

**Sowing a Healthy Future: Supporting Women to Strengthen
Community Health and Livelihoods in Myanmar**

END OF PROJECT EVALUATION

January 2006 – December 2009

PROJECT TITLE:	Sowing a Healthy Future: Supporting Women to Strengthen Community Health and Livelihoods in Myanmar
COUNTRY:	Myanmar
SHF BUDGET:	US\$1,777,879 2006-2009
OBJECTIVES :	<p>Development Goal: Improved social and economic situation of marginalised women and girls.</p> <p>Program Goal: Marginalised women and men from ex-opium farming households have increased capacity to improve their livelihood status and manage family health problems.</p> <p>Specific Objectives: One: Women and men in target villages have increased food production and household income Two: Women and men in targeted villages have increased capacity to implement development activities Three: Women in target villages have improved capacity to manage key health issues Four: Project lessons, results and impact are effectively captured and inform future programming</p>
PRINCIPAL LOCAL PARTNER(S)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Kokang and Wa Authorities. 2. Village Development Committees and Village Based Organisations in 25 communities (15 in Kokang and 10 in Wa)
TARGET GROUPS :	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Women 2. Vulnerable households (women-headed and landless) 3. Ex poppy farmers.
RESULTS :	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1: Women and men are using improved agricultural production practices 2: Women and men are adopting locally appropriate options to increase household income 3: Access to food is increased 4: Women, men and children are accessing improved community assets 5: Women and VBOs are demonstrating capacity to lead activities at village level 6: Local authorities are cooperating with project teams and communities 7: Women in target villages have increased confidence to adopt improved health practices 8: Referral linkages between communities and providers are strengthened 9: Project lessons, results and impacts are effectively captured and inform future programming
TOTAL PROJECT PERIOD :	January 1 st 2006 – December 31 st 2009

Acronyms

AEDP	Agro Enterprise Development Process
AHRN	Asian Harm Reduction Network
AMDA	Association of Medical Doctors of Asia
ARI	Acute Respiratory Infection
EoP	End of Project
FFE	Food For Education
FFT	Food For Training
FFW	Food For Work
GoUM	Government of Union of Myanmar
HE	Health Education
HH	Household
INGO	International Non Government Organisation
LIG	Livestock Income Group
SHF	Sowing A Healthy Future project
TOT	Training of Trainers
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
VBO	Village Based Organisation
VDC	Village Development Committee
WFP	World Food Programme
WMC	Water Management Committee

Contents

1.	Executive Summary.....	1
2.	Introduction and Project Background.....	3
3.	Methodology.....	4
4.	Key findings, Outcomes and Analysis.....	5
I.	Status of the project.....	5
II.	Participation in the project activities.....	15
III.	Effectiveness of the project activities.....	16
IV.	Relevance of the project activities.....	23
V.	Strengths and Weaknesses.....	23
VI.	Efficiency.....	24
5.	Unexpected Outcomes (positive and negative).....	25
6.	Lessons learned and good practices.....	26
7.	Analysis of relevant cross cutting themes.....	29
8.	Sustainability Strategies.....	31
9.	Conclusions and Recommendations.....	31
10.	Annexes.....	33
1.	Evaluation Terms of Reference.....	33
2.	Evaluation Tools & Guidelines.....	33
3.	Evaluation Respondents.....	33
4.	References.....	33
5.	Logical Framework.....	33
6.	Map of project area.....	33

1. Executive Summary

The purpose of this End of Project evaluation is to assess the overall impact of the project 'Sowing a Healthy Future: Supporting Women to Strengthen Community Health and Livelihoods in Myanmar', and document lessons learned and best practice for future programming. This was a four year project implemented in Kokang and Wa special regions in Shan State, from January 2006 to December 2009. In the final year the project has been implemented in 25 villages, and the evaluation was carried out in eight of these villages. Due to travel restrictions and the current sensitivity of the Wa authorities, it was not possible to conduct the evaluation in the Wa region, however CARE Myanmar assesses that the findings in this report broadly reflect the situation in both project areas.

The stated development goal of the project is to improve the social and economic situation of marginalised women and girls. Four objectives were identified to achieve this – improved livelihood security, capacity to implement development activities, capacity of women to manage key health activities, and to identify lessons learned for future programming. Significant impacts have been made across all objectives but communities are still in need of support over a longer timeframe

Livelihood security

The focus of livelihood security was to increase food production and household income.

Food security has been addressed by the project through increasing food availability, access to food and the ability to produce food. The communities report a reduction in the number of food short months per year, and an increase in the number of months with sufficient or surplus food. However, communities still face food short months for half of the year. The main coping strategy in food short months is to borrow money, and there has been a 64% reduction in the number of people who had to borrow money this year compared to previous years. The level of borrowing has also decreased.

Access to food has been improved through the availability of rice under the various food programs in partnership with WFP. People's ability to produce food has also improved, with 78% of those sampled reporting an increase in their agricultural production as a result of new agricultural activities adopted under the project. The evaluation did reveal that approximately one fifth of the rice consumed is from the WFP food programs; communities will need to be able to replace this food source by their own means for longer term food security.

The adoption of improved agricultural methods is evident by the target communities, and also through replication by non-beneficiaries. A variety of low environmental impact, low input methods have been promoted, allowing beneficiaries to easily adopt simple techniques. The most commonly adopted methods are diversified cropping with improved seed varieties and composting. The issuance of land certificates for tea cultivation has been a successful feature of the project, allowing the most vulnerable households access to productive land into the future.

Income security has been addressed through promoting a range of income generating activities. 90% of those sampled saw an increase in household income as a result of adopting new income generating activities. Livestock, tea and home gardening/cash crops were the most popular activities, and some women also undertook non agricultural income generating activities such as trade and sewing. The most significant increases in income were seen in home gardening and walnuts, and also salaries earned outside the village¹, implying that out migration is a necessity for some families. Income from daily wages² has decreased, indicating that there is less reliance on this as an income source. The review also revealed that there has been an increase in the proportion of food that is self produced and a reduction in the food that is bought, indicating that the beneficiaries are more food self-reliant and do not need to spend as much of their household income on food.

¹ Salaries were typically from work in the casinos in the regional centre

² Daily wages are typically from agricultural labour

The livestock activities are a popular element of the project, with 86% of the respondents indicating they have adopted pig raising as an income generating activity. The livestock groups that have been established are functioning well and are a good model for the delivery of this activity. However there are challenges in raising healthy pigs, and beneficiaries report that the income generated through the sale of the pigs is not much greater than the cost of buying and raising the pigs. The activity has a useful saving outcome for the households, but is not generating the level of income returns that is possible. Future projects need to address key issues with regard to feeding, animal health and improved dissemination of training and extension services to further strengthen the income generating potential of this activity.

It is apparent that the adoption of multiple agricultural and income generating activities is required to generate significant improvements in livelihood security. Despite the positive impacts from the project, households still face food short months and need to borrow money to buy food. There is a continued need for such support in these communities.

Capacity to implement development activities

The project has worked well with Village Development Committees (VDCs) and Village Based Organisations (VBOs) in the implementation of the project activities. Training and a key role in the management of project activities has increased the experience and capacity of VDCs to engage in future development activities. Community assets have been created, supported by the WFP FFW programs, including access tracks, school buildings, a rural health clinic and water supply systems. Improved access to goods and services has important impacts on the ease with which people can travel outside the village year round, for example to market days or to collect firewood. The installation of water systems has had significant time saving benefits for communities, reducing water collection times from up to one hour down to a few minutes. Some villages have demonstrated innovative approaches to establishing funds for water supply system maintenance and repairs. These community-led approaches should be considered by the future projects and included as examples to other communities.

Linkages to other village groups, communities and organisations is apparent, but linkages to local support services such as veterinary support should also be facilitated, to improve the community capability to address future challenges. It is recommended that all the training programmes for the various village based groups be reviewed and updated with appropriate visual aids to address the illiteracy levels in the communities. Demonstration and cross visits are important elements of motivating people to adopt improved practices, and should be strengthened.

Capacity of women to manage key health issues

The health impacts of the project have been significant at the household and community level. 72% of respondents stated that they had attended a health education session in their village, and of these two thirds reported follow up discussions with others. Importantly, men and children reported that women shared health knowledge with them, and all recognised improvements in hygiene and health. Respondents demonstrated improved health practices, with personal hygiene being the most significant change. Reproductive health outcomes were strong, with women reporting that they discuss family planning with their husbands, and appear to have some level of control in the use of family planning methods adopted. Referral systems were established with other health providers in the region, and disease tracking and training in basic treatment was also included in the health activities. Communities have little access to health facilities, and self treatment and using traditional Chinese medicine are common; this underlines the importance that improved health practices can have at the household level, to reduce common illnesses and the need to access health services.

Importantly, organising the health activities has meant that women have had more contact with VDCs and village leaders, for example to organise meetings. Their leadership role in health and the subsequent positive impacts have led people to recognise and value the women's contribution. This has been positive for people's attitude towards women and their social status in the household and community.

From the respondent feedback, it is evident that some health messages that were not clearly delivered. Household members spend time away from the household for agricultural

activities, and it is not clear that the improved health practices are continued away from the household. The delivery of health messages could be reviewed to ensure they are using appropriate tools and content; given the high level of participation in health activities this would have significant impacts on its effectiveness.

Identify lessons learned to inform future programming

Regular project reviews and this EoP evaluation have enabled key lessons to be identified, and recommendations made for future programming.

It is clear that communities rely on a diverse range of agricultural and income generating activities to support their livelihood. The project has promoted multiple activities with low environmental impact and low input needs, ensuring they are accessible to the most vulnerable households. The project focused its activities on crops and products with short to medium returns that are common in the communities, and now there is the opportunity to pilot activities in crops that have medium to long term returns, to further increase the options available to the communities. An important factor facilitating the uptake of income generating activities was the time saving impacts of other project interventions. This underlines the relevance of an integrated livelihood approach, where project components support each other.

