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SUCCESS STORY:

Good Agriculture Practices Improve Incomes for Farmers in Shan State



U Tun Mg displaying ginger grown using Good Agricultural Practices (GAP)

Although U Tun Mg had been farming for over 30 years, his income was rarely enough to meet his family's basic needs.

U Tun Mg lives with his wife, son and two daughters in Thu Kha Loi Di Village in Shan State. The family's four-acre farm grows rice, corn, ginger, turmeric, and groundnut, but unstable crop yields and low prices left the family struggling to make ends meet.

"I never managed to save any money. Instead, I had to use any profits from previous crops to invest for the following season," said U Tun Mg.

In 2017, things started to improve for U Tun Mg after he was introduced to Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) by the 'Improving Market Opportunities for Smallholder Farmers, Especially Women, in the Pa-O Self-Administered Zone' project, which is being implemented by the Myanmar Institute for Integrated Development (MIID) with financial support from the DaNa Facility and UK aid. The project is supporting the application of GAP through farmer field schools and demonstration plots in three villages in Shan State.

When the project established a farmer field school in his village, U Tun Mg grabbed the opportunity with both hands, agreeing to grow a ginger demonstration plot on his farm.

“Normally, the yield for ginger on a plot of this size is about 1,000 viss [1,600 kg], but by using GAP I've managed to almost double that to 1,900 viss [3,040 kg].”

"I've participated in every farmer field school and training course so far because I want to learn how to increase yields and profits. I attended the farmer field school nine times between April and December," he said.

The results of GAP on U Tun Mg's ginger demonstration plot have been impressive. Bacterial infection has been reduced, the number of healthy plants has increased, and the size of stems are larger compared to those using traditional practices. Perhaps most importantly, the yield is significantly higher. "Normally, the yield for ginger on a plot of this size is about 1,000 viss [1,600 kg]," said U Tun Mg, "but by using GAP I've managed to almost double that to 1,900 viss [3,040 kg]."

Implementing GAP has not just resulted in better quality and increased yields, it has also saved on input costs by reducing the use of chemical pesticides and herbicides.

Since the project began, almost 470 smallholder farmers have adopted GAP, enabling women and men from economically disadvantaged communities to improve their livelihoods. The project will extend its activities to include neighbouring villages in July 2019.

U Tun Mg has made good use of the extra income: "After selling the ginger, I was able to buy another acre of land and a pair of earrings for my daughter," he said.

The DaNa Facility is a five-year innovative private sector development programme funded by the UK Government's Department for International Development (DFID). The programme works with the Government of Myanmar to support inclusive economic growth.