WOMEN’S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT in AGRIBUSINESS in MYANMAR

SITUATION ANALYSIS 2019
ABOUT
THE DaNa FACILITY

The DaNa Facility is an innovative £25 million private sector development programme funded by the UK Government’s Department for International Development (DFID) and managed by DAI Europe and KPMG. The programme runs from May 2016 to December 2020, supporting inclusive and responsible economic growth by working with government, businesses, and stakeholders through a combination of grants and technical assistance.
The DaNa Facility (DaNa) is a private sector development programme funded by the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development (DFID). DaNa provides grant funding and technical assistance to create the conditions for inclusive economic growth and to increase incomes, livelihoods and access to finance for the poor. This includes grant funding to organisations – NGOs and private businesses – working in the agribusiness, textiles, and finance sectors. All the organisations that have received grant funding from DaNa have made a commitment to work on various aspects of social inclusion, to increase participation, and ultimately incomes and financial access for women, people with disabilities, and people affected by conflict. In relation to the inclusion of women, targets have been agreed for women’s participation in activities across all funded projects, and implementing partners are required to track and report quantitative information. For current projects, partners were not required to deliver specific outcomes related to gender equality, other than to ensure that women are included in activities designed to increase jobs and incomes, or that women receive improved access to finance. Building on a commitment to promote inclusion, DaNa seeks to strengthen its commitment to women’s economic empowerment. It therefore undertook research to inform its approach to strengthening women’s agency and empowerment in future agribusiness projects. The findings are intended to inform DaNa’s future strategy.

This research has considered the current status of women working in the agribusiness sector in three DaNa-funded projects at different field sites – Magway, Southern Shan, and Rakhine. It has involved asking women and men about the levels of access women in their communities have to training and employment opportunities. It has explored the barriers that exist – and need to be overcome – to improve women’s access and agency. When considering how women might benefit from funded projects, the research has sought to gather information beyond numbers of women who have attended project activities. It has also considered gender attitudes of project staff and potential beneficiaries.

The results indicate there are gaps among project partners in understanding what women’s economic empowerment means and what it involves. Improved knowledge about this topic and about gender more broadly is needed to ensure implementing partners can develop gender action plans, monitor the impacts of projects on women’s access and agency, and promote gender transformational change in the lives of individual men and women, their families, and their communities. Recommendations are provided for DaNa to strengthen its approach to women’s economic empowerment and support implementing partners to succeed in making positive contributions to the empowerment of women in the communities where they work.
Women have less involvement in the Myanmar economy than men. The labour participation rates in formal employment in Myanmar continue to differ significantly for men and women – approximately 80% compared to 50%.

In the agribusiness sector, women make up approximately 51% of the workforce. However, women’s role in and contribution to agriculture are consistently undervalued. Land is usually only registered in the name of the male head of household. Men tend to be paid more for their labour in the context of a sector where there continues to be some gender division of work. And there is more explicit discrimination against women in rates of pay, with women often earning up to 30% less than men for equal work. In general, training and other support offered to farmers in agricultural development programmes tend to benefit men more than women.

The Government of Myanmar has committed to increasing women’s participation in the economy. Article 350 of the Myanmar constitution states that women have the same rights and benefits as men for the same or similar job. The National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women (NSPAW 2013 – 2022) outlines a plan to strengthen systems, structure and practices to ensure fairness and equal rights for women in the economy.

The Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan (MSDP 2018-2030) highlights that gender empowerment, equity, and inclusion are cross-cutting themes and need to be mainstreamed into all aspects of the plan’s implementation. Despite these statements and plans, the reality is that women are still being left behind across almost all sectors of the national economy. Progress in women’s economic empowerment in Myanmar remains slow.

The DaNa Facility is part of the Business for Shared Prosperity (BSP) programme, which is funded by the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development (DFID). The BSP programme aims to provide a sustainable route out of poverty by increasing incomes and creating jobs, making it easier for new businesses and entrepreneurs to compete fairly, and by facilitating the participation of women and other excluded groups in business and economic growth. Since 2016, DaNa has been supporting the development of businesses by providing grant funding and technical assistance to the non-profit and business sectors, as well as to the Government of Myanmar. Increasing agency and economic empowerment for women and other marginalized groups is central to the promotion of inclusive and responsible business.

DaNa has provided grant funding to improve economic opportunities for poor women and men working in agribusiness and textiles and to improve women’s financial inclusion. It has run three competitive grant windows and funding has been allocated to 17 civil society and businesses working in these sectors. The first grant window focused on NGOs and was designed to have a strong focus on supporting women’s economic empowerment, people affected by conflict and/or other disadvantaged groups. The funded NGOs have now been operational for more than two years. The second grant window focused on the private sector, with the goal of supporting the development of commercially viable businesses with a poverty and social impact. These funded businesses have now been operational for more than one year.

DaNa is keen to ensure that any future grant funding is used to support women’s economic empowerment. Importantly, this will mean that the efforts of future funded partners will

1. INTRODUCTION

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KEY FINDINGS

• To strengthen work on women’s economic empowerment, it is necessary to improve the capacity of project staff to develop gender action plans at the start of projects; to run activities that promote women’s economic empowerment throughout the life of projects; and to monitor achievements at the midway point and at the end of projects.

• DaNa will need to strengthen gender requirements in its funding processes and facilitate early support to potential partners to ensure they can design and implement gender-sensitive projects.

• Effective and accurate measurement of the impacts of funded projects on women’s agency and empowerment requires the development of indicators and tools that can be applied consistently across the DaNa funding portfolio.
need to move beyond ensuring that women are included in their project and business activities. Implementing partners will need to consider how women’s well-being, capacities, empowerment, independence, and decision-making abilities will all improve as a result of their projects and businesses.

Limited research has been carried out to better understand the situation with regards to women’s economic empowerment in Myanmar, and to make recommendations on what can be done to build upon successes, address remaining barriers being faced by women, and support the Government of Myanmar to achieve the goals of the NSPAW and MSDP. This research will help better understand the challenges that private sector development programmes such as DaNa face with respect to ensuring women’s economic empowerment is a key component of a project. The three projects that have been assessed were set up to do this to varying degrees – all made commitments to ensure inclusion of women in activities, with one of the three aiming for empowerment. The purpose of undertaking a review of these projects is not to find gaps in the specific work of these three funded partners. Rather, it is to help DaNa identify lessons, examples of good practice and future strategies to strengthen its results related to women’s economic empowerment. The results of this research will help DaNa understand how best to approach and support improved women’s economic empowerment within its grant portfolio.

1.1. METHODOLOGY

This section summarizes the research methodology. The methodology and research tools were developed in August, 2019. The field research was conducted by three field researchers between September and November, and the analysis and final report were completed by December. Table 1 outlines the research aims and questions.