Some lessons have been learned with regard to the effectiveness of project activities. Livestock groups are an effective model for pig raising activities, however fodder development and the adoption of improved livestock raising practices are crucial to ensure animal health and thus maximise returns from pigs as an income generating activity. The facilitation of land certificates for vulnerable households has been an important factor in allowing beneficiaries to invest in tea as a cash crop, and has been included in other projects due to its success. CARE undertook significant advocacy and negotiation with the local authorities to achieve this, and is a good example of the importance of establishing good working relationships with the relevant authorities.

The use of community extension workers across all sectors has been effective and cost efficient. Similarly, working through VDCs and the advocacy groundwork that was undertaken with local authorities at the start has enabled the project to move from relief to a development approach with the support of these key local partners. A review of training materials and information dissemination models would be recommended, to ensure that maximum effectiveness is achieved in the promotion of key messages and mobilisation to adopt improved practices.

The implementation of activities to specifically ensure participation by women has been successful, and women demonstrated important contributions in agricultural production, income generation and health. The key role that women played in health activities in particular has facilitated moves towards women's empowerment, with some positive change in people's attitudes and behaviour towards women reported. This approach, to design activities with women's participation in mind, and an integrated health component, would be recommended for future livelihood programming, in order to address women's empowerment as an underlying goal in all projects.

2. Introduction and Project Background

Kokang and Wa special regions are located in the north-eastern part of Myanmar, a geographically isolated mountainous area bordering China. These populations total approximately 305,000 people. Subsistence hill farming is the main source of income, and communities are widely dispersed with difficult access, they have a largely rural base and are impoverished. Poppy cultivation has been a significant income generating activity for the region; in 1998 Myanmar generated 63% of the world's opium poppy cultivation, with the majority of Myanmar poppy production taking place in the Shan State³. In 2003 the Kokang authorities declared Kokang an opium free special region, and in 2005 the Wa region

³ Opium Poppy Cultivation in the Golden Triangle, UNODC Oct 2006

declared a ban on opium cultivation⁴. While beneficial to global efforts against drug use, it had a devastating effect on the local farmers. Their primary income source was suddenly lost, they were unable to buy inputs needed for food production, and the land had become degraded due to the poppy cultivation. Food shortages were widespread and in 2003 CARE began emergency food relief activities with other partner agencies.

The Sowing A Healthy Future Project integrates activities to increase food production and family income, along with those to improve the capacity of women to manage women's health risks and common illnesses. The project also aimed to increase the communities' capacity to implement development activities through community asset creation supported by the provision of immediate food assistance through FFW, and active participation and management of project activities.

The design of the project is based on the recommendations from the Agro Enterprise Development Process assessment and Tea Sub Sector Market Assessment Report which were conducted by CARE 2006-2008. These assessments identified with the communities potential income generating crops, and a five year strategy was developed to improve livelihoods. Health activities are an integral component of the project, to address the lack of health services in the area and facilitate the involvement and empowerment of women.

During the Project phase (2006 – 2009), the Project team transitioned from emergency through rehabilitation to long term development activities. To reflect this programmatic shift, the project goal was modified along with the logical framework and key objectives.

This End of Project evaluation assesses the impact of the project, its achievement of the project objectives, and documents lessons learned and best practice for future programming. The Terms of Reference for the EoP evaluation can be found in Annex 1.

3. Methodology

The consultant reviewed relevant project documents and met with key project staff to gain an overview of the Sowing a Healthy Future Project. The draft evaluation methodology was prepared by the consultant and the evaluation tools were finalised in conjunction with the CARE Myanmar program team in Yangon. Guidelines and training on the use of the tools was provided by the consultant, in addition to village selection criteria and a proposed schedule.

Due to travel permission restrictions, the consultant was not able to travel to the project site during the evaluation process. A national evaluation team was organised by CARE Myanmar, consisting of facilitators, note takers and technical advisors. This team carried out the evaluation activities according to the guidelines provided by the consultant, and the consultant prepared this evaluation report using the information gathered during the evaluation exercise. The donors agreed to this evaluation process, given the current travel restrictions. Where possible, CARE Myanmar engaged individuals external to the organisation. It was not possible to find the suitable expertise locally in all cases however, and the technical advisors and three of the facilitators were CARE Myanmar staff. It was also not possible to undertake the evaluation in the Wa region, due to the sensitivity of the local authorities towards travel in the region and the collection of information from households and communities. This was communicated to the donor, and CARE Myanmar assesses that the findings in this report broadly reflect the situation in both project areas.

The tools used during the evaluation process included participatory mapping exercises, focus group discussions, key informant interviews, a household questionnaire, and observation. This variety of tools allowed for triangulation of the results, where more than one source of information is used to cross check the feedback given during the evaluation process. Respondents were asked to provide information about the current situation and to compare this to the situation before the project started, in order to understand what changes have been seen during the implementation of the project.

⁴ Ibid.

Villages were selected to include examples of key project activities, including agricultural activities, Village Development Committees, livestock groups, Women’s Health Groups, income generation groups, savings groups and water supply systems. Additional selection criteria were requested by the consultant, including communities which showed strong or weak participation in the project, a mix of ethnic backgrounds, and varying access to regional centres and infrastructure. The proposed schedule included time for trialling the various tools together as a team in the first community, followed by a de-brief to see if any modifications were needed. After this, the teams worked independently to undertake the evaluation activities. Translated notes from the various evaluation exercises were given to the consultant, to analyse and prepare this report.

The final evaluation schedule was prepared by the evaluation team with the CARE field office in Laukai, Kokang, taking into account the criteria requested by the consultant, logistical arrangements and practical considerations. Eight communities participated in the evaluation exercise, out of the 25 communities in the project area, generating 11 focus group discussions, 23 key informant interviews and 69 questionnaire responses. The consultant is very grateful for all the support provided by CARE staff, to the consultant and to the evaluation team, in the undertaking of this evaluation exercise.

Details of the evaluation tools, guidelines, selection criteria and methodology can be seen in Annex 2. Evaluation respondents can be seen in Annex 3.

4. Key findings, Outcomes and Analysis

I. Status of the project

The stated Development Goal of the project is the: Improved social and economic situation of marginalised women and girls.

The stated Program Goal (Purpose) is that: Marginalised women and men from ex-opium farming households have increased capacity to improve their livelihood status and manage family health problems.

Four key indicators were identified in the project Log Frame. The impact of project activities is measured against these indicators, as an assessment of how far the development goal has been achieved.

- At least 50% HH report consumption of staple foods all year round, by EoP
- At least 50% of HH have reduced their need to borrow from money lenders and/or relatives for food by at least 50%, by EoP
- 20% reduction in number of HH in which common illness (ARI, malaria, diarrhoea) has affected any HH member in the past 4 weeks, by EoP
- 25 VBOs have clear plans for future activities, beyond EoP

Through the End of Project evaluation, it can be assessed that improvements have been seen across all four indicators. It is not always possible to report on the specific information required in the indicator due to constraints in the time and resources available for the EoP evaluation and the lack of comparable baseline data, however a qualitative assessment can be made against each indicator and these are discussed below.

Consumption of staple foods all year round

Household level detail on the consumption of staple foods could not be collected in the EoP evaluation due to time and resource constraints, however food security participatory mapping exercises were conducted in seven project villages. The communities report a reduction in the number of food short months per year, and an increase in the number of months with sufficient or surplus food.

Level of availability	Months (average)		% Change
	Now	Before	
0-1 (Food Short)	6.4	7.4	-13%

2 (sufficient)	3.0	2.6	17%
3 (Surplus)	2.6	2.0	29%

Responses based on staple food of rice

The number of food short months in each community varied immensely, from just two food short months in one community to ten food short months in another. Despite the positive changes in the average number of months with sufficient or surplus food, there are still food short months for approximately half of the year.

The mapping exercise also ascertained where the communities get their food from, whether it is self produced, bought or collected. Feedback indicates that the majority of food is bought, but that there has been an increase in the amount of food that is self produced, and a decrease in the amount of food that is bought. The project has also seen increases in household incomes, so it can be concluded that the increase in self produced food and reduction in bought food is a result of increased ability to produce food, rather than a reduced ability to buy food due to lower household incomes. The most significant changes in increased self produced food and decreased bought food are seen across rice, maize, meat and vegetables. These are all foodstuffs that have been targeted through the various project activities. Additional food has also become available through the various FFW programs. It is estimated that this accounts for approximately 4% of all food consumed, and 22% of the rice consumed in the communities. This is a significant food source that is only available in the short term while WFP is operational in the area.

Communities still face food short months despite an increase in the number of months with sufficient or surplus food, and an increase in their ability to produce their own food. This would suggest that there is still a need for continued livelihood interventions in these communities.

Need to borrow money for food

The main coping strategy in food short months is to borrow money, and there has been a 64% reduction in the number of people who had to borrow money this year compared to previous years. This has exceeded the logframe indicator of a 50% reduction in HH who have to borrow money. The level of borrowing has also reduced. Of those who had to borrow money:

- 65% had to borrow less than in previous years
- 18% had to borrow more than in previous years
- 18% had to borrow the same as in previous years

There have been significant improvements in the number of people who had to borrow money this year compared to previous years, and in the level of borrowing. Despite this, 25% of the respondents still have to borrow money to buy food at certain times of the year.

Reduction in common illnesses

33 people reported a member of their household had been affected by an Acute Respiratory Infection (ARI), malaria or diarrhoea in the last four weeks. This represents 5% of the households in the sampled communities.

HH affected by common illnesses in last 4 weeks (ARI, malaria, diarrhoea)	
ARI*	15
malaria	1
diarrhoea	17
TOTAL	33
<i>*in children</i>	

Although there is no baseline data in order to assess whether this represents a reduction compared to before the project health activities, positive health impacts were cited as being the biggest changes seen in the community in eight of the focus groups (by the VDCs, WHGs

and men's groups). It is also clear from the questionnaire that the majority of respondents are aware of the main causes and treatment of the above common illnesses, through the project's health education activities.

