



Action Agenda, Key Lessons and Reflections of Multi-stakeholder Dialogue on Scaling-up Interventions for Sustainable Agricultural Development in Myanmar's Dry Zone

20-21 December 2016, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar

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An action agenda was developed at the end sessions of the Dialogue. The multi-stakeholder participants had more in-depth discussion in order to scale up interventions for sustainable agriculture development in Myanmar's Dry Zone based on five focused area of interventions: (i) setting up priority areas for scaling up interventions of regional government; (ii) strengthening research-extension linkages to scale up successful technologies and innovations; (iii) mobilizing more resources to scale up successful interventions; (iv) involving small holders in developing strategies; and (v) improving multi-stakeholder coordination and partnerships.

Development of Action Agenda

- Setting priority areas for scaling-up interventions for agricultural development in the Dry Zone by regional government

The discussion under this group identified seven challenges to be addressed:

- *Information sharing/flow* to assist in identifying priority areas including the policies set by regional government. [INGO/NGO, regional governments)
- *Policy setting, e.g.* enabling multi-stakeholder involvement in the preparation and development of national agriculture development strategies. [national government]
- *Database systems* for better information flow and sharing processes. [regional/national government]
- *Budget allocation* based on participatory planning/budgeting systems, in order to meet local requirements. The DoA has adopted a bottom-up approach (submitting budget requests from township level). [regional agri-department township]
- *Survey/research* to be conducted regularly by respective sectors and zones to identify gaps of knowledge and practices in respective places. [DAR, universities, DoA, NGOs]
- *Strategy* that involves all stakeholders. [region and all stakeholder]
- *Coordination* to strengthen government systems; to enforce rules and regulations properly; to ensure regular coordination and identify

priority areas at different levels; to organize necessary meetings; and to put a complaint mechanism in place. [regional government and all stakeholders]

- Strengthen research-extension linkages to scale up successful technologies and innovations

An action agenda was produced during this discussion:

- *Communications (trust/enthusiasm)*. This is needed among researcher, extension staff and farmer. Regular meetings to be ensured at village level to establish interactive relationships and build trust. Demonstration conducted at the farmer field level, connecting researchers, extension officers and farmers. It is also important to enable coordination among government departments. [DoA, DAR, AMD, farmers, private sector, NGOs, INGOs]
- *Technology and information sharing (problem-based solution)*. Issues/problems of stakeholders (farmer, merchant, millers) have to be conveyed to researchers. 'Field days' should be conducted with sound technology transfer of research findings to farmers. Provision of robust data (from DoA-DAR) to farmers. Transfer technology through media/IECs, case studies and/or call centres. [universities, private research institutes, media, stakeholders]
- *Capacity-building of extension workers and researchers*. Targeting junior staff to build confidence of farmers. YAU and DAR provide curriculum with local Myanmar context (practical and theory). Agricultural engineering should be introduced at YAU to deal with, for example, agricultural mechanization, irrigation, etc. Organizing exchange visits to expand best practices and lessons learned, regular training and provision of a database and information sources (websites, library, etc.). [YAU, central government, regional government, NGOs]
- *Funding*. Coordination and management of government budget allocation, department budget allocation, TA/DSA for government staff, government rules and regulation (expenditure and administration process) and transportation facilities. [government, NGOs, INGOs, multilateral, bilateral cooperation]
- *Participation and contribution of all stakeholders*. A national/regional level of policy strategy is needed to share evidence-based findings, to form mobile teams (DoA, DAR), incentivize and interest farmers through workshops and small-farmer group discussions. [university, research institutions, farmers, MPs, extension workers, researchers, regional level government]

- Mobilize resources to scale up successful interventions

The group focused on mobilizing resources in Dry Zone areas, with the major challenge of scarce water resources availability driving the action agenda:

- *Increase access to water and technology in water management practices.* Applying practices of water conservation, underground water utilization and technology in water management (rainwater harvesting), increase awareness of government water management policies, renewable energy project.
 - *Market orientation.* Provision of market information for each region. Local and foreign investment policies. Crop insurance system/policy.
 - *Increase mechanization technicians for farm equipment/machines/skilled labourers.* Coordination with AMD/training/companies, DoA trainings and other capacity-building activities.
 - *Loans for small farmers.* Custom hiring practices.
- *Involve smallholders in developing strategies to scale up successful interventions*
- *Technology (irrigation).* Provide technical requirements to fulfil the gaps at lower level. [government, NGO, MP]
 - *Finance.* Provide solutions for farmers with smaller land areas to improve their livelihoods. Linking to organizations that can provide financial systems. [government, NGOs, private sector]
 - *Higher information exposure to small-scale farmers.* Having more extension workers. Provide more exposure of farmers' organization. [respective departments, NGOs, private sector, parliament, media]
 - *Improved assistance for small-scale farmers (in cases of natural disaster).* Assisting small-scale farmers, providing inputs (seeds, fertilizer, pesticides) in cases of natural disaster. [respective departments, NGOs, private sector, parliament, media, CSOs]
 - *Improved access to better infrastructure.* Provide better infrastructure (road, bridges, schools). [government, NGO, MP]
- *Improve multi-stakeholder coordination and partnerships to scale-up successful interventions*
- *Information-sharing on stakeholder programmes' work plans and objectives.* Each stakeholder to share and disseminate more on their programme focuses, objectives and workplans for better coordination and partnerships. [government departments, NGOs, CSOs]
 - *Regular coordination.* Coordination meeting to be conducted regularly (every 2-3 months) to maintain contacts database, produce regular newsletter/journals and create web page/social media. [All stakeholders, NGOS, Network/FSWG, government]
 - *Strengthen cooperation among organizations.* Avoid overlapping interventions through committee coordination (and all existing small groups), regular work meetings, workshops and training, trust-building, exchange visits and farmers' meetings. [government, departments, NGOs, CSOs]

The key lessons and reflections gained from the Dialogue and action agenda development promote ways that the Union government, regional governments, researchers, CSOs, the private sector, farmers and practitioners can help to set approaches that cover five major requirements:

1. ***National food security and livelihoods of farmers need to be improved.***
Raising the livelihoods of farmers means focusing on them or placing them at the centre of interventions. Farmers are not part of the problem, they are, indeed, part of the solution. Farmers should be encouraged to represent and state what they need and want for themselves rather than presenting what will be done for farmers by organizations. It is important to strengthen farmer organizations, associations, federations and farmers' groups.
2. ***Hyper-type agreements and public-government-private links*** are needed. Currently, the role of the private sector needs to be improved, as well as the roles of government and public sectors.
3. Although CSOs/NGOs have better technology/practices and success, individual NGOs can only cover relatively smaller areas. Therefore, in order to ***distribute better technology/practices nationwide, this should be handled by Union-level government***, which can drive/trigger the success (e.g. even in the less important issues, state-level interventions can produce faster and wider results) (e.g. castor oil plants/hybrid rice projects).
4. ***Trust-building issues***
It is necessary for CSOs, NGOs and the private sector to work hand in hand, with a more constructive attitude towards cooperation. Workshops like this can be a space for better engagement and trust-building with departments. As organizing workshops/meetings can be costly, different organizations working in the same region should cooperate to create an enabling environment for better engagement and trust-building among governments, NGOs and INGOs.
5. ***Information-sharing***
Whether sharing is necessary can be questioned. Certainly, sharing information is a must. It is better to share information available through an information-sharing mechanism, so all participants can keep in touch with each other, as well as share information and good practices. Thus, we can increase our network in our working environment (making new friends and gathering old friends) through meetings like this, for sharing information.

Further from the key lessons and reflections **the Dialogue espoused the following recommendations:**

- i. Strengthening capacities for evidence-based decision-making, including collaboration on data-gathering and statistical analysis for monitoring, and institutional responses to democratic governance (e.g. implementing participatory decision-making processes and private sector engagement in development projects). Promote demand-driven scale-up of successful interventions, continuous programme improvement, information sharing, and transparency, achieving SDGs under the commitment 'No one left behind'.
- ii. Fostering knowledge-networking as a national agricultural innovation and technology forum/advisory body/community in Myanmar. A multi-stakeholder membership (government, INGOs, NGOs, private sector, farmers' groups, etc.), multi-sectoral approach, transfer of knowledge across national contexts may include policies, advocacy, strategic programme interventions, practices, technologies, analysis on success/failure factors, enabling conditions, emphasis on local context, need for vertical (between Union and regional level, to grassroots levels) as well as horizontal coordination (between regions).
- iii. Promoting institutional responses, such as the National (Regional) Knowledge Hub for possible support and assistance, call centres, mobilization of resources and setting up an Incubation Fund for agricultural development through the involvement of all stakeholders (smallholders) to scale up successful pilots.

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