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About WorldFish

WorldFish is an international, not-for-profit research organization that works to reduce hunger and poverty by improving fisheries and aquaculture. It collaborates with numerous international, regional and national partners to deliver transformational impacts on millions of people who depend on fish for food, nutrition, and income in the developing world. Headquartered in Penang, Malaysia and with regional offices across Africa, Asia, and the Pacific, WorldFish is a member of CGIAR, the world's largest global partnership on agriculture research and innovation for a food secure future.

About BoP Inc

BoP Inc is an independent foundation supporting multinationals, SMEs and start-ups in creating and scaling inclusive business models that include the Base of the Pyramid (BoP) or low-income population, as consumers, distributors, producers, and entrepreneurs. It has worked with more than 500 inclusive businesses worldwide to create Inclusive Business models and led several training and coaching tracks for female entrepreneurs in BoP markets.

Notes

- One (1) USD is equal to 1,400 Myanmar Kyat (MMK)
- MYSAP Inland defines a small-scale pond as being a pond of less than 2,023 square metres (0.5 acres) in area, which holds water for at least six months per year.



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MYSAP Inland supports small-scale fish farmers and fish processors during COVID-19

In the Central Dry Zone and upper regions of Myanmar, since April 2017, the Inland component staff of the Myanmar Sustainable Aquaculture Programme (MYSAP) has been working intensively with smallholder fish processors and vendors to improve fish value chains. To boost the opportunities of female micro-entrepreneurs in Kale, Shwebo and Kengtung townships, in March 2020, MYSAP Inland selected as a partner of choice the BoP Innovation Center (BoPInc). BoPInc has extensive experience in supporting women entrepreneurs as well as in the development of business models benefitting the Base of the Pyramid (BoP), low income consumers and entrepreneurs. Through their expertise, BoPInc will assist in the co-development of post-harvest fish value chain innovations with female micro-entrepreneurs working on fish processing and vending, empowering these women to solve problems they face every day. However, due to COVID-19 lockdown restrictions, working closely with female micro-entrepreneurs and surveying their business in the marketplace was temporarily halted.



Survey conducted via mobile phone

MYSAP Inland and BoPInc kick-started their collaboration with the development of a short computer-assisted telephone interview (CATI) questionnaire survey to gather data from fish value chain actors in Myanmar. The survey collected information on the level of mobile phone accessibility, digital abilities, and the overall COVID-19 understanding of fish value chain actors targeted by MYSAP Inland with innovative fish post-harvest training, and messaging. As a result, a total of 41 respondents (32 women), including village and main market fish vendors, wholesalers and fish processors, previously trained by MYSAP on value-added fish products were interviewed by mobile phone. These included key value chain stakeholders from all the MYSAP Inland targeted regions of Kale (5 people) and Shwebo (14 people) townships, in the Sagaing Region, and Pinlaung (11 participants), and Kengtung townships (11 participants), in the Shan State.

The findings revealed that phone usage is fairly ubiquitous in Burmese market chains. All but one of the 41 respondents had a mobile phone. Moreover, no men were without a smartphone, while 85 per cent of women had one. The main mobile phone uses were for social communication (65 per cent), work communication (12.5 per cent), trading (12.5 per cent) and seeking new information (10 per cent) and, especially using Facebook chat and video features. Despite power cuts ranging from monthly to many hours per day, most respondents were able to charge their phone frequently and barely ever had any phone reception issues.



Photo credit: Nanyang Tin Mya Win/Deception



Aquaculture Value Chain in the COVID-19 context

Season-long extension and training services on sustainable small-scale aquaculture, integrated vegetable and fruit production on pond embankments and in homestead gardens and on improved human nutrition has been delivered to a total of 1,081 direct beneficiary households in 2019-2020 culture by MYSAP Inland working through collaborating NGO partners including Ar Yone Oo, BRAC Myanmar, and Malteser International, in Kale, Shwebo, and Kengtung townships, respectively. When COVID-19 restriction came into effect, several hundred MYSAP Inland direct beneficiary households had near or almost market-sized fish in their small-scale household ponds.

During the COVID-19 situation, MYSAP Inland has continued to support households to partially and completely harvest their ponds, market their fish, and support the ongoing operations of food value chains for essential food items including rice, eggs, fish, vegetables, and fruit. Through the implementation of COVID-19 preventative measures and practices, MYSAP Inland has proactively helped minimize the risk of COVID-19 infection and spread within the fish value chain community.

COVID-19 Preventative Measures and Practices

- Limiting the number of people netting the fish.
- Compulsory temperature checks and asking any people with a temperature above 37.8 degrees Celsius and with any COVID-19 symptoms to return home and to self-quarantine for 14 days.
- Social distancing of at least one (1) meter (two meter is better) at all times.
- Compulsory wearing of face masks at all times during fish netting, grading and packing.
- Compulsory hand washing with soap for 20 seconds before activity commencement.
- Use of disposable plastic gloves when handling fish.
- Regular use of hand sanitizer (70 per cent alcohol), every 30 minutes, during activities.
- Use of ice (food safe if available) to allow less people to grade fish and to maintain fish quality and extend fish shelf life.
- Where possible, advance announcement of the pond harvest and taking pre-orders for fish, followed by home delivery to avoid people congregating in groups.



Using the phone capacity and COVID-19 insights gathered

MYSAP, BoPInc, GIZ Myanmar, WorldFish Myanmar and other key fish value chain actors plan to work together going forward to virtually design, co-create and deliver innovative fish post-harvest training in the Central Dry Zone and upper regions of Myanmar.

The insights gathered from the survey indicate that such activities are feasible with the fish vendors and processors, and can be conducted via chat or video calls from existing open source platforms and messaging applications.



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