Table 1: Research aims and questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Aim</th>
<th>Research Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>AIM 1.</strong> To understand the extent to which implementing partners understand and are applying gender transformational concepts in their projects.</td>
<td><strong>Question 1a.</strong> Who are the key players working on gender-related issues in projects? <strong>Question 1b.</strong> What are the gender attitudes, knowledge, practices, and capacities of these key players? <strong>Question 1c.</strong> What additional skills and knowledge would help partners to apply gender transformational concepts in their projects?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AIM 2.</strong> To understand the extent to which implementing partners are achieving gender transformational change in their projects.</td>
<td><strong>Question 2a.</strong> What progress have partners made to implement action plans related to women’s economic empowerment in funded projects? <strong>Question 2b.</strong> How are allocated funds being used to improve women’s access to resources and decision-making capacities? <strong>Question 2c.</strong> What tangible successes (strategies, practices, stories etc.) can partners demonstrate to show how their projects have resulted in improved women’s access to resources and decision-making capacities?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **AIM 3.** To understand the extent to which female beneficiaries are experiencing and practicing gender transformational change as a result of funded projects. | **Question 3a.** What have been the specific changes for female beneficiaries since the projects commenced with respect to:  
  - Participation in workshops and training sessions  
  - Access to and choice of livelihoods  
  - Income and control over use of income  
  - Decision-making in the household  
  - Decision-making in the community  
  - Leadership in the community  
  - Access to and use of resources  
  - Safety, including gender-based violence |
| **AIM 4.** To identify new opportunities for implementing partners to achieve gender transformational change in their projects. | **Question 4a.** What are the challenges and barriers that partners face in ensuring their projects make a positive contribution to improving women’s access to resources and decision-making capacities? **Question 4b.** What are socially and culturally sensitive ways to address these challenges and barriers? **Question 4c.** What can implementing partners do to support greater transformational change for women? |
1.1.1. Data Collection

Table 2: Research activities by field site

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Aim</th>
<th>Research Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AIM 5.</td>
<td>To identify opportunities for women to make use of available pathways to experience and practice gender transformational change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 5a.</td>
<td>What social, economic, and political obstacles and constraints do women face that prevent transformational change in their agency and power in their households and communities?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 5b.</td>
<td>In what ways have distinct women managed to overcome these social, economic, and political obstacles and constraints to achieve transformational change in their agency and power in their households and communities?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 5c.</td>
<td>What can men and women, families, and community leaders do to support greater transformational change for women?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The research employed a mixed methods approach using multiple data sources:
- Desk review of selected project business plans, gender action plans, and progress reports
- Key informant interviews with project leads
- Focus group discussions with project staff and with women and men working in the agribusiness sector
- Rapid time-use survey with female members of households
- Case studies of selected women working in the agribusiness sector
- Key informant interviews with stakeholders – representatives of international and national non-government agencies within programmes on women's economic empowerment in agribusiness in Myanmar

Data collection was completed at three field sites – Magway, Southern Shan, and Rakhine. Two researchers undertook data collection over five days at each field site. After analysis of the data, a validation workshop was held with DaNa staff, representatives of the three selected partners, and other external stakeholders. Table 2 provides a summary of the research activities completed at each field site.

The research methodology was generally informed by the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) – a way of capturing women's empowerment in agriculture by exploring decision-making power over production, capacity to earn and power to spend, access to resources, leadership opportunities and practices; and use of time for income generation, domestic duties, and leisure activities. These are defined as the “five domains of empowerment”.

Table 3: Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) domains and indicators.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Production</td>
<td>• Input in Productive Decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Autonomy in Production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>• Ownership of Assets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Purchase, Sale, or Transfer of Assets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Access To and Decisions On Credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>• Control Over Use of Income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>• Group Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Speaking in Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>• Workload</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Leisure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Women's economic empowerment is in itself a transformational process. It involves improved access for women to resources and opportunities and improved power for women to make decisions about matters that affect their lives. The act of delivering women’s economic empowerment does not, however, always adopt a transformational approach.
11.2. Limitations

DaNa funds companies and NGOs working in textiles and financial inclusion, as well as agribusiness. The research did not cover this part of the DaNa grant portfolio. While it is possible DaNa’s implementing partners in these sectors could be facing similar challenges to its partners in agribusiness, efforts to progress women’s economic empowerment in their projects should be informed by additional targeted research.

The findings and recommendations are based on the field research conducted in only three DaNa projects and therefore the results and conclusions have limitations in scope and representativeness. The study does not intend to be representative of the agribusiness sector broadly, but the findings may give a picture of the main challenges that many projects in agribusiness will face if they strive to be gender transformative.
2. FINDINGS

This section follows the WEAI methodology, but also includes other areas of relevance to the three DaNa-funded projects that were included in the research. The section includes notes on activities implemented within the three projects of relevance to women’s economic empowerment. It should be noted that the findings are linked to the DaNa-funded projects, but in some cases research participants refer to activities funded by different development actors in the same geographical areas – training on sexual and reproductive health for example.

2.1. CONTROL OVER PRODUCTION

On the farm there is a gender division in relation to decision making. Women are often in charge of hiring labour and are sometimes responsible for setting the selling price for crops. Men make the decisions about what crops to grow, fertilizing techniques, and insecticide spraying. In relation to community decision making, women have almost no power.

2.2. ACCESS TO TRAINING

More than half the female and male focus group participants in all three field sites say women in their communities have had access to training – to develop new livelihood skills, or to improve knowledge about sexual and reproductive health. The new livelihoods skills mentioned by participants in this study included soap making, sewing, and improved techniques for growing vegetables. Training records also show that women have attended additional agribusiness related technical training not mentioned by the research participants – for example, training that focuses on delivering practical skills, such as good agricultural practices (GAP) and business development skills have not been covered in this field research. In relation to access to training, the only indicator of relevance for measuring women’s economic empowerment that is a requirement for DaNa grantees is to count and apply the learning. In these training activities, participation rates are still higher for men than for women.

Figure 3 shows the percentage of focus group participants who say women in their communities have had access to training.

Figure 3: Women’s access to training by sex and field site

Despite this apparently high level of access to training, significant barriers for women to attend training sessions were identified in the research. Women cannot travel alone to training sessions held outside their villages. Sometimes, their families do not allow them to attend either because they believe it is too dangerous for the woman to travel or because they do not see the benefit of women spending time learning new skills. It is also difficult for women to find support for their household duties, including childcare, when training is available. This often means they do not have the time to attend. However, when they do attend and learn, there is a perception that women are generally more willing than men to share their new knowledge with others.

One stakeholder expressed concerns about the training currently offered to women. They believe the planning of the training is misguided because women are not asked what they would like to learn. In this case, they were offered training on how to make soap, when what they actually want and need is training to improve their technical skills in farming.

This stakeholder also expressed a concern about the way gender training in general is being delivered and received.

"Currently, information sessions and discussions for women are not effective at all. Most of the gender-related programmes lead to fights between men and women in Taunggyi. Sometimes, my son said that men and women do not even look at each other after a gender training has finished because it leads to negative relationships." – Female stakeholder, interview in Southern Shan

Another stakeholder confirmed that when gender training is offered, there is often a separation of the gender training from the technical training, resulting in different people attending one – but not both – sessions. As a result, training on gender is seen as irrelevant to improving the lives of women, their families, and their communities. And technical training is seen as irrelevant to gender – or to women’s economic empowerment.

A more integrated approach is recommended. According to the stakeholder, one additional outcome of this approach is that men are starting to view gender training as undermining their positions and roles. Men’s perception of the training matters and could make it more difficult for women to attend. If women attend training, and if their husbands believe they are participating in “anti-men, women’s empowerment” activities, the women could be at increased risk of intimate partner violence.