The health component of the project has had multiple benefits. There has been strong participation in health activities, referral linkages to health service providers have been facilitated, health impacts are noticeable and reported by the community, and health activities have also been a key factor in promoting women's empowerment at the household and community level (this is discussed in more detail in Section 7. Analysis of relevant cross cutting themes).

VBOs have clear plans for future activities

As reported in the SHF Final Report, all 25 villages have village action plans following village-level action planning workshops. This is corroborated by the EoP evaluation, where all nine village based organisations that were consulted reported that they have an action plan and that their group is currently involved in implementing activities ranging from health activities, group lending, trade and agricultural activities.

Specific Objectives

In addition to the performance indicators described above, four specific objectives were identified in order to achieve the overall program goal. A summary of how far these objectives have been achieved is given below. Details of achievement against specific indicators can be seen in Annex 5 SHF Logframe.

- One:** Women and men in target villages have increased food production and household income
- Two:** Women and men in targeted villages have increased capacity to implement development activities
- Three:** Women in target villages have improved capacity to manage key health issues
- Four:** Project lessons, results and impact are effectively captured and inform future programming

It should be noted that these objectives have been modified during the project period. Objective 2 initially related specifically to increased access to capital through saving. However, difficulties were encountered in establishing women led savings groups, so this objective was broadened to the more development focused objective stated above. Objective 4 initially related to creating an enabling environment for community development. This was encompassed in the change to Objective 2, so the final objective was amended to a broader objective to capture lessons learned for future programming.

This modification of the objectives reflects a strength in the project, that it moved towards a longer term development goal of building the capacity of the community to manage their own initiatives by the end of the project. This will help ensure the long term impacts of the project. The project also aims to capture lessons learned from the last four years, to inform future programming.

Objective One: Women and men in target villages have increased food production and household income

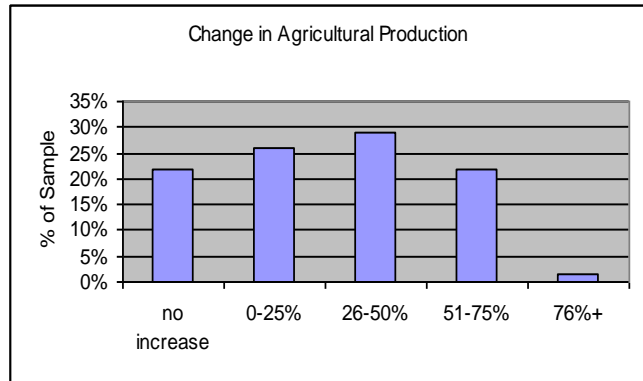
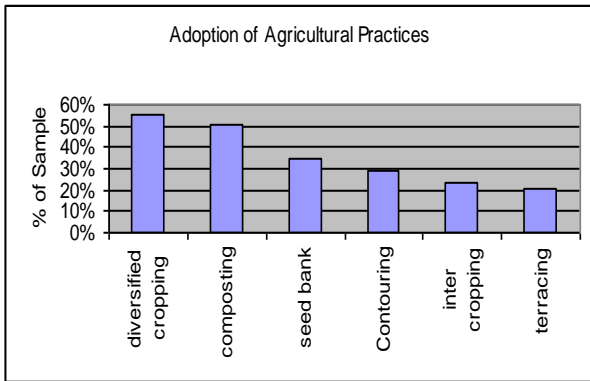
Indicators for measuring achievement towards Objective 1 can be summarised as:

- Food production
- Household incomes
- Access to food

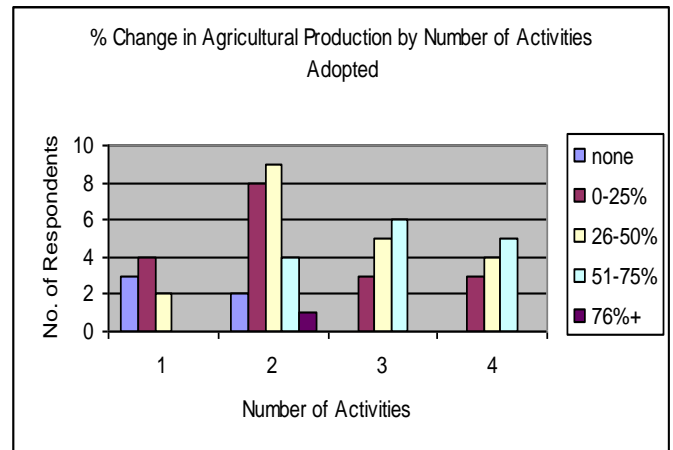
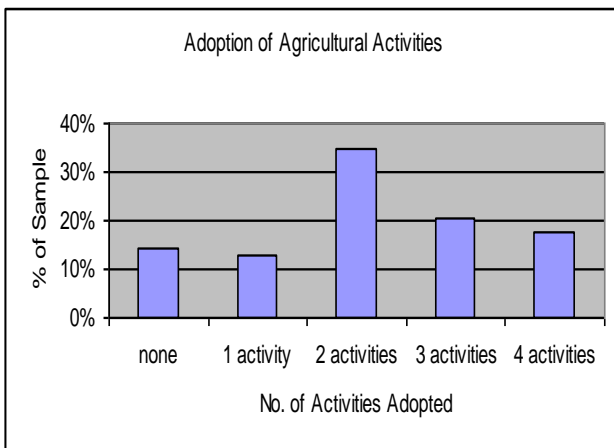
Food Production

According to the sampled respondents, 86% of households adopted new agricultural methods and 78% saw an increase in their agricultural production. The most popular activities were diversified cropping with improved seed varieties and composting, both of which were adopted by other half of the respondents. Despite these high levels of uptake, 21% of the sampled respondents did not experience any increase in their agricultural production, either

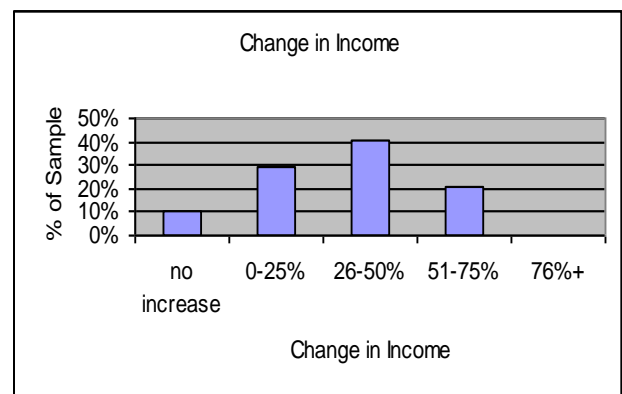
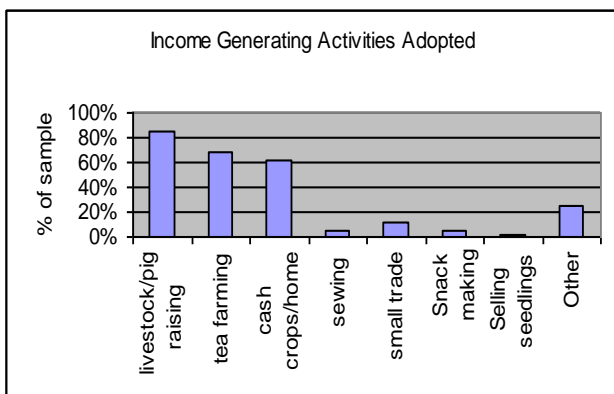
because they did not adopt any new practices, or did not see any improvements as a result of the practices they did adopt.



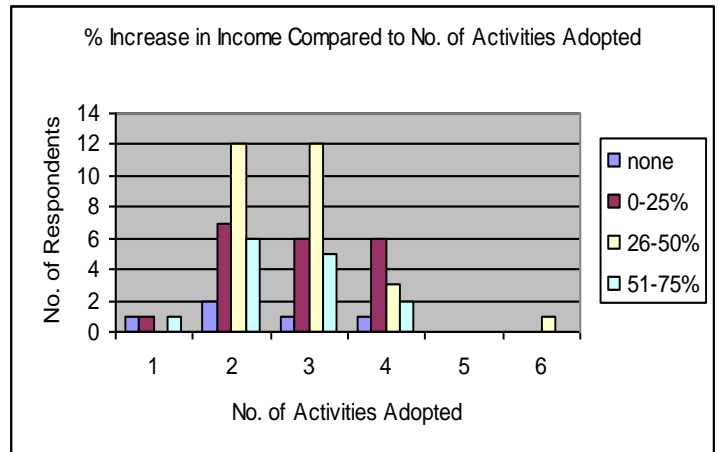
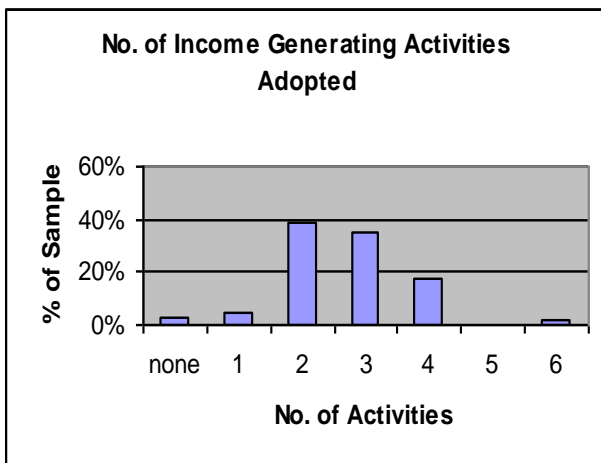
It can also be seen that those who adopted two or more activities were more likely to see an increase in production of over 26%, and those who adopted three or four activities were more likely to see increases in production of over 50%. The project has identified a number of locally appropriate agricultural techniques that can be easily adopted; this is an important element in encouraging people to adopt more techniques to increase their production and diversity of activities.



According to the sampled respondents, 97% of households adopted new income generating activities and 90% saw an increase in their household income. The most popular activities were livestock, tea farming and cash crops/home gardening.



