**Narrative Reporty by Network Activities Group**

'Support the social, economic and environmental transformation of the small-scale fisheries sector towards its better contribution to food security and poverty eradication as a result of improved policies, strategies and initiatives'

# Background

Myanmar has a total population of about 60 million and 75 per cent of the population lives in rural areas. Those in the delta and coastal areas account for about 20 million, and 40 per cent of these coastal and riparian communities are directly involved in fisheries. The majority of these are poorly resourced and highly vulnerable; they are dependent on outsiders for fishing rights, and the latter also have significant control over the credit arrangements and the price offered for fish catches. With a squeeze on fishing access, there is increasing pressure on those who eventually obtain fishing rights to over-exploit fishing grounds. Natural disasters such as Cyclone Nargis and Giri had the dual effect of badly affecting coastal spawning grounds and constraining small fishers’ capital base and loss of productive assets. The pressure to manage the resulting accumulation of debt has further exacerbated the weak position of small fishers relative to those who exercise primary legal rights over fishing. These broader processes act to trap the poor and vulnerable fisherfolk in a cycle of debt, dissociate them from control over their livelihoods, add unnecessary inefficiencies into the production and value chains, constrain the opportunities for value addition, and undermine sustainable management of fishing grounds. Further, loss of fishing rights/livelihood opportunities forces the small-scale fishing communities to migrate in large numbers to work as casual labourers in Yangon and other major cities, as well as to join the marine fishing industry as fishworkers.

# Objectives

The overall objective of the proposed project is to improve the governance in the fisheries sector by strengthening the capacity of small-scale fisher institutions. Its specific objectives are as below;

* To support the capacity building and strengthening of small-scale fisheries specific to a co-management arrangement of fisheries resources
* To support the small-scale fisher organisation for improving the working conditions of small-scale fishers

Activities

### Activity 1.1 – Review the existing co-management plan of targeted fishing grounds and improve the co-management plan, including species conservation and close season arrangement

The current government, spurred by the efforts of the Fisher Development Association(FDA) and the Ayeyarwaddy Region Fishery Network (ARFN), has provided access to fishing grounds to some small-scale fishing communities Dedaye township. The FDA has had co-management mechanisms in the concerned communities since 2013 in collaboration with community leaders. However, it was observed that the management practices were seen by the fishers as merely a mechanism to allocate access to fishing grounds to those fishers living alongside the particular fishing zones. This observation led to undertaking a series of awareness and knowledge programmes relating to fishery ecology and trends indicating resource declines over the years, which helped the FDAs and ARFNs to improve their management plans by integrating important aspects of conservation and better governance approaches into them. In order to ensure effective community participation in the management process, NAG facilitated FDAs and ARFNs to undertake a participatory review of their existing co-management by organising a workshop which had strong participation from representatives of all relevant fishing zones. The workshop was organised at the NAG sub-office, Pyapon township on 22 and 23 December 2018 for two days, with 19 participants (14 male, five female) largely from the FDAs and the ARFNs, but also including a few non-member villagers.

### Activity 2.1 – Capacity Needs Assessments of existing FDAs

The first day of the co-management plan review workshop (22 December 2018) also focused on a Capacity Needs Assessment, which was intended to understand the gaps in the current capacity of the FDAs to implement fishery resource management effectively and efficiently. This exercise, undertaken with the active participation of representatives of the FDAs, indicated that the FDA members had good indigenous knowledge of how to manage and conserve the local fishery resources. The existing customary practices were also supportive in solving the local level fishery related issues. However, in order to follow the new fishery co-management plans more effectively, they still face a lot of challenges which need to be addressed, such as the need for better coordination with government agencies, for more efficient financial management and organisational development and for documenting the process.

### Activity 2.2 – Capacity Building Training for FDAs

Based on the results of the Capacity Need Assessment, NAG undertook a Co-management Training, which included bio-monitoring aspects, of selected members of the FDAs on 24 December 2018 at the NAG sub-office in Pyapon. During the training, the NAG team used PowerPoint presentations and brainstorming exercises involving group discussions to provide information on relevant issues: different types of resources, trends of climate change, root causes of resource decline, impacts of the decline for human well-being, and the appropriate systems and approaches to address resource depletion. In addition, Ecosystem Adaptation of Fishery Management (EAFM) training was provided to fisher leaders of the targeted area, FDAs and ARFM members, from 24 to 26 December for three days at Myanmar Koe Hotel, Pathein township. The total participants for the EAFM training was 26 (18 male 18, eight female).