It is questionable to what extent any of the gender training being offered is, in fact, contributing to improved empowerment and autonomy for women. During this research, criticism was targeted at trainers, who some participants said lack the gender knowledge to be able to deliver accurate and effective gender training. According to stakeholders, training sessions on gender and livelihoods in Myanmar have additional problems. These are:

- There is no consistency in the definitions and uses of gender terminology used by people who deliver gender training. This is likely the result of a lack of gender knowledge among trainers and project staff. This leads to confusion among trainees and prevents women from speaking a shared language.
- Training is not always linked to existing market needs and contexts. Trainees are not always able to make use of their newly acquired skills to earn money and/or they cannot access the materials they need to make what they have been taught to make.
• Trainees are given limited post-training support to help them transfer skills into sustainable and meaningful income-generating activities. One impact of these problems is that women appear to be growing disinterested in attending training. This is a situation that project managers identified. The usual incentives — per diems, travel money, food — no longer appear to be enough to motivate women to attend. Getting “more creative about how you incentivize people” and recognizing that “skills building can include provision of knowledge about industry or sector as well as other skills to address social barriers” are proposed solutions.

2.3. CONTROL OVER USE OF INCOME

The average income is 5,105 kyat per day. Income increases alongside an increase in a woman’s level of education (Figure 4). Average daily income for women with a high school or university education is at least double that of women with no education.

![Figure 4: Average daily income by education level (kyat)](image)

Women are more likely than men to manage the family income. Almost 80% of focus group participants say women in their community manage the household income. Women can make decisions about buying food and everyday items needed to maintain the household, as well as to support the education of their children. For more expensive items (livestock, motorbikes, electronic equipment, gold etc.), men usually make the decision alone or sometimes the wife and husband will discuss and agree.

Only one participant in the study said that women and men get paid the same in their village. This was not corroborated by other participants who discussed the wages of women. Overwhelmingly, participants said that women get paid less than men. The quoted daily income for women was between 2,500 and 5,000 kyat. Men get paid at least 500 kyat more, but more often the difference is around 2,000 kyat. The most common explanation for this is that men do heavier work than women. They work harder and are more tired. This is what many of the participants in this study believe and say.

“A family gets more money only when a male leads. There is a saying that ‘if a man does it, it will get a large amount of money. But if a woman does it, it will get only a small amount of money.’ It is better for men to do the work.” – Female focus group participant in Magway

Some participants disagree with the position of the majority. They claim that women are more tired than men because they have to work to earn money and complete domestic chores. One female participant pointed out that the wages were not the same, but the amount of work was. Another suggested the wage disparity could be solved if all the work could be done by machines. Given the masculinization of machinery in agribusiness in Myanmar, however, this cannot be considered a guaranteed outcome of any future mechanization in the agribusiness sector.

2.4. LEADERSHIP

Women are sometimes invited to attend meetings, but they are rarely allowed to speak. Men tend to make all the decisions about community social events and infrastructure work. Of the three locations – home, farm, and community – the community is where women have the least decision-making power (see Figure 5).

These findings are consistent with previous research that found women in agribusiness in Myanmar to have fairly equal power alongside men within their households but very limited power within their communities – a situation the researchers suggested might be the result of the country’s long history of conflict and military government control.

![Figure 5: Allocation of power by focus group participants – all field sites](image)

Participants in this research give a number of different reasons to explain this situation. They say it is tradition, even as they are aware of changes occurring in gender roles through watching television programmes or reading about what is happening in parliament and in urban environments. They also say that being a leader requires a person to travel and to interact with other people – activities they generally believe women cannot do safely or without approval.

“It has become a tradition that only men want to act as a leader. If there is a need to lead a team or activity, there is no woman who would like to do this. Some women have the qualities to be a leader, but practically they don’t do it.” – Male focus group participant in Rakhine

Women are also seen as unsuitable for leadership roles because of their responsibilities for unpaid care work. Having to look after children and do most of the household chores means they do not have the time or the energy to carry out the work of a leader. Such statements made by both male and female focus group participants contradict the claim by almost 60% of the same participants that some women in their communities do, in fact, occupy leadership roles. Female focus group participants were more likely to claim that women had access to community leadership opportunities than men were – 66% of women compared to 50% of men made this claim. However, both male and female participants acknowledge that the chance of a woman becoming a village administrator is low. Only 10% of women and 11% of men said women have this opportunity. Lack of acceptance by the community is another of the reasons why women have limited chances to become village administrators. It is believed that men will not listen to women if they take the lead.

Figure 6 shows the comparable percentages of power that focus group participants say women and men have in communities, in homes, and on farms. The results are disaggregated by field site. As an example, participants say women hold only 14% of the power and men hold the remaining 86% in communities in Magway. In all cases, the total allocation of power equals 100%.

When the results for community, household, and farm are combined, they show closer equity in power for women and men in Southern Shan. Here, the overall balance of power across the three locations is 43% for women and 57% for men. In Magway, it is 34% compared to 66%. And in Rakhine, we find the lowest level of power parity – 29% for women and 71% for men.

When the results are disaggregated by gender, female focus group participants assign more power to women in all three field sites in comparison to male participants. The greatest difference is in the assigned balance of power in the home, where female participants say women have more than half the power (55%) but men say women have less than half (40%).

2.5. TIME USAGE

A concern for many female focus group participants is the amount of work they are expected to do. Women who engage in paid work are still responsible for the majority of household duties, including childcare, and continue to be expected to volunteer time to support community events.

Table 4 shows the full list of activities that both female and male focus group participants identify as being the roles and responsibilities of women in three locations - their homes, farms, and their communities.

Table 4: Women’s roles and responsibilities in each location

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Homes</th>
<th>Farms</th>
<th>Communities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Childcare</td>
<td>Weeding</td>
<td>School committee member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household chores -washing, cooking, cleaning</td>
<td>Harvesting crops</td>
<td>Cooking for ceremonies, for school children and to support labourers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sewing</td>
<td>Choosing plant species</td>
<td>Charity work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrying water</td>
<td>Recruiting workers for the farm</td>
<td>Supporting social events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeding cows and chickens</td>
<td>Teaching other workers about technical related work such as grafting</td>
<td>Cutting grass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buying food</td>
<td>Collecting trash</td>
<td>Helping to build roads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultivating vegetables in the backyard</td>
<td>Cultivating, transplanting and watering plants</td>
<td>Sweeping streets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cooking for the labourers</td>
<td>Cleaning monastery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fertilizing – buying and applying</td>
<td>Collecting garbage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Carrying bales of hay</td>
<td>Providing voluntary health care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Selling Vegetables</td>
<td>Assisting with education in schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Harrowing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These roles and responsibilities are distinct from those of men in a number of ways:

- In the home, men share some responsibilities with women – they carry water and feed the livestock. The only time a man would help take care of the children is if the mother is sick. They take responsibility for doing repairs to the home, but they do not assist with domestic chores.
- On the farm, men are responsible for undertaking heavier work tasks – ploughing and carrying. Women only harrow when the men are not present. Men also have sole responsibility for working with machinery and driving farm vehicles.
- In the community, men take the lead during ceremonies and social events. They cook during these events. They take responsibility for sanitation and infrastructure building.

