



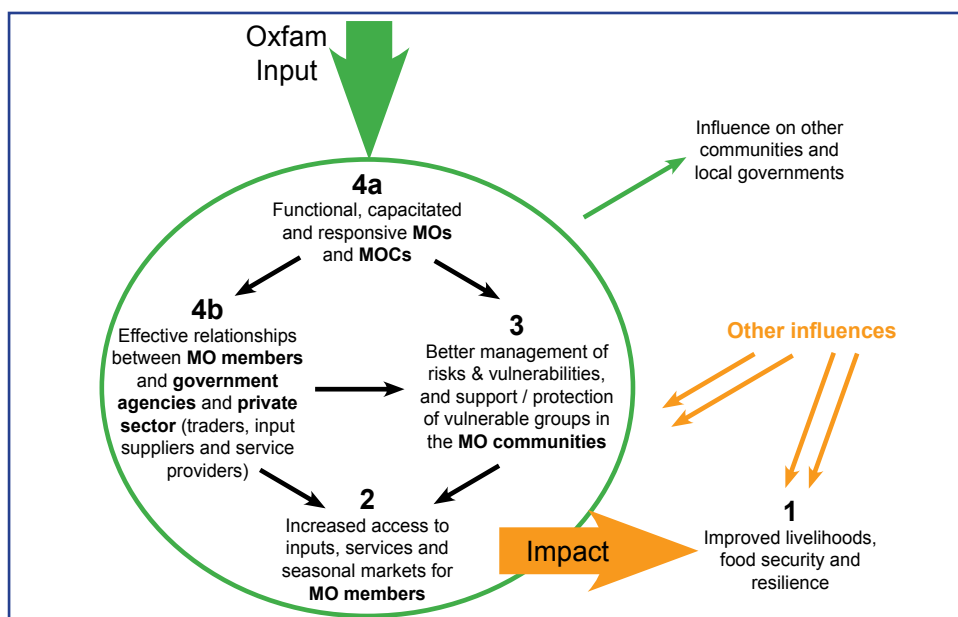
Myanmar

Governance

2015/16

## Building equitable and resilient livelihoods in the Dry Zone

The 'Building equitable and resilient livelihoods in the Dry Zone' project (DZ project) aimed to build strong and viable Membership Organisations (MOs) capable of organising community members, lobbying township departments and parliament, establishing business relationships with traders and suppliers, and developing civil society networks with local NGOs and MOs of other villages, in order to create sustainable livelihood opportunities and build resilience against climate-related hazards. The project was initially designed to directly provide 'Livelihoods Enhancement Support' to smallholders and enhance their production and market access. However, its Theory of Change built on the premise that sustainable livelihoods improvements and community resilience in the Dry Zone in Myanmar can best be realised through developing local inclusive governance and citizenship in the form of community-based MOs.



This Theory of Change diagram maps the assumed causal pathways / interactions between MOs and external actors, and shows that efforts to build the capacity, knowledge, skills and confidence of MOs could lead to improvements in livelihoods and resilience outcomes.

Project date: May 2011–July 2014

Evaluation: March 2016

Publication: January 2017

# Evaluation Design

The evaluation sought to assess the extent to which the MOs were functioning effectively 18 months after project exit and learn about what influenced MO sustainability. Oxfam was keen to uphold the principle of voice and participation through the use of a participatory evaluation approach, and drew on PIALA or Participatory Impact Assessment and Learning Approach. PIALA combines five elements making it possible to assess systemic impact at larger scale and where classic counterfactuals don't work well:

1. Systemic Theory of Change – To visualise causal claims and engage stakeholders in framing the evaluation and debating the evidence
2. Multi-stage sampling of/in 'open systems' – To enable systemic inquiry across medium to large populations
3. Semi-standard set of participatory mixed methods – To collect and link the data in the sampled 'systems' in a systematic and comparable way
4. Participatory sense-making model – To engage stakeholders at local and aggregated levels in debating emerging evidence
5. Configurational analysis method – To assess systemic change patterns and draw conclusions about distribution and magnitude of impact

For more information see [https://www.ifad.org/en\\_GB/topic/overview/tags/piala](https://www.ifad.org/en_GB/topic/overview/tags/piala)

## Results

		Minbu average contribution score	Thazi average contribution score	Total average contribution (TAC) and total average MO (TAMO) scores
4a. Sustained functional MOs/ MOCs	Contribution score	3.33	3.28	3.31
	Evidence score	3.46	3.50	3.48
	MO score	3.33	3.17	3.25
4b. Sustained & strengthened relationships	Contribution score	2.63	2.39	2.51
	Evidence score	3.92	4.22	4.07
3. Improved vulnerability & risk management	Contribution score	2.54	2.50	2.52
	Evidence score	3.75	4.00	3.88
2. Increased / sustained and sufficient access	Contribution score	3.08	2.78	2.93
	Evidence score	4.00	3.78	3.89
1. Improved / sustained livelihoods & resilience	Contribution score	3.04	2.83	2.94
	Evidence score	3.88	4.17	4.02

Evidence confirms the proposition that MOs can function as an important local governance mechanism for improving livelihoods and building resilience, but by themselves are insufficient to guarantee sustainable improvements. Evidence from the 38% of struggling MOs provides a counterfactual showing that in the absence of such a governance mechanism, improvements are unlikely to occur. Similarly, a strong correlation appeared between MO/MOC performance and livelihoods and resilience status, confirming the hypothesis that capable and well-functioning MOs can make a difference in livelihood conditions. Please see full report for a more detailed interpretation of the results.

## Going forward

The Dry Zone project has been closed for over 24 months, but the lessons learned about the value of building local governance will be incorporated into project development by Oxfam Myanmar. Oxfam will also work with the project's implementing partner, NAG, who are still active in the Dry Zone, to use the review findings for their ongoing implementation, and to enable them use the evaluation as part of their advocacy efforts to the government on the most recent updates to the agricultural policy.

Photo: Hein Latt Aung/Oxfam