed multiplication farm for next season, which means I no longer need to buy seed since I grew enough on my own land. I am so grateful to DFID, DaNa and P4 for providing me the chance to earn more money for my family and improve our lives."