The women were asked to estimate the number of hours they spend on distinct activities each day.

Table 5: Daily time use of women in the three field sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Magway</th>
<th>S-Shan</th>
<th>Rakhine</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sleeping and resting</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooking</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating meals</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring for other household members (e.g., elderly relatives)</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic chores</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livestock raising</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backyard farming</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure (e.g., reading, social visits, watching TV)</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal care</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The average number of hours spent on domestic duties (including care responsibilities and cooking) each day is 3.8. It is higher than the average in Magway (4.2 hours), but lower in Southern Shan (3.3 hours) and Rakhine (3.7 hours).

2.6. BARRIERS TO WOMEN’S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT IN AGRIBUSINESS

There are multiple challenges to improving women's economic empowerment within the agribusiness sector. Across the three rural locations surveyed, barriers exist at the individual, family, community, and societal levels. In many cases, barriers exist at multiple interconnecting levels.

Table 6: Barriers to women’s economic empowerment in Magway, Southern Shan, and Rakhine

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual Changes</th>
<th>Family Changes</th>
<th>Community Changes</th>
<th>Societal Changes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women have no interest in learning new skills</td>
<td>Men do not have time to help out in the home</td>
<td>It is unsafe for women to travel</td>
<td>Women have low levels of education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women do not own possessions and so cannot access loans</td>
<td>Women are busy with household chores</td>
<td>Transportation is not good</td>
<td>Women are encouraged to stop working after getting married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women are not strong enough</td>
<td>Family members will not allow women to travel alone</td>
<td>Community leaders say it is not suitable for women to attend training</td>
<td>Women are expected to look after children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only men can ride motorbikes</td>
<td>Women do not want to leave their children with non-family members</td>
<td>It is safe for men to travel</td>
<td>Men are prioritized for employment, even when women are educated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women don’t like working with some men</td>
<td>Men do not help with household chores and childcare</td>
<td>There is resistance when activities target women - people think this will change things</td>
<td>There are natural gender characteristics which determine natural gender roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women do not want to take on the role of the village administrator or community leader</td>
<td>Men drink a lot and make the community unsafe for women</td>
<td>It is tradition for women to take responsibility for caring for their family members (children and elderly)</td>
<td>The skills offered in training are difficult to implement – lack of resources, low profit etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women do not know how to climb</td>
<td></td>
<td>There is no training offered by organisations in the village</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women do not know how to use machinery</td>
<td>Only men are allowed to talk in meetings and make decisions</td>
<td>It is our tradition and our religion for women not to do what men do</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Of the responses to these scenarios, 6% show a neutral stance.
A total of 6% of the responses were “unsure”.

Many of these barriers are the result of dominant gender norms found among the target rural populations.

At the societal level, religion and culture both play a part in sustaining the positions of men and women as distinctly different. In most cases, this sex differentiation results in women being kept in subservient roles. Communities reinforce gender inequality by denying women access to opportunities. In the home, women are expected to take sole responsibility for doing domestic chores and looking after family members. This is time they therefore do not have to spend on other activities, including income-generating activities. Men have a far greater chance of being able to make choices about their lives because they are told they can succeed and they are granted more tools (education, ownership, safety, transportation etc.) to promote their success. And women internalize how their society, community, and family construct all women as naturally weaker and less capable. The result – as expressed by several women in this research – is to insist that “We don’t want to change” or to dismiss the inequalities as important. At the same time, however, it was seen that some women are starting to question the traditional norms and gender roles and how they are reflected in gender inequalities at home and in the economy.

“We usually say like this as a joke that ‘In work, it is the same as at the lunch table. Men are given priority.’” – Female focus group participant in Magway

2.6.1. Exploring gender attitudes

Gender attitudes are key indicators of the extent to which changes that can benefit women can be achieved and will be welcomed. They are – as one stakeholder identified – responsible for making women accustomed to the current situation of gender inequality in their communities and reasons why women do not want to make a stand for their own economic empowerment. For another stakeholder, it is imperative existing gender norms are challenged.

“We these are important 100%. When we think about barriers to women’s economic empowerment, the number one barrier is gender norms. So, changing these norms is important in implementing women’s economic empowerment.” – Stakeholder interview in Yangon

Bringing about sustainable transformation in gender norms is unlikely to be easy in the three field sites where this research took place. Overall, there is only a 24% rate of positive gender attitudes among the research participants in these locations.

To assess positive gender attitudes, the research team asked focus group participants to indicate if they agree or disagree with some statements about gender roles, and recorded the number of individual responses. These attitudinal statements were:

1. It is natural for men and women to do different jobs.
2. Men are physically and mentally stronger than women.
3. In domestic situations, it is better for women to obey their husbands to avoid conflict or violence.
4. Ideally, men should be earning money and women should be looking after the home and children.

On average, participants agree with these statements 70% of the time. This means that seven in every ten of the focus group participants can be said to hold a negative gender attitude. Figure 7 shows there is significant variation in gender attitudes depending on the statement under consideration.

Figure 7: Percentage of focus group participants who agree with specific statements that support gender inequality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agree (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is natural for men and women to do different jobs</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men are physically and mentally stronger than women</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In domestic situations, it is better for women to obey their husbands</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideally, men should be earning money and women should be looking after</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the home and children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Almost all focus group participants believe the gendering of jobs is natural and therefore normal. Fewer than half believe in the traditional roles of man as breadwinner and woman as homemaker. This response was, however, often accompanied with an explanation that suggests this positive attitude may not be permanent. Many see this traditional arrangement as impractical under current economic circumstances, but do not necessarily want this arrangement to continue forever.

“If possible, we would like to take our traditional roles – where women stay at home to take care of children and men work in the farm. But it is not enough if only men work. Women also have to work.” – Female focus group participant in Magway

* Of the responses to these scenarios, 6% show a neutral stance.
* A total of 0% of the responses were “unsure.”
Made by male focus group participants

But emotionally, men are stronger than women. Table 7 shows a list of comments participants made to try to justify gender inequality and the superiority of men over women.

Table 7: Comments expressing negative gender attitudes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Made by female focus group participants</th>
<th>Made by male focus group participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men are strong both physically and mentally. Women feel sad and cry very easily.</td>
<td>Naturally, women have more fear and inferiority than men.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men have more life experiences and so they are more mature than women. Moreover, they are intelligent and can solve problems. Women are emotional and don't have creative thinking.</td>
<td>It is natural difference. Men can do heavy work because they are strong. Men believe in themselves and they are able to do things just with the sense of “being men”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We think women should stay at home and take care of children if their husband has enough income for the family.</td>
<td>Women can't climb up. Women can't drive tractors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We think men and women's intelligence are different. Men are cleverer than women. Men have more qualifications than women to be a leader.</td>
<td>Heavy work such as harrowing can be done only by men. Vice versa, cultivating paddy plants can be done only by women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men are braver than women.</td>
<td>But emotionally, men are stronger than women. Women usually cry and are very emotional.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men are stronger than women because men carry a lot of rice but women can't carry a lot of rice.</td>
<td>Women are one step lower than men.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men are cultivators for our farms. Women can't cultivate with tractors.</td>
<td>Men are stronger than women in education. Men do not have as much inferiority complex in their subconscious mind as women have.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men are cleverer and physically stronger than women. Women can't think reasonably.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are some tasks which women can't perform.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women feel emotional due to their menstrual cycle. As men don't experience menstruation, they are mentally stronger than women.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These are only a sample of the total comments made by focus group participants that reveal their belief in fundamental inadequacies of women in comparison to men. Not all focus group participants agree with these kinds of comments or hold negative gender attitudes. Some insisted the argument about men being stronger than women does not always apply. Some argued women have a higher emotional intelligence than men. But comments supportive of changes to existing gender norms – such as this one from a female focus group participant in Rakhine – are rare.