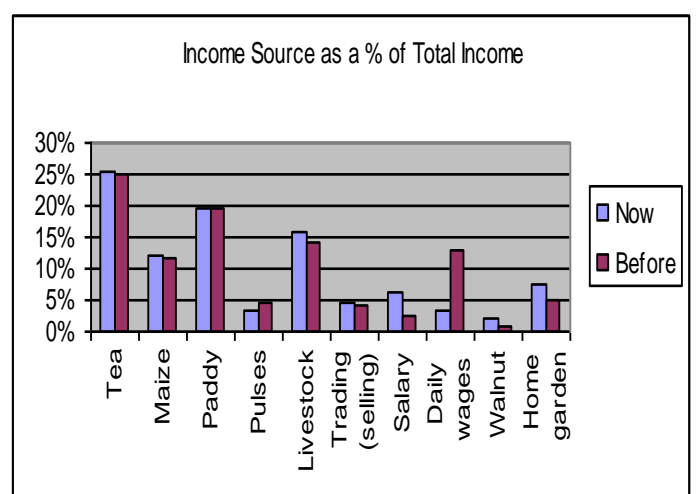
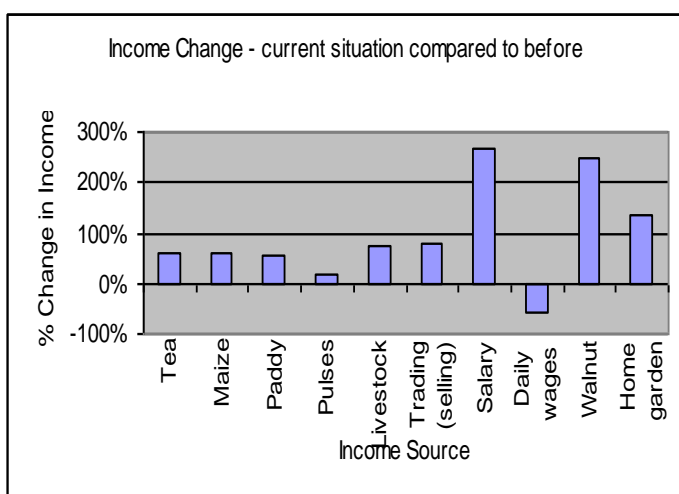
It can also be seen that those who adopted two or more activities were more likely to see an increase in production of over 26%.



In addition to the responses in the household questionnaire, income security mapping exercises were also conducted with focus groups. It can be seen that there are a large number of income generating activities adopted by the communities. Tea is the most important source of income, followed by paddy and livestock. Interestingly, daily wages⁵ have decreased and become less important as an income source. The reason given for this is that because household income has increased there is less need to look for wages outside the household.

Walnut and home gardening have both seen significant increases as income earners, with increases of 250% and 136% respectively. Two communities noted that walnut has been ready for harvest this year, and all the communities stated that home gardening has been well supported by CARE with tools, seeds, training, and that new techniques have increased their yields.

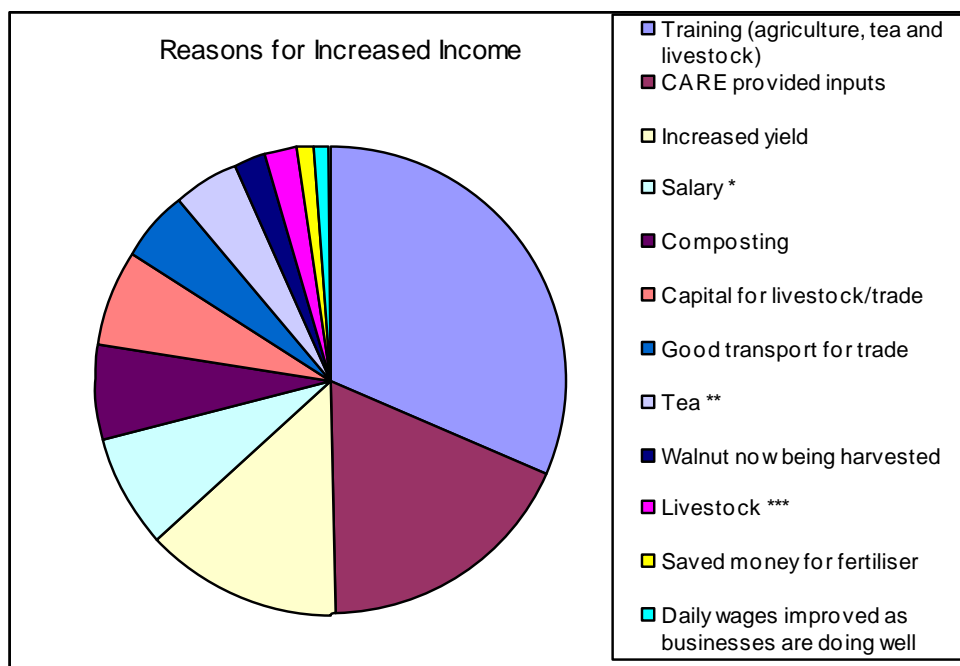
The biggest increase in overall income was seen in salaries⁶, and this source of income has also become more important within the overall income. The evaluation noted that many young people, in particular girls, leave the village to work in the casinos in the town. Some of these earnings are sent back to the families in the village, but there are negative social impacts of this trend on the community, as well as potentially putting the young people at risk in the urban environment.



⁵ Daily wages refer mainly to agricultural labour.

⁶ Salary indicates work outside the village, for example in casinos.

The main reasons stated for increases in income are represented below. The majority of responses are due to project related impacts.



* Salary - more opportunities now, better access to jobs, don't have to worry about HH expenditure, women more knowledgeable/less discriminated, can earn money

** Tea - increased prices, better processing, more land

*** Livestock - more maize feed available, decreased animal illness

It should be noted that the feedback from the group income security mapping exercises indicates an approximate overall income increase of 56%. This is higher than the figures given by the questionnaire respondents, where only 20% of respondents reported an increase of more than 50%. The group exercises were conducted with focus groups including farmers and income generating groups, and therefore could reflect the increased incomes seen from these particular activities, compared to the household questionnaire which was completed by randomly selected households. There could also be some disparity between the two responses, however it is clear that income levels have increased compared to the time just before the project.

Income levels may not yet be at the levels experienced by the landless and landpoor during the poppy cultivation time however. Project staff estimate an average yearly income from tea (the most important income source) intercropped with maize from 1 mu⁷ land = ¥900 (currently ¥6 = US\$1). This compares to income potential during the poppy cultivation time for labourers, i.e. those without access to land for cultivation, of approximately ¥1,200⁸. After poppy cultivation was eradicated, the daily wage labour options available to the labourers were drastically reduced to only a few days or weeks in the year in paddy and sugar cane field work, earning only ¥7 a day.⁹

While it is difficult to exactly compare income levels without any baseline data, it can be assessed that income earning opportunities for those with little access to land have been

⁷ Mu: 6 mu = 1 acre

⁸ Poppy labourers: in the past households worked in opium fields from three to four months per year at 10 yuan per day; 120 days x 10 yuan per day = 1,200yuan. From Household Livelihood Security Needs in Kokang Region, Northern Shan State, CARE 2003

⁹ Household Livelihood Security Needs in Kokang Region, Northern Shan State, CARE 2003

improved compared to the time immediately after poppy eradication. However, for the landless with less than 1mu of land, they are yet to reach income levels during the poppy cultivation time.

From the above analysis, it is clear that the project has accurately identified the need to promote multiple agricultural production and income generating activities. Adopting at least two activities will have more significant impacts. The project also promotes practices that are easily adoptable, and do not require inputs that are out of reach of the beneficiaries.

Access to food

It has been shown above that the beneficiary communities report an increase in the number of food sufficient and food surplus months, as well as increased capacity to produce food. In addition, the project targeted short term access to food through the availability of rice through various FFW programs in partnership with WFP. Approximately 770MT rice was distributed as part of the community asset creation activities. From the food source mapping exercise, it was estimated that this accounted for approximately 4% of the total food available to the communities, and approximately 22% of the rice available. This has significant implications for the longer term ability of communities to access sufficient rice when the WFP programs are no longer available.

Objective Two: Women and men in targeted villages have increased capacity to implement development activities

Indicators for measuring achievement towards Objective 2 can be summarised as:

- Access to improved community assets
- Women and VBO capacity to lead activities at the village level
- Local authorities cooperate with project teams and communities

Access to improved community assets

As reported in the final report, significant community assets were built under the project - 24 village water supply systems, 13 schools, 44 school latrines, the installation of two pipe culverts in one village road, renovation of 5km of road, and one rural health centre. The impacts of these assets are numerous, including access to food through FFW during construction and FFE for children attending school. Importantly, community asset creation was undertaken with the VDCs, to promote ownership of the assets and active participation in the community's development.

Responses from the focus groups highlight the benefits of these assets, for example improved roads have made firewood collection easier and allowed access to the local market by car. It was noted that more children can attend school now, girls as well as boys, and this has eased the childcare burden for women who can devote more time to other activities. Water collection time has been reportedly reduced from approximately one hour down to just a few minutes, as the water systems bring water to the village. Women reported being able to spend more time on income generating activities as well as home gardening and caring for children as a result. More family members can also collect water as it is much closer, for example older and younger family members, and people also reported reduced stress as they do not have worry about returning early from their fields to the household in order to collect water.

Capacity to lead activities at the village level

All 25 villages have village level action plans, indicating that a systematic approach to community issues has been taken by the villages with support from CARE. This is supported by the EoP evaluation, where all nine village based groups that were consulted reported that they have an action plan and that their group is currently involved in implementing activities ranging from health activities, group lending, trade and agricultural activities.

Feedback regarding how the plan was developed was not well articulated however, and only three groups stated that the plan was developed by the village and with CARE support. However, they were happy with the process and one VDC reported that the process helped unite the village. All groups indicated that the project has helped them become stronger for

the future, citing improved knowledge and resources, solving village problems and helping livelihood security.