### Activity 2.3 – Support for community to develop a fisheries management plan, awareness-raising and enforcement for improving co-management arrangement and species conservation

In order that fishery communities are able to understand clearly the concepts and strategies of co-management and to implement co-management activities more effectively at the community level, regular cluster meetings were conducted. Cluster management committee members, community fishers, township-level FDA members, ARFN representatives from Pyapon and village administrators participated in the meeting. The meeting was aimed to to explain the implementing of management plan to all community fishers and members, to draw up the community base co-management plan, and to foster a close relationship and collaboration between members of the cluster committee and those from FDA and ARFN.

In addition, the SSF Guidelines implementation project facilitated FDAs and ARFNs to undertake a participatory review of their existing co-management by organising training which had strong participation from the fisheries representatives of targeted co-management zones. The training was organised at KMSS Center, Pathein township from 16 to 18 June 2019 for three days, including one day for a field visit, with 32 participants (27 male, five female) largely from the FDAs and cluster leaders of the co-management zone.

With the purpose of enhancing the practices of fishing communities with regard to fishery resource conservation, they were encouraged to conserve fishery related resources such as mangroves and fish species, and to follow fishing laws. As the community understood the impact of the ecology system on fishing business, they developed the proposal for conservation of mangroves at their fishing ground and then submitted a proposal to the NAG for a small grant in second week of December 2019. Then, the NAG team conducted a field visit to the proposed area and organised a meeting with members of the FDA to discuss their implementation plan. In the last week of December 2019, the NAG team supported a grant to Dedaye township’s FDA to implement the Mangrove Conservation project in the target village, Nyi Naung.

### Activity 3.1 – Study on working conditions of fishers and fishworkers in Kyar Phong

A study of Kyar Phong Fishery was conducted at the end of the Kyar Phong season during 7-10 May 2019 in Pyapon township of Ayeyarwaddy region and 14-15 May 2019 in Yay township of Mon state. A Research Officer and Research Coordinator led the study, and interns from NAG Research Team and Research Assistants collected data and information. The study aimed to 1) understand the Kyar Phong fishery in Pyapon and Yay townships; 2) propose how the environmental, social and economic dimensions of this fishery could be enhanced to optimise benefits, including the well-being of migrant fishers and fish workers; and 3) suggest a co-management framework in relation to fisheries, informal work and safety at sea, in a coordinated and coherent manner, drawing upon international instruments such as the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, FAO’s Voluntary Tenure and Small-scale fisher Guidelines, and ILO instruments in relation to decent work.

### Activity 4.1 – Media engagement and awareness activities related to working conditions of fishworkers

A session of media training was conducted by an external consultant, U Ye Yint Tun, a journalist from *Than Daw Sint Journal*, with U Ko Ko Naing, Communication Associate of NAG Headquarters, for three days from 10 to 13 June 2019 at Myanmar Koe Hotel, Pathein township. The total number of participants was 19 (17 male, two female) from ARFN and FDA. The participants learned that the role of media is mainly to inform the public, entertain the public, convey information from the government to the public and vice versa, seek the truth and report it accurately, and be the voice of the voiceless.

Moreover, the NAG team organised the Research Results Sharing workshop on 23 December 2019 at Myanmar Koe Hotel, Pathein township. Fisher leaders from the targeted project area, FDAs and ARFN members were invited and there were 29 participants (25 male 25 and four female).

### Activity 5.1 – Strengthen the capacity of the FDA and ARFN for handling the issues related to DRR and Climate Change

DRR and Climate Change Training focusing on Safety and Security at Sea was provided to fisher leaders of the targeted area. The training was organised by the Programme Manager of NAG Headquarters from 29 to 30 April 2019 with the purpose of: 1) enhancing their knowledge on Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction; 2) building technical capacity and skills; 3) catalysing the implementation of Village Plans of Action for Disaster Risk Reduction and Management at the community level; 4) understanding the concepts of Security and Safety in Fishing at Sea.