“We can't spend our life only in the kitchen. We can't follow and obey men's decision at all times.” – Female focus group participant in Rakhine

The research has found that the strongest push for gender transformation is in the expectation that women should be responsible for looking after their homes and children. Female focus group participants seek greater support from men to help them manage these responsibilities. Some see this as part of an equalization of the workloads so that after finishing work together in the farm, the situation at home is not one of “men watch television and women have to cook and take care of children”.

Bringing about this change is likely to need some direct and targeted intervention. Both stakeholders and female focus group participants recognize the resistance they would likely get from (some) men if they started to talk about or push for change. It can also be difficult for men to change their behaviors even if they want to. They face intense social pressure to perform like a “real man”, which in the context of Myanmar traditional culture means not helping their wives with domestic duties.

“All the household chores should not be separated for males and females; and all should be done by both. Even though men would like to help with household work, they are afraid of being criticized – like ‘he is controlled by his wife’ – by other people. In the past, women were defined as slaves of their husbands.” – Female focus group participant in Rakhine

One solution that many participants in this research suggested is a shared approach to improving support for women to manage their childcare responsibilities. Men, other women, families, communities, and organizations could contribute. Specific suggestions include providing grandparents with a fee to look after the children while the mother attends training, establishing community-based childcare centers, building trust among women to leave their children with qualified care-givers in safe environments, and government support for working mothers.
2.7. FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN

The research allows for some consideration of how women might better benefit from training, have better access to opportunities to earn money, be more involved in decision-making and/or have more opportunities to become leaders in their communities. Participants in the research were not asked directly to make suggestions. Instead, they were asked to discuss general changes they might like to see for women in their homes and communities. The results presented here are therefore interpretations of what these desired changes might mean for women. These desired changes can be seen as what participants believe are the enablers for improved women’s empowerment and agency.

Table 8 shows a list of changes participants in the research said they would like to see. These changes have been arranged to show the level at which they are likely to have a positive impact on women – at the individual, family, community, and societal level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual Changes</th>
<th>Family Changes</th>
<th>Community Changes</th>
<th>Societal Changes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People willingly share knowledge and skills</td>
<td>Men helping out with the housework</td>
<td>Training sessions at times and in locations that suit women</td>
<td>Legally mandated equal pay for equal work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills in using technology and machinery for women</td>
<td>Family members helping out with the housework and childcare</td>
<td>Business networks for women</td>
<td>Improved education for women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal skills development – confidence, courage, public speaking</td>
<td>Training and mentoring programs for women to learn how to work as community leaders</td>
<td>Government-supported childcare</td>
<td>Community childcare arrangements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These desired changes are not extensive. They nevertheless give an indication of the key areas where partners, beneficiaries, and stakeholders believe work needs to be done if women are to have access to new opportunities in the agribusiness sector.

2.8. WOMEN’S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT IN DANA-FUNDED AGRIBUSINESS PROJECTS

This research included reviews of three agribusiness projects that are currently funded by DaNa – one by an NGO, one a business association and one a private company. The purpose of these reviews was to identify specific gaps these organisations face in promoting women’s economic empowerment through their business activities and projects. These three projects all have targets related to women’s inclusion. Only one project implemented specific activities intended to improve the agency and empowerment of women in beneficiary communities.

The purpose of the reviews is to identify lessons learnt and challenges that need to be addressed to have a greater impact upon women’s economic empowerment and to use this information to help guide DaNa in the future. Through identifying successful outcomes in these three projects, DaNa can also understand more about best practices to promote women’s economic empowerment in different organisations and in different geographical locations in Myanmar.

2.8.1 Progress and Good Practices

Participants in the research identified a number of areas where they are seeing women benefiting from projects. These are:

- Facilitating access to finance, supporting women’s income-generating activities and women’s entrepreneurship, linking local products to markets, and training women to produce value-added local products.
- Supporting women’s skills development has proved to be beneficial not only for them but for the whole community. It was found that when women are trained they are more willing to share their new knowledge and skills with others. Men, in contrast, are seen to be reluctant to share because they believe their capacity to earn money will be reduced if they do so.
- Working with men and boys to promote fairer leadership practices and to create “gender champions” in local communities. Some men are starting to encourage women to attend and speak out in community meetings. Furthermore, in a few villages, some men are doing more to help out with domestic duties, including caring for children.
- Creating or supporting existing women’s groups to strengthen the presence of women in community leadership positions – albeit leaders of women’s groups.

2.8.2 Challenges and lessons learnt

Stakeholders express concerns about the lack of progress promoting women’s economic empowerment throughout Myanmar. Table 9 shows a list of these concerns.

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* This approach was taken because of the research team’s previous experience working with similar populations in Myanmar who, when asked to give specific ideas about their ideal situation in the future, are rarely able to give responses that might suggest the possibility of transformed lives. Instead, they tend to say only that they want more of what is already available – more training on weaving or craft-making. These responses can easily and erroneously be interpreted as proving that the participants have no imagination or are unable to think beyond the scope of their current lives. However, in the case of women in particular, there can be risks involved in speaking out publicly about wanting to change their current situation or to wanting access to the same kinds of opportunities that men in their communities currently enjoy.
The results of this research suggest the level of gender experience and knowledge of project managers and staff does matter. In the case of the three projects that were reviewed, the research detected limited understanding of gender terminology and women’s economic empowerment and this situation is impacting implementation of gender activities.

### 2.8.3. Gender Attitudes

Among project managers and staff in implementing partners, the research discovered a mixture of negative and positive gender attitudes. Figure 8 shows the percentages of project staff and project managers who disagree with statements that indicate support for gender inequality.

![Figure 8: Percentage who disagree with the statements that indicate support for gender inequality](image)

Table 9: Stakeholder concerns about the progress of women’s economic empowerment in Myanmar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expressed Concern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of transparency related to fairness and inclusion in programmes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gap between size of a project and its measurable benefits to women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relying on the number of women involved in a programme as evidence of having achieved women’s economic empowerment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of attention to quality of impacts and transformations in gender roles as part of measuring the success of programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited communication in communities about the gender aspects of projects and activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inconsistent approaches among implementing partners to understanding, implementing, and measuring women’s economic empowerment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of involvement by men.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risks of sexual exploitation and abuse in access to opportunities and training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separation of technical training from gender training, so attendees learn one but not the other and do not see the connections.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The research has discovered that some of these concerns exist at the project level for the three DaNa projects that were reviewed. As such, these should be considered factors likely to hinder progress in women’s economic empowerment in future projects. These factors are:

- No knowledge of how to measure women’s economic empowerment and impacts on gender roles
- No shared system for doing this measuring
- No mandate for large projects to benefit women equally
- Limited communication in communities about the gender aspects of projects and activities
- Isolating gender knowledge from technical skills – and therefore gender from economic opportunities and success

Stakeholders also identified a gap in the technical expertise of project staff on how to mainstream gender into projects.