Women have played a prominent role in VBOs in the project villages, with WHGs, income generation groups, savings groups and livestock groups being led by women. Health impacts have been seen by all the community, and women's attendance at health meetings and sharing knowledge with their household was reported by men, women and children. Men also noted that the women organised these activities within the village, and that some women were doing good business in the market and making more income than men. This feedback is important to illustrate that as well as having the ability to lead activities at the village level, there have been some improvements in the social status and attitudes towards women as a result of the project.

Local authorities cooperate with project teams and communities

The project faced delays in the first year due to the GoUM move of all government departments from Yangon to Nay Pyi Daw and new operating guidelines for INGOs. The Wa authorities in particular have been particularly sensitive to project activities in their area, and tension between the government and Kokang in 2009 caused delays to the project while all activities were suspended for nearly two months due to security risks. National project staff also required travel authorisation at the beginning of the project.

Despite these challenges, the project team undertook a number of project sensitisation activities with the relevant authorities, and the immediate impacts seen from the community asset creation activities helped to build trust. Monthly coordination meetings, handover ceremonies for community assets, planning meetings and project phase-out meetings were held throughout the project. Significant achievements were made possible due to the good relationship with the authorities, for example the issuing of land certificates, giving beneficiaries long term security over access to land for tea cultivation.

During the evaluation it was reported that some community members were still cautious about travelling within the region after the military tension last year. There are also currently travel restrictions in place for international staff to visit the region, and sensitivity around data collection within Wa. For these reasons the EoP evaluation team was not able to visit Wa at all, indicating that the operational context in the region is still a challenging one.

Objective Three: Women in target villages have improved capacity to manage key health issues

Indicators for measuring achievement towards Objective 3 can be summarised as:

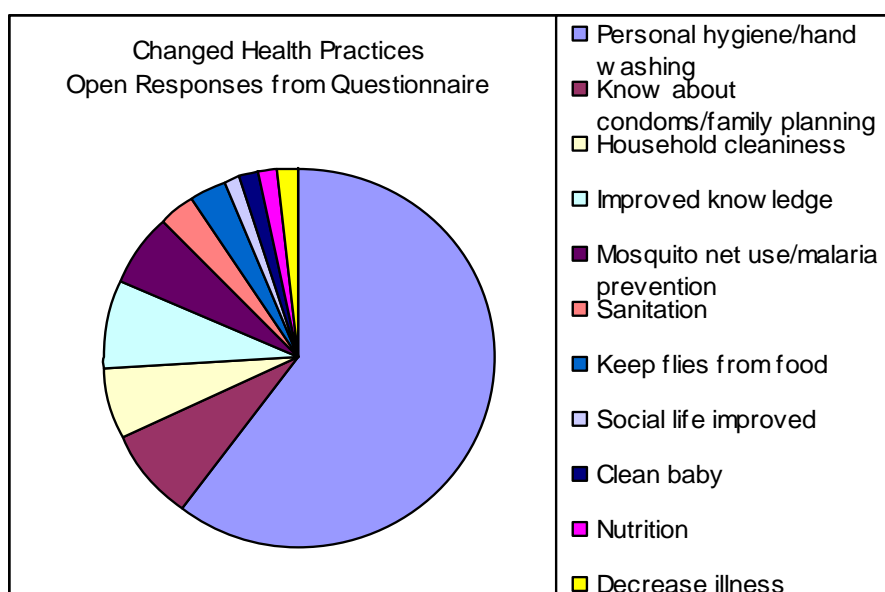
- Women have increased confidence to adopt improved health practices
- Referral linkages are strengthened

Women have increased confidence to adopt improved health practices

The training of community health educators and the organisation of health education sessions in the villages has been a strongly supported element of the project. WHGs were established to conduct regular disease record tracking, and provide basic treatments using project-initiated basic home drugs. Health educators provide regular HE sessions and support their communities to apply improved health practices to prevent common health issues. The WHGs who took part in the evaluation indicated that they are still conducting health activities in their villages.

Women's attendance at health meetings was reported by men, women and children. As important was the feedback that the women shared this knowledge with their family members. This is supported by the questionnaire responses with regard to handwashing; 81% reported that they always washed their hands after going to the toilet and 93% reported that they always washed their hands before a meal. This would support the assessment that women have been able to adopt improved health practices themselves as well as encouraging their family members to do the same.

72% of the sampled households reported that they had attended a HE session in their village, and of these nearly two thirds reported that they had discussed health issues with other people after attending the session. Respondents were also asked to give an example of how they have changed their health practices, and many examples were given, with personal hygiene and hand washing being the most common example given.

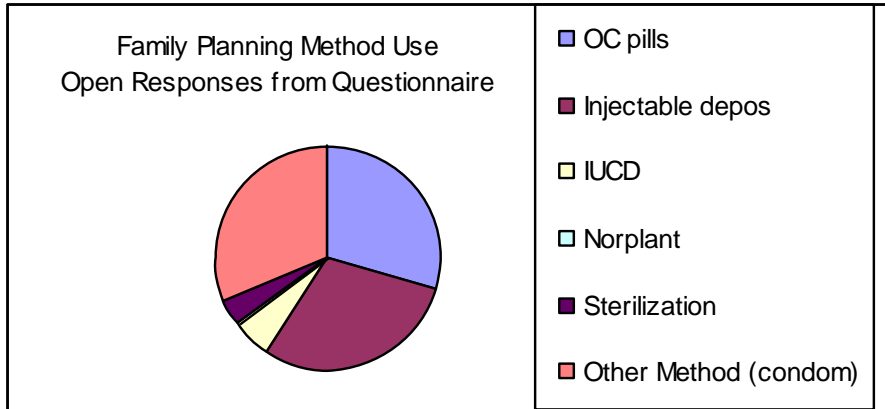


This demonstrates that women had the confidence to conduct HE sessions as well as adopt improved health practices in their household. This is corroborated by the feedback from the gender relationship mapping exercise and the FGDs, where improved health impacts were given as examples of beneficial changes seen in their communities.

Project promoted health practices include the installation of fly proof latrines and the distribution of mosquito nets. 42% of the respondents had a fly proof latrine installed in their house as a result of the project, and reported use of the latrine was very high, with 90% stating they use it all the time and 10% that they use it some of the time. 99% of households had received mosquito nets, with up to four being provided per household. 70% reported that they use the net all the time, and 29% that they use the net some of the time. An example was also given of taking the net when they go to their upland farm. However, only one third of respondents reported that they received enough nets for their household needs. The use of nets to prevent mosquito bites was the most commonly given method to prevent malaria, however given that not all households received enough nets, and that nearly one third of respondents report that they do not use the nets all the time, it is suggested that there is room to improve on this health message.

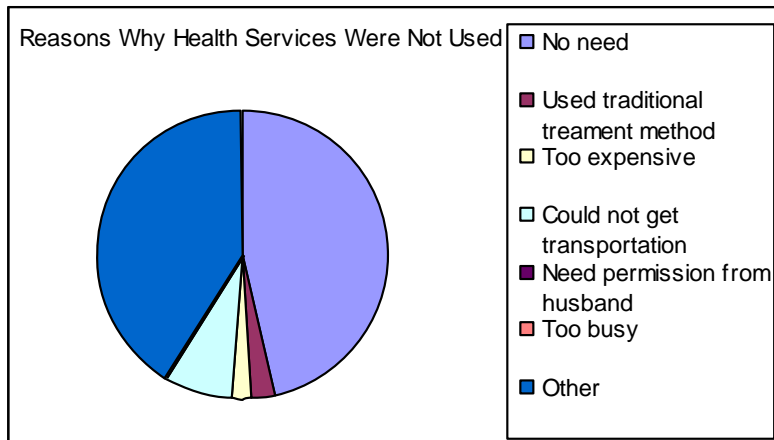
Mixed responses were given with regard to the cause and treatment of two common illnesses, diarrhoea and malaria. This is discussed in more detail in section III Effectiveness of project activities.

Over two thirds of respondents indicated that they knew of different family planning methods, the most commonly used were oral contraceptive pills, injectable contraceptives and condoms. Interestingly, women reported that they were able to negotiate with men about the use of condoms, and that they were the ones who went to the CARE office to get the condoms. This would appear to illustrate an element of control over reproductive health and family planning. However, it was also reported that since the project has finished they have not been able to easily access condoms, that they are only available in Laukai, the regional town. On the whole, the reproductive health benefits were found to be unexpectedly high, with focus groups stating that they wanted smaller family sizes, and did not need to keep trying for a baby boy. Women reported many benefits of smaller families, for example having more time for income generating activities, and being able to send older children to school if they are not needed to look after the younger children.



Referral linkages are strengthened

The questionnaire sought feedback on people’s knowledge and use of the available health services. At least half the respondents knew of the local clinic, although 19% did not know of any of the health services available, and only one quarter knew of the local health educator. This indicates that the coverage of the health activities could not reach all households. One fifth of respondents with children reported that they had used antenatal services while they were pregnant, with most going to the clinic in Tar Shwe Tan or the hospital in Laukai. Over half of the respondents reported that they had not used the health services available, mostly because they had no need to.



The project sought to improve referral linkages to other health providers, and, as reported in the final report patients suffering from malaria and tuberculosis were referred to other NGO clinics and Laukai general hospital.

Objective Four: Project lessons, results and impact are effectively captured and inform future programming

Indicators for measuring achievement towards Objective 4 can be summarised as:

- Project impacts and lessons are captured to inform future programming

Regular project review meetings were held by CARE staff throughout the project, bringing together staff from Kokang and Wa regions. Project modifications were made, as can be seen in the amended project objectives for 2009. This EoP evaluation is also part of the process to assess project impacts, capture lessons learned and make recommendations for future programming.

Project Achievements

Quantitative achievements have already been reported in the project Final Report. Only one key activity could not be implemented, and that was facilitating women led saving groups in Wa. The community and local authorities had expectations that CARE would provide high level inputs, which did not relate to the project goal of building capacity and the requirement for community participation. Even though the saving groups could not be started in this area, the livestock groups were successfully established. Pig raising was a popular activity which the women used mainly for savings purposes.