Advocacy Training was provided to fishery leaders of targeted project area and FDA members by an external consultant at the FDA office of Pyapon township from 16 to 18 December 2019. Participants are encouraged to identify key issues facing fishery sectors, including Kyar Phong fisherworker conditions, poor law enforcement, and IUU fishing. There were a total of 25 participants (16 male 16 and nine female).

# Summary of the Results

### Results of Activity 1.1

At the workshop, critical issues and constraints facing the implementation of the existing co-management plan were discussed by the participants, who also dwelt on the root causes of issues in brainstorming sessions. In addition, the participants were encouraged to review their existing co-management plans for each fishing zone, and the areas which needed to be developed, revised and modified were mapped out. On the second day of the workshop, a revised co-management plan was developed by taking account of the issues and actions discussed on the previous day, which included the roles of the project and the FDAs to implement a more effective fishery co-management strategy.

In December 2019, the FDA’s Co-management Plan was reviewed again through the EAFM training, and provided to fisher leaders and FDA members. By reviewing the on-going co-management plan, fisher leaders would be able to prepare for a better management system for the upcoming Inn and Tender Season.

### Results of Activity 2.1

The Capacity Needs Assessment showed that the following areas need to be supported:

* fishery ecology and mangrove habitats
* co-management and resource governance
* value chain and post-harvest
* SME and business planning
* Small-scale aquaculture
* patrolling and bio-monitoring
* leadership and organisational management
* documenting and reporting
* advocacy training
* financial management

### Results of Activity 2.2

The co-management and EAFM training programmes were instrumental in making fisher communities better aware of the key themes of resource management, in understanding the respective roles and responsibilities of the fishing communities and the government agencies in managing the fishery resources, and in developing the crucial step-by-step actions needed to implement the fishery co-management plan at different levels. As their interest in resource conservation improved, fishing communities of the targeted area prepared a proposal of mangrove conservation and submitted it to the project team in December 2019.

### Results of Activity 2.3

By organising the Co-management Cluster Meeting, committee leaders presented the challenges and difficulties in implementing the co-management system. The cluster co-management plans and monthly work plans developed from the meetings were submitted to the Department of Fisheries. Moreover, the existing duties and responsiblities of committee members were reviewed and updated for futher implementation.

At the end of a participatory review of their existing co-management, the Training of Trainers(ToT) received participants developed a trip plan and agenda for a mobile awareness raising programme to their respective areas in collaboration with Capacity Building Coordinators. At the meeting, TOTs shared their gained knowledge of resources management, including the root cause of resource decline, impact on their socio-economic condition, and the importance of fishery co-management, to the fishing communities and reviewed their existing management plan.

### Results of Activity 4.1

The media training improved the understanding of fisher leaders about the concept and definition of news such as (1) Unusual (2) Timeliness (3) Impact (4) Prominence (5) Proximity or local angle (6) Conflict (7) Useful information. The training was supportive of fisher communities by collecting the real story of fishing sector, covering socio-economic conditionsand environmental issues, and creating reliable articles for the local newspaper.

By the sharing of the Research Results, the fishing communities improved their understanding of the working conditions of Kyar Phaung fishermen and the impact of the new fishery policies in the Ayeyarwaddy region. It increased their interest to work in resource management encouraged them to follow fishery laws.

### Results of Activity 5.1

# By the Advocacy Training, the proper strategies to address each issue at different levels were supported through different types of sharing approaches such as brainstorming and PowerPoint presentations. The participants improved their understanding of the way of advocacy to access their rights and about better law enforcement systems.

# Changes in Implementation

Previously, the NAG had proposed project implementation in the villages related to the Mya Sein Kan Tender Areas, but this tender was reached to businessmen through the government auction system in 2018. So, another three tender areas accessed by fishery communities were selected for project implementation.

# Moving Forward

The project targeted communities now fully understand the ways of working in resource conservation as well as the impact of conservation. NAG will encourage the fishing communities to get success stories of fishery resource management and these will be featured in NAG’s regular newsletters. Moreover, NAG will get their team in advocating to appear the decent working condition for KyarPhaung Fishery Sector.