“Whenever a person is working on women’s economic empowerment or gender, mostly he or she does not get any training about women’s economic empowerment or gender. They start a job and work without being provided training on their career. Staff should be provided with training – basic concepts at least.” – Stakeholder interview with NGO

Overall, project personnel agree with these statements only 15% of the time. This is compared to 70% among the focus group participants – potential beneficiaries of projects. This suggests that project staff hold significantly stronger positive gender attitudes than the beneficiaries. There is also some indication that project managers and staff are starting to understand how gender roles are socially constructed.

"If a woman grows up in a very supportive environment, she may grow up as a strong girl. Probably men can be physically stronger than women, but it is not certain psychologically. It depends on the environment where they grow up. If their environment is supporting or prioritizing women, they [women] will grow up with a strong mind.” – Project staff, focus group in Magway

It was also found that project staff recognize that gender norms change across time. They define the exclusion of women from taking leadership roles in their communities as "village tradition". They also recognize how the entry of women into the workforce is part of wider shifts caused by the economic needs of families.
2.8.4. Enabling factors

Implementing partners need resources and support to mainstream gender into their projects. Project staff need both theoretical knowledge about gender and women’s economic empowerment and practical skills in how to apply this knowledge through activities. They do not need to be told these gaps exist. As their comments show, they are already aware of this situation.

“We don’t understand women’s economic empowerment. I don’t know gender. I want to get training.” – “We think we don’t have enough knowledge about women’s economic empowerment, so we would like more training. The more we have knowledge, the more we can provide assistance to women.”

“We need help to understand how to conduct gender training in the villages.”

“We need gender support for project staff who are implementing in the field.”

“We need help to develop a specific action plan for the empowerment of women.”

Stakeholders offered suggestions on what implementing partners and female beneficiaries need to help create an enabling environment for economic empowerment for women in the agribusiness sector. Table 10 provides a list of these suggestions.

Table 10: Stakeholder suggestions to enable women’s economic empowerment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partners need…</th>
<th>Female beneficiaries need…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Training on gender and women’s economic empowerment</td>
<td>Technical and practical skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandatory requirement to prove benefits to women in projects</td>
<td>Accurate and honest market information about training and potential future work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standardized gender terminology</td>
<td>Sexual health awareness and services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills in how to deliver gender training in creative ways – storytelling, theater etc.</td>
<td>Childcare and domestic help services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills in working with men</td>
<td>Literacy skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community leadership support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transportation to training sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local training sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Training sessions at flexible times</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. CONCLUSION

This research has been able to identify gaps and challenges for promoting women’s economic empowerment in agribusiness in three rural locations: Rakhine, Magway, and Southern Shan. It has shown that the DaNa-funded projects in these locations face the same six challenges that have been identified in previous research to be widespread challenges to effective mainstreaming of women’s economic empowerment in market systems development programmes.* These challenges are summarised in Table 11.

Table 11: Challenges that have previously been identified as barriers to women’s economic empowerment in development programmes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Viewing women’s economic empowerment as a social rather than a commercial activity</td>
<td>Project staff do the bare minimum to integrate women’s economic empowerment into programme interventions and monitoring activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrealistic resource allocation for mainstreaming of women’s economic empowerment</td>
<td>Understaffing and/or employing staff who lack relevant experience of women’s economic empowerment to be responsible for women’s economic empowerment activities in projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low senior leadership engagement with women’s economic empowerment</td>
<td>Poor understanding of the importance of women’s economic empowerment and low prioritization of women’s economic empowerment activities and goals by senior management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff see women’s economic empowerment as a responsibility some staff have to “do”</td>
<td>Women’s economic empowerment is not perceived as everyone’s work and is not mainstreamed into activities of all staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited staff capacity to integrate women’s economic empowerment considerations into the design and implementation of a project</td>
<td>Staff find it difficult to identify and address the gendered constraints which inhibit women from participating in and benefiting from project activities and interventions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate systems to prove and improve the business case for women’s economic empowerment</td>
<td>Limited efforts to collect and present evidence to demonstrate the commercial benefits of inclusive practices within to facilitate improvements in project performance and impact</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Creating an enabling environment in which improved and sustainable agency and empowerment for women are achievable requires organisational commitment and leadership. Project staff need opportunities to learn about gender and what it means to mainstream gender into their activities. They also need opportunities to be challenged about their own gender attitudes and practices, and supported through this journey by committed leaders who are similarly experiencing gender transformations.

The owners of businesses and other implementing agencies of projects need to understand the business case for why women's economic empowerment is profitable and good for organisational reputation. There needs to be a commitment of funding and staff resources to ensure gender is central to the design and everyday implementation of projects.

For DaNa to strengthen its impact upon women's economic empowerment and ensure that future grant funding is used to produce visible benefits for women – improved access, agency, and independence – the right projects and businesses need to be selected and subsequently supported to ensure they can access these enablers.

Some of this work needs to come at the intervention, design, and selection stage. Some will need to come at the contracting stage to ensure that stronger gender commitments are included within funding contracts and project targets. Some will need to come through stronger enforcement of compliance – contractual obligations linked to funding and oversight of the efforts that are being made to transform the lives of female beneficiaries. A lot of effort will be needed to ensure implementing partners have access to additional support throughout the life cycle of the projects – from grant application stage to interim reviews to project completion and assessment.

These efforts are necessary not simply because women deserve equal opportunities and agency. Women's economic empowerment is a social issue for women. But it is also a social issue for their families and country. Women's economic empowerment increases agricultural productivity and strengthens household food stability.* It also helps build stronger and more profitable businesses.

3.1. RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations are intended to help strengthen efforts to improve access to opportunities and economic agency for women and to achieve gender transformational change within DaNa-funded interventions in the agribusiness sector in Myanmar.

To strengthen the inclusion of gender transformative components in all funded interventions:

- Review the methodology for assessing gender components and commitments in grant applications. This should include asking for more detailed evidence of how a funded partner intends to meet its stated gender commitments, to reduce the risk of approving grant applications for organisations that do not have the capacity and/or desire to deliver on gender aspirations and claims.

- Review all grant applications through a strong gender lens and offer advice and support to the applicant to strengthen their project design accordingly. Applications should respond to the detected needs and the given advice by ensuring they allocate the necessary resources.

- Prioritize grant applications for projects and businesses that:
  - include a plan for developing support networks for women to share skills, manage businesses and access loans;
  - offer training for women on developing skills in use of farming machinery and technology;
  - offer soft skills development for women, either through training and/or mentoring, and/or;
  - show how sustainable support will be offered to women to manage their childcare and domestic duties so they can attend training and participate in income-generating activities.

- Develop an M&E framework to help capture results beyond numbers of women participating in activities and monitor and evaluate the gender impact of projects.