II. Participation in the project activities

Target beneficiaries were ex-poppy farmers, vulnerable households and women. Women headed and landless households represent approximately 20% of the target population, with the majority of other households categorised as land-poor. The annual reports present achievements of outputs disaggregated by gender, and these results show that significant numbers of beneficiaries have been female-headed households.

Women were targeted through activities such as health, home gardening, livestock, income generation and savings groups. The landless and land poor have also been targeted through the project activities, particularly through land tenure for tea farming and participation in FFW programs, ensuring that the participation of the most vulnerable is also achieved. A number of the village based groups indicated that anyone interested can participate, with income generation and savings groups giving priority to the poorest. Women's representation at the committee level for groups involved in women-specific activities appears to be high, however women's representation at the VDC level does not appear to be as strong.

The project has been implemented in 25 villages which have representation of four of the major ethnic groups in the region – Kokang, Palaung, Wa and Lahu. In Kokang, eight of the villages are Kokang, two are Palaung while the remaining five villages are a mix of Kokang and Palaung. In the Wa region, all villages were Wa with some Lahu in one village. Project staff were recruited to represent all the ethnic groups, ensuring that language and cultural difference would not restrict access to the project. Some minorities such as Palaung and Wa are more restricted in daily activities, for example in staying at home to do domestic work and in the traditional dress that they wear. Project activities were designed to facilitate participation from all groups, for example with the inclusion of women-specific activities at the household level such as pig raising and home gardening.

The sample villages selected for the evaluation included four Kokang villages, two Palaung and two with Kokang Palaung mixed. There were differences seen within the cultural groups with regard to women's influence in household decisions, for example it was stated that Palaung women did not do anything without first discussing with their husband, and their social opportunities to meet other women were more limited. However, they were able to participate in training sessions, project meetings and arrange health activities in their communities. Looking at committee membership of the groups consulted, the Kokang communities had complete female representation on the committees for women-focused activities such as WHG and saving. In Palaung communities, committee membership for women-focused activities such as income generation and WHG was mixed. Encouragingly, in Palaung communities women were represented at the committee level in the VDCs consulted.

After the incidence of fighting in Kokang in August 2009, there has been an increase in military presence in the area. One issue raised was that some local people were still cautious about this development, and more reluctant to move as freely as before, however this does not seem to have significantly impacted the ability of the project to carry on with its activities. The Wa authorities placed restrictions on travel for project staff within the region during some of the project period, however this does not appear to have significantly impacted participation in the project. Difficulties were encountered in the establishment of women savings groups in Wa. This was the only significant challenge faced in securing the participation of the beneficiary communities, and it would appear that participation in the project has been high, across the most vulnerable groups.

III. Effectiveness of the project activities

Project activities have relied on participation and contribution by the community. This is effective in achieving results on a cost efficient basis, and ensuring that beneficiaries are partners in the project rather than merely recipients. The project activities have been well received by the beneficiary communities, but the evaluation has revealed that there are some instances where implementation could have been more effective.

Training

The information dissemination models used in the project have concentrated on Training of Trainers, using community extension workers, and providing training to community leaders to increase their operational and management capacities. Building levels of knowledge in a community is an important approach for future sustainability, and using local people to disseminate information is cost effective, promotes active participation in project activities, and has had empowerment impacts for women, as can be seen in the health activities.

Feedback from the focus groups indicated that not all the training received was sufficient, this was reported from the livestock and farmer groups that were consulted. Illiteracy is an issue in the communities, and the use of appropriate visual aids is recommended in the training provided for the trainers, and also in the materials used for the dissemination of information through community extension. Despite this, half of the focus groups were happy with the training received, and all stated that the training has helped their group in its activities.

Requests were made for refresher training, in the livestock, agriculture and water system maintenance areas. Refresher training was provided during the project timeframe, however cannot continue once project activities are finished. Women noted that it was difficult to keep encouraging people to attend HE meetings when they are not able to provide new information now that the project has finished.

For agriculture and livestock, practical examples of new techniques and visits to 'model' farmers are also effective ways to disseminate information. It was reported that model farmers were often too far for beneficiaries to visit, and more opportunities to see activities demonstrated in practice would aid the uptake of improved agricultural techniques and methods by beneficiaries and non beneficiaries alike.

Livelihood security

Livelihood security was addressed by the project through food production and income generation. The effectiveness of these interventions is outlined below. A wide variety of locally appropriate opportunities were promoted by the project, allowing all community members the ability to adopt suitable activities. All the interventions were effective in providing more diverse livelihood opportunities, although it can be seen from the overall situation discussed in Section 1 that communities still face challenges to produce sufficient food all year round.

Agriculture

Agricultural activities have focused on the main crops of tea, rice, maize, and raising livestock. This is based on the findings of the AEDP carried out by CARE Myanmar in 2007/8. As reported above, the vast majority of the beneficiaries have adopted new agricultural techniques promoted by the project, and three quarters of the questionnaire respondents have seen increases in agricultural production as a result. The new techniques that have been adopted include diversified cropping with improved varieties, composting, seed banks, contouring, intercropping and terracing. There is also evidence of replication of the agricultural methods, as reported in discussions with project farmers, extension workers and non beneficiary farmers.

The issues related to agricultural training and the dissemination of information through extension services could have been more effective, as suggested above. From the questionnaire it can be seen that 21% of the sampled respondents did not experience any increase in their agricultural production, either because they did not adopt any new practices, or did not see any improvements as a result of the practices they did adopt. It would be interesting to find out why.

The Project has successfully promoted user-friendly, low cost and sustainable agricultural practices. Home gardening in particular has been particularly effective as it has been integrated with livestock raising and the use of composting. This has been an important activity for women, who stated increased yields as a result of the project, used for home consumption and the sale of surplus product. This feedback is supported by the income mapping exercise, where income from home gardening reportedly increased by approximately 136% and also became relatively more important as a source of income.

Tea was a focus of the agricultural activities. The establishment of tea plantations and nurseries, and facilitation of the issuance of land certificates from the Wa Agriculture Bureau and Kokang local authorities were important achievements towards guarantee the long term cultivation of established tea plantations. The tea market has, on the whole, been strong. This has had a positive impact on the effectiveness of tea cultivation as an income source. At the time of the evaluation, tea prices in Yunan, the main market for Kokang tea, show marked increases on 2006 prices.¹⁰

Kokang Tea prices at Nam San (Yunan, China) Market

Tea Specification	Price/kg 2006 (July)	Price/kg 2010 (June)
Highest quality (1st and 2nd flush), well processed tea	¥25-30/Kyin (\$7.5/kg)	¥40-50/Kyin (\$12.9/kg)
Medium quality, wet season production of reasonable quality and processing, representing the bulk of tea produced within the area	¥4-8/Kyin (US\$1-2/Kg)	¥20-25/Kyin (US\$ 6-7/Kg)
Lowest quality (wet season production, high % of rough, older leaves) and poorly processed (esp. drying) tea	¥1.25/Kyin (US\$0.31/kg)	¥3-4/Kyin (US\$1/kg)

While the market remains strong, tea will be popular crop. There is however the risk of focusing too heavily on one crop as an income earner, and the project activities related to paddy, maize and livestock are important to maintain agricultural diversity in the area.

Livestock

Livestock raising is a very popular activity in this project. It was cited as the most popular income generating activity and was adopted by 86% households. Pig production is traditional and an important activity for poorer households, and income from pig raising activities increased by 75%, and became relatively more important as a source of income. The livestock groups are a successful model for the implementation of this activity, they are still engaged in livestock activities and some groups have made two or three rounds of pig distribution. Livestock are used as a saving mechanism by the beneficiaries, with the pigs fattened, sold and the income used for significant spending such as children's education, special occasions or for medical purposes. The feedback from the livestock groups is that the income from selling the fattened pigs is not substantially greater than the costs of buying and raising the pigs¹¹. Despite this, they are still used as an important avenue to save. Livestock raising is an important activity for women and makes an important contribution to the household. The decision of when to sell the pig is discussed between men and women, however the men reported that women control the income generated from the sale of the pigs.

The pen method of raising pigs has been seen as an improvement by the communities, as it reduces scavenging by pigs, and allows the manure to be used for home gardening.

¹⁰ 2006 prices identified in the Tea Sub-Sector Market Assessment Report, Tar Shwe Tan, Kokang, October 2006 CARE Myanmar

¹¹ The most successful respondents report that the cost of buying and raising two pigs is ¥1,500, and income raised after fattening the pigs for 6 months is ¥2,000, generating ¥500 profit (approx. US\$83). Most respondents however reported returns that were less than this.

Despite these important achievements, a number of factors were identified which reduce the income impacts for the participating households. The dissemination of information and the uptake of improved practices have been discussed above. The important role of CARE staff to provide technical support and monitor livestock activities was also raised.

Observation from the evaluation, and feedback from key informant interviews and group discussions all confirm the poor health status of many of the pigs. This is mainly due to inadequate feeding and the incidence of disease. The project has introduced improved varieties of fodder, however the group feedback indicates that these have not been adopted by all the groups, and achieving reasonable levels of dietary protein appears to be particularly difficult using the range of feeds currently available in villages. Poor nutrition has led to higher mortality rates amongst young pigs, and limited their growth, therefore reducing their income generating potential. One group did report that they grew the improved fodder in their home compound and that this is sufficient for their needs, and saves time as they do not have to forage for food for their pigs. It is not clear however why more people have not adopted this practice.

Income Generation and Saving

According to the sampled respondents, 97% of households adopted new income generating activities and 90% saw an increase in their household income. These impacts have been discussed above in Section 1 Status of the project. On the whole, income activities that were adopted were related to agricultural produce, and these saw the biggest increases in income as a result of the integrated agricultural component of the project.

In addition to these income generating activities, the project also sought to work with women in particular to start alternative income generating opportunities, such as trade. There was a substantial increase in income from trade after the project, approximately 78%, although it's overall share of total income remained fairly static at about 5% of total income. It was an important activity for women. They stated that they used the income to buy food, to give money to their children, and for medical purposes, but that there was no chance to save as the money was utilised immediately on household expenses.

Interesting responses were given during group discussions with regard to women in the marketplace. The main activities they were involved in were sewing, selling foodstuffs, and also produce from the home garden. The men reported that some women were doing very well with their business in the market and making more profit than men, earning a profit of ¥30-100 per market day.¹² Other project interventions supported income generating activities, for example home gardening, improved roads meant women could travel by car rather than walking, and time saving impacts of water collection and increased school attendance contributed to allowing women more time to devote to other activities. It was also reported that the increased household income reduced tension in the household and has allowed women to be able to participate more freely in household level discussion and decision making. The women stated that they would like to engage in animal trade if they had enough capital.

Savings groups were also established in Kokang; it was not possible to start any in Wa due to lack of participation in this activity and the community perception that high level capital inputs should be provided. The two savings groups who took part in the evaluation reported that they were able to provide loans to all members, who mostly used the money to buy food. Defaulting on the loan was a problem, although they expect to continue with their activities. As with the income generating feedback, they reported that it was difficult to save on a regular basis as money was needed for household expenses.

Although there was little evidence of an increased ability to save on a regular basis, the project activity met a need for the women involved and thus can be considered effective to some extent. Additionally, women reported that access to credit through the project had forced money lenders to reduce their interest rates. This market outcome benefits the whole community.

¹² ¥6 = US\$1

Health

As reported in Section I. Status of the project, health activities were well supported in the communities and had important impacts for women's participation in activities and their role in the community. Nearly three quarters of the sampled households reported that they had attended a HE session in their village, of these nearly two thirds reported that they had discussed health issues with other people after attending the session. Family members reported that the women shared the health knowledge with them and that they could see health and hygiene benefits in the household. Since the end of the project, AMDA has implemented health activities in some of the communities. AMDA reported that the enthusiasm and knowledge which the women demonstrate has aided their work; this is a credit to the WHG model and participants. These activities can be assessed as having been very effective in achieving impacts within the community.

The importance of improved health and hygiene at the household level is reinforced by the focus group responses with regard to access to community services. The use of local traditional Chinese medicine at the village level and self treatment are very common, and most women still give birth with traditional birth attendants. Travelling to a clinic or hospital is not easily achievable for most people. Given these constraints, the improved health knowledge, disease tracking, referral systems put in place and basic treatment resulting from the project are likely to have significant health impacts for the communities. The project constructed one Rural Health Centre in Wa, to improve access to health services. The RHC was completed near the end of the project and patient statistics was not available. Patient referral systems were also established between WHGs and other service providers, Laukai government hospital and the MSF Holland (AZG) clinic.

Significant changes in personal hygiene behaviour have been achieved. Questionnaire responses indicate that 81% of people always washed their hands after going to the toilet and 93% reported that they always washed their hands before a meal. 93% use soap for handwashing. This compares to information found in previous CARE assessments¹³ where only 56.5% reported handwashing after the toilet and 70.5% replied they usually wash hands before meal.

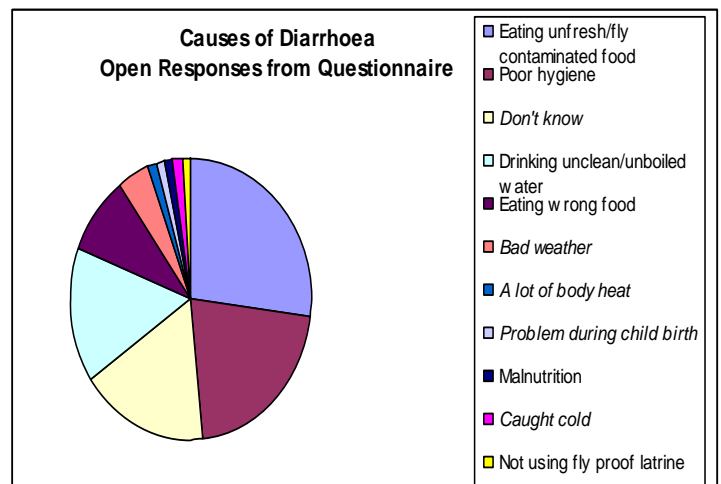
However, there are some areas where it is evident that health messages have not been fully disseminated or taken up by community members. For example, only one quarter of the questionnaire respondents knew of the local health educator, and mixed responses were given with regard to the cause and treatment of two common illnesses, diarrhoea and malaria.

25% of questionnaire respondents reported that someone in their household had suffered from diarrhoea in the last four weeks. There is no baseline data to compare this to, but the EoP evaluation was able to assess whether people demonstrated improved knowledge with regard to the causes and treatment of diarrhoea. In response to an open question, the majority of responses regarding the cause of diarrhoea were correct, although a number of incorrect causes were given.

¹³ Rapid Need Assessment on Health in Tar Shwe Tan, Kokang Special Region, CARE Dec 2006

Causes of diarrhoea

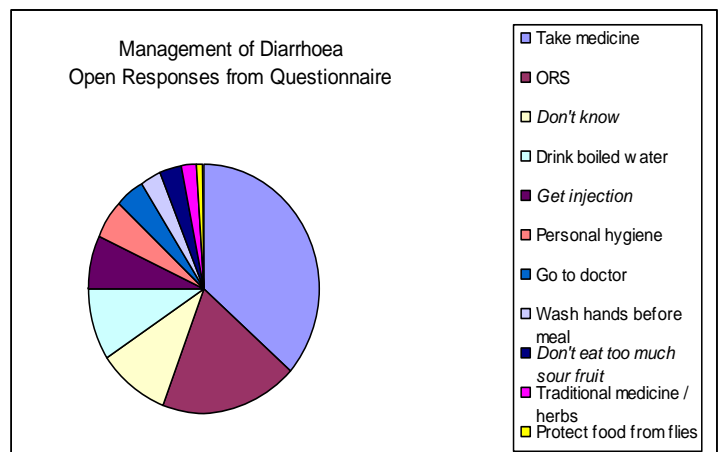
Correct responses (75%)	Incorrect responses (25%)
Eating unfresh/fly contaminated food	Don't know
Poor hygiene	Bad weather
Drinking unclean/unboiled water	A lot of body heat
Eating wrong food	Problem during child birth
Malnutrition	Caught cold
Not using fly proof latrine	



A similar situation can be seen with responses regarding the treatment of diarrhoea. Some incorrect responses were given, and the majority response was 'to take medicine', although this does not necessarily indicate an accurate understanding of the type of medicine to use. Encouragingly though, one fifth of responses stated taking ORS to manage diarrhoea. This compares to previous CARE assessments in the region that assessed that common treatments used medicinal herbs and roots or self-administered purchased medications, and that ORS was not used.¹⁴

Management of diarrhoea

Correct responses (80%)	Incorrect responses (20%)
Take medicine	Don't know
ORS	Get injection
Drink boiled water	Don't eat too much sour fruit
Personal hygiene	
Go to doctor	
Wash hands before meal	
Traditional medicine / herbs	
Protect food from flies	

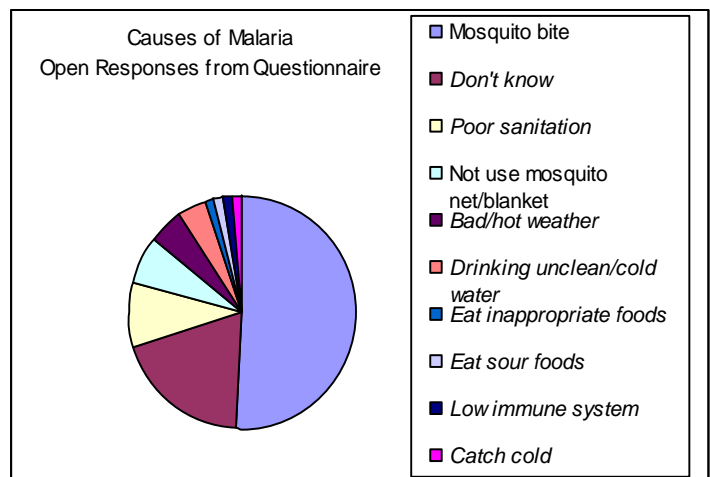


Similar feedback was asked on the causes and treatment of malaria. Many incorrect responses were given to the open question regarding the causes of malaria, although approximately half correctly identified mosquito bites as a cause.

¹⁴ Rapid Need Assessment on Health in Tar Shwe Tan, Kokang Special Region, CARE Dec 2006

Causes of malaria

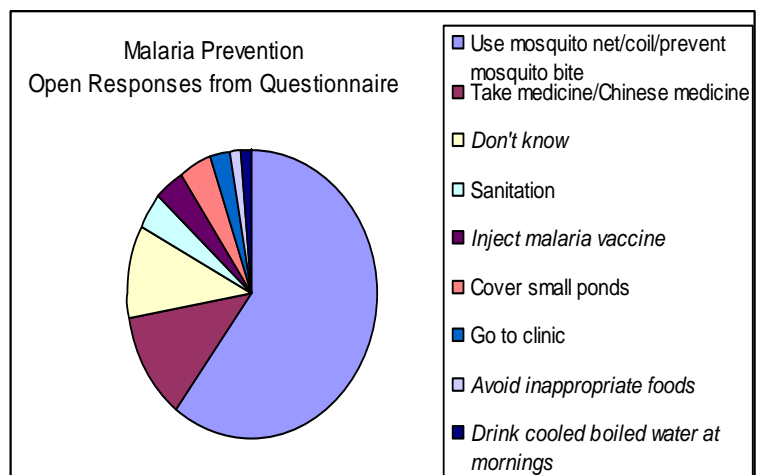
Correct responses (57%)	Incorrect responses (43%)
Mosquito bite	Don't know
Not use mosquito net/blanket	Poor sanitation
	Bad/hot weather
	Drinking unclean/cold water
	Eat inappropriate foods
	Eat sour foods
	Low immune system
	Catch cold



The majority of responses regarding preventing malaria were valid, although some incorrect answers were given. Only one third of respondents reported that they received enough mosquito nets for their household needs. Given that not all households received enough nets, and that nearly one third of respondents report that they do not use the nets all the time, it is suggested that the inputs and messages regarding malaria could have been more effective. However, compared to previous CARE assessments¹⁵, significant improvements can be seen; it was previously reported that only 40% of households used bed nets (compared to 70% who now use them all of the time), and that they had 1.8 nets per household in average (the majority of households received 2-4 bed nets under this project).