- Ensure gender commitments and outcomes are included in grant contracts and identified as milestones that need to be completed in order to obtain future tranches of funding.

- Request that all grantees undertake an assessment of where and at what times women in local communities would prefer to receive training, to maximize opportunities for women to attend when they have free time or access to childcare support.

To improve the success rate of achieving measurable benefits to women in their projects:

- Dedicate funding and resources to provide all implementing partners with quality and ongoing technical and hands-on support to ensure all projects benefit women and bring about gender transformational change.

- Provide gender transformational training to project managers and project staff at touch points throughout the project implementation phase. Include participation in this training as one of the grant award conditions.

- Provide specific guidance and resources – training, templates, toolkits etc. – to grantees on how to mainstream women's economic empowerment in projects, including ideas for activities, indicators, and impact measuring systems.

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• Complement this training with dedicated technical support to help partners develop gender action plans, develop content for women’s economic empowerment activities, and run gender activities.

To help create a better enabling environment for funded projects to produce gender transformative results:
• Write a suite of success stories to provide organisations with examples of what success looks like for women’s economic empowerment, including examples of both good practice activities and promising outcomes.
• Require grantees to undertake a location-specific gendered market map to understand the specific barriers women face participating in the local market.
• Undertake a risk analysis of partners’ women’s economic empowerment objectives and activities as part of the grant application assessment.
• Support research into the costs of domestic duties to community economies to inform community-based choices about support for working women and women who attend training sessions.
• Support endeavors to pilot childcare support options for women in beneficiary communities and in the workplace.

ANNEX 1: CASE STUDY - MAGWAY

DAW KHIN THAN MYINT

In Daw Khin Than Myint’s village it is rare to find an educated woman, especially one who graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in chemistry. As such, she is respected in the village and people look up to her as a role model.

When Daw Khin Than Myint heard about the Network Activity Group’s P4 Project, she thought it might be a useful initiative to help aid the development of her village. She attended the training in Magway and brought the information she learned back with her to share with other villagers. As a direct result of her leadership, the villagers have started a savings program.

“We started saving money – 2,000 kyat per each member per month. We have twenty members now.”

To attend training, Daw Khin Than Myint has to travel for two hours each way by motorcycle. Because her own motorcycle is not suitable for the journey, she relies on the other villagers to help provide her with transport. She takes great pride in knowing that the other villagers trust her advice and leadership abilities, and will support her when she needs their help.

Daw Khin Than Myint has also attended training run by the Indigenous and Conserved Communities Association (ICCA) and problem solving training provided by the Network Activity Group. She says these experiences have boosted her self-confidence and ability to make decisions.

“I have become more confident to speak and make decisions after attending the training. I can make the right decisions without worrying.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DAW KHIN THAN MYINT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age:</strong> 47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marital status:</strong> Married</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity:</strong> Burmese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Religion:</strong> Buddhist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education:</strong> B.Sc. (Chemistry)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Occupation:</strong> Farmer and Leader at PPPP Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Length of time in current job:</strong> August 2019 to present – in role of Leader at PPPP Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Previous job(s):</strong> None</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Place of birth:</strong> Mone Taung (Ywar Ma) Village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location of home:</strong> Mone Taung (Ywar Ma) Village</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
She believes it is important for women to learn new skills and technologies to become economically independent. She says that without a strong willingness to learn and to travel outside of the village, women cannot make progress.

“Family members should allow women and girls to go outside the village to attend training or to participate in a meeting.”

Daw Khin Than Myint regularly loads up her motorcycle basket with grocery items, such as cooking salt and vegetable oil, and rides into the village to sell to households. She often sells goods on credit because the villagers do not have the money to pay. She tries to collect the money the following week, but not all buyers pay their debts.

She notes that many of the other women in the village cannot ride a motorbike. Without that skill she would be reliant on men to drive her around, making it more difficult to sell goods in the village and to attend training.

Daw Khin Than Myint believes that women must work hard and be self-motivated in order to overcome economic barriers. She is both hard working and entrepreneurial.

“I had to try for myself. I had to learn knowledge and skills. I worked hard with my family on the traditional farm. We [her and her sisters] are successful in my village.”

Daw Khin Than Myint receives good support from her relatives when she needs to leave the village to attend training or for work. They offer to take care of her son and cook meals for him. Her husband is also supportive and understands her needs and her work. She finds it reassuring that he contacts her each day when she is away from home to make sure she is doing okay. She believes there is a significant advantage in having the support of her husband to share household responsibilities.

“In my village, every woman does domestic work but time is very limited. Many couples negotiate about who does what so that both are earning some money and both are doing the domestics chores. The more they negotiate, the more economically successful they are.”

Because Daw Khin Than Myint is able to earn an independent income, she is able to support her nine-year-old son with his education and to spend her money as she pleases, without having to worry about asking for money from her husband.

In the future, she hopes to be able to establish her own small business in the village making noodles. She is enthusiastic to talk to other noodle machine owners to learn the skills and knowledge she will need to start her own business.

ANNEX 2: CASE STUDY - MAGWAY

DAW THIN THIN

Daw Thin Thin is a woman who thrives on keeping busy. She doesn’t consider it a challenge to balance domestic duties, farm work, and volunteer work – she just wakes up at 4am and gets on with her work without any complaint. And it is obvious that she loves her many jobs.

“If I have to attend training in Magway, I get up very early and cook food for my family including breakfast, lunch, and dinner. After that, I go to Magway for my meetings. So, my family members are satisfied with me.”

Her dedication is rewarded by her family. Her husband is very supportive and never complains about her volunteer work. He helps her to organize community meetings in their home and is very patient no matter how much noise they make during the meetings. He also picks her up from Magway on his motorcycle if she is late returning home from a meeting.

Daw Thin Thin believes that having children should not hold women back from working and earning an income. She believes mothers should return to work as soon as the child is six months old.

“Women need to learn knowledge and work equally with men. They need to develop their knowledge and skills. To be skilful and knowledgeable, women also need to try things for themselves.”
But she acknowledges that without the positive attitude of her husband, it would have been more difficult for her to become economically independent.

“Some men just don’t want their wives to work.”

Aside from a supportive husband, Daw Thin Thin suggests there are often many reasons why women find it difficult to be economically independent and successful. They need access to:

- money to start a business and spare time;
- work opportunities to gain experience;
- markets to sell their goods or services; and
- technology and skills training.

Daw Thin Thin has attended several training courses that have helped equip her with knowledge and skills she now puts to good use in her daily life. They include:

- leadership training;
- business plan training;
- ECCD training at Yan-Kin Educational College (with Save the Children);
- agricultural training; and
- insecticide usage training.

Most of the training was provided at no cost by an energy organization and by Network Activity Group, though Daw Thin Thin had to fund her own transport costs and forego paid work to attend.

When she was younger, Daw Thin Thin did not have the confidence to speak in public. But now she is one of the few women who is willing to speak up at village and township meetings. She says that for many women, when they are forbidden to talk in a meeting, they feel such shame and embarrassment that they are afraid to try speaking up again.

“When women try to speak, the men said, ‘Ladies! Don’t talk. Just listen! We will talk.’ But I try again in the next meeting. I am not afraid of them.”

Daw Thin Thin believes men need to listen more to women’s voices. They should involve women in all matters including leadership decisions and negotiations. She believes women need more opportunities to put their skills to work in business and in the community.

She also thinks it is important for women to support each other. She makes sure to share any knowledge or skills she has learned with other women in the village. After all, not every woman in the village is fortunate enough to be able to attend the same training courses that she can.

Her ambition is to some day establish and grow a women’s cooperative business. She would like the opportunity to connect and link with local and international businesses to access new markets and to achieve higher selling prices for their crops.

ANNEX 3: CASE STUDY - SOUTHERN SHAN

NANN KHAN YIN

Nann Khan Yin, 33, is the owner and operator of a farm in her home town of Hum Sie Village, Taunggyi Township. As the only one of her siblings who decided to take on the responsibilities of the family farm, she is now a co-owner alongside her 61-year-old father. She is pleased to carry on the tradition of farming from one generation to the next and to be able to take care of her ageing father.

“I live with my father and look after him, as my sister and my brother do not live together with us. I am grateful that I can look after my dad.”

Nann Khan Yin did not always plan to become a farmer like her father. When she was young, she had dreams of landing a more contemporary job, such as becoming a radio presenter. At school, she studied hard and went on to earn a bachelor’s degree in mathematics.

Later on, she took a job as a cashier and accountant at a private clinic and worked there for three years. But Nann Khan Yin found the work stressful and unrewarding. She was unhappy that her salary did not increase during her time with the clinic even after she became more proficient at the job. She decided to leave the job at the clinic and return home to her father’s farm.

Her ambition is to some day establish and grow a women’s cooperative business. She would like the opportunity to connect and link with local and international businesses to access new markets and to achieve higher selling prices for their crops.
“I work both day and night to manage our workload and deadlines. I do my best to do all the work. If not, I hire workers when the deadlines are tight.”

Her farm produces avocado, rice, corn and other vegetables. Common tasks for Nann Khan Yin on the farm include:

- sowing seed for avocado, rice and corn;
- nurtering and transplanting seedlings;
- grafting avocado plants;
- applying fertilizer;
- cutting grass (weeding); and
- harvesting and sale of crops.

Even though the farm work is difficult and time consuming, Nann Khan Yin has found the time to venture into soap-making as a side-business. She got started by attending training on organic soap-making offered by MSP. The training and technical support was provided free of charge, but no financial support was provided to help her kick-start her new venture.

“For organic soap, I am very interested in soap as it is a new innovation. I am curious in creating something new or special, so I loved to create organic soap in our region.”

She initially tried making both avocado soap and ‘orangutan’ soap but each had its own problems. The local demand for avocado soap is low so the price has dropped – she says it is currently not worthwhile for her to manufacture and sell the product until the price increases. The ‘orangutan’ soap is a premium product which sells for 1,500 kyat, but it is unaffordable for potential customers in rural areas. Unfortunately, this means that, for the time being at least, Nann Khan Yin has stopped producing organic soap. Without access to profitable markets for her products she feels she has no other option.

Nann Khan Yin says the main barriers that prevent women from becoming economically successful are:

- the difficulty in finding the time to work on something other than subsistence;
- not being able to make their own decisions; and
- not being innovative enough to try something new.

She is always looking for new opportunities to gain knowledge or experience. For her venture into soap-making, she reflects that she did not have a business plan in place, so she didn’t know whether or not it would be profitable until she tried it. Now, she has learnt that the market needs to change or she needs to find new markets if she decides to continue with this venture.

In the township where Nann Khan Yin lives and works, it is common for women and men to work side-by-side in farming jobs. She has not encountered any resistance to taking over responsibility for managing her father’s farm. The farm workers listen to her and her male neighbors are generally supportive and helpful.

Daw Khin Sin Win has been cultivating vegetables for more than 24 years. She now has two family farms. One of them is close to her home and the other is about 30 minutes away by foot. For Daw Khin Sin Win, a typical day involves waking up at 5:30 in the morning, cooking her family’s breakfast and lunch, and then going to her farms to water, cut grass, and apply fertilizer. She grows tomato, chili, carrot, and cucumber. She goes back home around 11am to have lunch and to take a nap. She returns to the farms at about 1pm. Clearly, she is very busy.

“I don’t have enough time. Sometimes I am not aware that the sun has gone down and it is dark. It is so late to cook dinner. I can’t clean the house and wash the clothes every day as I am too busy on the farm.”

She sometimes tries to hire labour to help her with her work on the farm, but this is not easy because it is difficult to find labour in her village. She finds it difficult to carry natural fertilizer. When the weather is not good, it is a big challenge for her to grow plants and to harvest. Still, she gets on with the work and finds happiness in her success.

“T am satisfied with my work and I am happy to see that plants I have cultivated are growing well. I feel happy to earn money from the farm.”

Daw Khin Sin Win has nothing to complain about. She is happy in her work. She is happy with her life at home. She enjoys good communication with her husband. When she has difficulties on the farm, she discusses these with him. Her husband works as a tuk-tuk taxi driver. When he doesn’t have to work that job, he helps her...
on the farm by transporting vegetables from the farm to the market. Her family also support her. They give her money when she doesn't have enough money to buy seeds or fertilizer.

Polite and softly spoken, Daw Khin Sin Win doesn't think she is particularly special. She considers herself quite normal and says there are many other women in her village who are also doing farm work. Through her efforts, however, she is an inspiration to other women to make the effort to build a successful business and be happy. Some of them admire her. They say: “Oh, you can work a lot on the farm just like a man!”

She believes that working is a way for women to feel happy and to experience independence.

“It is great to work regardless of what kind of work you have to do. If a woman works, she can earn money and this will be helpful to her family. She can possess a happy family. Women don’t need to depend on others for daily living if they can make money. They will become independent and feel confident.”

Daw Khin Sin Win is also committed to learning new skills and knowledge that will help her improve her ability to support her family. She has attended many training sessions to learn skills in planting, cultivating, and using fertilizers and insecticides effectively and safely. She believes it is important for women to attend training sessions because it is difficult for them to make a profit from their farms if they don’t have knowledge and experience.

While she is aware of organizations that offer loans to women to help them with their farming work, she has chosen not to go down this path. She nevertheless recognizes how important this access to finance can be for women, especially in her village where there tends to be few opportunities for women to work and women do not have enough money of their own to start a business.

Daw Khin Sin Win benefits from living in a village where people are generally supportive of women engaging in income-generating activities. She feels safe in her village and has always been treated well by men. She says she enjoys good relationships with other women in her village and with people from neighbouring villages. Differences in gender, education and religion do not matter to her.

She considers this kind of support essential to helping women succeed. She suggests that women should be keen to share their knowledge with each other and that men should be willing to help women, especially with the heavy work tasks on the farm.

“Families should encourage women to work to earn money. They should allow girls and women to work like men. Communities should support and arrange agricultural training by collaborating with organizations. They should also encourage and promote the education of girls.”

She believes there is a positive future for women in Myanmar. And despite her happiness and success, she continues to strive to improve her knowledge and try different things. She says she loves to learn about how plants grow and produce fruits, and about insects that destroy her plants. She has a dream of one day becoming a trader in a big city.
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