Malaria prevention

Correct responses (83%)	Incorrect responses (17%)
Use mosquito net/coil/prevent mosquito bite	Don't know
Take medicine/Chinese medicine	Inject malaria vaccine
Sanitation	Avoid inappropriate foods
Cover small ponds	Drink cooled boiled water at mornings
Go to clinic	



Reproductive health impacts were unexpectedly high. In the focus group feedback, both men and women reported benefits of smaller family size, and the use of oral contraceptive pills, injections and condoms were common for family planning (as described in 1. Status of the project). Women were also apparently able to discuss family planning with their husband, and were usually the ones to get condoms from CARE. It was reported that since the project finished, people were finding it difficult to continue to access condoms easily, generally they were only available in Laukai, the regional town. However some women reported that they

¹⁵ Ibid.

used money they earned to buy condoms and contraceptive pills when possible, so the reproductive health messages have been effective in impacting on people's behaviour.

Water and sanitation activities were also implemented to complement the health component. 42% of the respondents had a fly proof latrine installed in their house as a result of the project, and reported use of the latrine was very high, with 90% stating they use it all the time and 10% that they use it some of the time. This compares to only 3% of people having a fly proof latrine before.¹⁶ Children also reported that they did not like to use the old style latrines due to the bad smell.

Water supply systems were installed in project villages, significantly reducing water collection times to just a few minutes compared to approximately one hour before. Young and elderly are able to access the water more easily, and it was reported that there was sufficient for household needs, with extra available for home gardening in some cases. Cleaning of the catchment area is the responsibility of the households and is organised on a rotational basis.

One VDC had installed water meters to measure water usage and apply appropriate charges. These funds were to be used for maintenance and repairs. This community-led approach could be considered in future programming, as an example to other communities of options they could adopt with regard to fund collection and the management of maintenance of the infrastructure. Some villages collected money on a regular basis for maintenance funds, while others collect money only when a repair is needed. The ability of villages to plan for and manage repairs and maintenance is an important aspect of the sustainability of the water supply infrastructure.

The installation of water supply systems have been very effective, however two communities reported that water was a challenge for them that had not been addressed. It would appear that the project had to prioritise water supply needs amongst the project communities and was not able to achieve complete coverage. This could have been due to technical reasons and the cost of installation in communities where the water source was far from the village.

Village capacity to implement development activities

All communities participated in community asset creation activities based on priority planning undertaken with CARE, for example building schools, roads, water supply systems and a rural health clinic. The partnership with WFP to provide FFW was an important element in the effectiveness of this intervention, not only to provide short term access to food for the most vulnerable households who took part in the FFW program, but also providing long term benefits from the improved infrastructure. The project provided training in the maintenance of infrastructure such as water supply to ensure that the community has the capacity to maintain it into the future. FFE was also an important incentive for more children to attend school, and it was reported that girls as well as boys could go to school, whereas normally boys would be given preference if the family could not afford to send all their children. This however is likely to be a short term impact, as it is not certain that this would remain the case if FFE was not available.

The construction of these community assets had an important role in establishing the VDC as a local partner in development, motivating community members to participate in project activities because they could see immediate benefits from the assets, and also in establishing trust with local authorities early on in the project period.

Village development plans were made in all 25 villages, covering activities such as farmland development, maintenance of watershed catchments, animal health and health education activities. All the village based groups consulted during the evaluation stated that they had developed action plans, and were involved in activities at the time. Women in particular reported that attending project meetings, training sessions and health meetings gave them increased opportunities to expand their social networks, and also raised their social status as they were seen to have a role in some of the key changes in the community. Of the groups consulted, 39% of the committee members were women, although it should be noted that

¹⁶ Ibid.

seven of the nine groups were specifically women focused (WHG, livestock, income generation and savings). Committee representation for the women's activity groups was approximately equal male and female, although in the VDCs only two of the 13 committee members were women. The project focus on women's participation and empowerment has been effective in facilitating these changes, although women still did not report substantially increased roles in decision making processes at the community level. This is a long term goal that would require project interventions over a longer time period.

IV. Relevance of the project activities

The integrated livelihood approach is highly relevant. It provides multiple options to address agricultural production and income generation, and it can be seen from the evaluation feedback that households engage in a wide variety of activities to secure their livelihoods. Participation is supported by community asset infrastructures, which have time saving benefits for the households as well as addressing food availability for the most vulnerable through FFW. The health improvements seen at the household and community level, and the lack of access to health services, indicate that health activities are also highly relevant in terms of their tangible impacts, as well as promoting women's participation and role in the community.

Farmer feedback in relation to the promoted agricultural techniques was positive, with a demonstrated strong uptake of a number of new practices. Farmers and extension workers report that they see others copying the techniques, and this is supported by feedback received from non beneficiary farmers, that they have also adopted new practices. The agricultural activities therefore can be seen to be relevant and appropriate to the target communities, and are also have positive impacts for non beneficiary farmers outside the project area.

Livestock raising is very popular and has been enthusiastically taken up by the livestock groups. Some of the first established groups have been able to supply pigs through two or three cycles, indicating that the group mechanism is a good model. The income security mapping exercise indicates that overall income from livestock has increased, as well as its contribution to total income. Efforts to improve livestock activities (feeding, animal health, training) will be an important factor in generating more income from this popular activity.

Focus groups were asked whether their priorities were being addressed by the project. The WHGs, livestock group and some farmers reported that their main challenges were being addressed by the project, in relation to animal disease, community health and access to improved seeds. Other groups mentioned challenges that have not been addressed, such as access to water, the need for a bridge and the high cost of fertiliser. Interestingly, several groups mentioned that working with the community, persuading people to listen and participate according to the 'rules' was a challenge. This reinforces the relevance of the project strategy to mobilise communities, to be accountable and to take ownership of activities which they take are part in.

CARE's activities also complement the regional authorities long term development plans. They focus on agricultural based approaches for tea, walnut, rubber, sugarcane, maize and paddy. Tea, maize and paddy are priorities in CARE project activities as per the AEDP process, and activities supporting walnut and paddy were also included in the agricultural interventions. The Kokang Central Committee Agriculture and Forestry representative also expressed his support for CARE's work to conserve water catchment areas and reforestation activities.

V. Strengths and Weaknesses

The project has seen strong participation by the community and support from VDC's and other community groups. The successful construction of community assets and the partnership with WFP in the FFW programs has been a good entry level activity into the community. The project has also moved from initial welfare activities to a more development focused approach. The initial groundwork with the community, mobilisation and building relationships with local authorities has allowed this to happen.

The EoP evaluation findings have shown that diversified agricultural production and income generating activities are necessary to improve people's livelihood. Even when multiple activities are adopted, there are still food short months and the need to borrow money to buy food. The project has concentrated on the production of tea, maize, rice, vegetables and livestock to address income levels in the short term. These are all important income generating activities, but livestock raising faces challenges impacting its ability to become a more significant income source.

It is important to trial and start demonstrating the potential of other crops with medium to long term returns, to complement the achievements already realised. This has been an identified strategy within the AEDP, but has not been fully addressed in the project area thus far. Diversification is an important strategy to build resilience in a community, and minimises the risks of relying on key markets such as China for the supply and demand of goods and inputs. An assessment of alternative income generating activities could also be beneficial, to determine which products in the local markets are currently imported from China but could potentially be supplied locally, for example piglets and pork products.

A common weakness across the activities is the effectiveness and amount of training, and the dissemination of information through extension services. Illiteracy is an issue within the communities, and requires the training materials to be developed at an appropriate level, including the use of visual aids. Visual aids are currently included in training materials, but maybe not to a sufficient extent or providing simple clear messages. The ability to practically demonstrate the advantages and benefits of the various project promoted techniques is a powerful tool in encouraging the adoption of improved practices, and there are apparently difficulties in easily accessing demonstration or model farmers within the project area.

VI. Efficiency

The project has been managed efficiently, with management systems, coordination arrangements, and responses to external factors contributing to an overall situation where the vast majority of activities have been implemented according to the plan and within budget.

CARE has offices in each of the village tracts in the project location, and in the last year the project focused on fewer villages and clustered activities in order to maximise the efficiency of the intervention. This allowed good access to the communities, as is evidenced by the mainly positive response from the focus groups regarding contact with, and support from, CARE staff in the field. Travel restrictions within the region were experienced at the start of the project, but the time was used for staff capacity building and training which assisted the implementation of the activities once the project could start. More recently, international staff have not been able to travel to the region since October 2009, but national senior level staff from the country office were able to travel to the project area to provide technical support and help with advocacy at the local level where required.

Positive working relationships were built over time with the Kokang and Wa local authorities. This enabled activities to be implemented in a challenging operating environment, where not many other INGOs are operating. Support from other INGOs is also evident, from their positive feedback given during the evaluation and in the coordination that was apparent during the project. CARE took a lead role in responding to an outbreak of infectious animal disease in 2007, in coordination with the Wa Agriculture Bureau, UN and other INGOs. Referral linkages were established with medical INGOs, and the health activities in the Wa were designed to complement the activities already underway by Health Unlimited.

CARE worked closely with WFP at the project implementation level as well as at a coordination level, and anticipates that FFW programs will continue in the area with a focus on food production and reforestation. Discussions with five INGOs during the evaluation indicated that CARE activities are well received and that the other agencies are keen to work with CARE in the region in the future, particularly on health and gender issues.

The project did face challenges in implementation from external factors, which caused delays to project activities. The GoUM moved its Ministries and Departments to the new capital in Nay Pyi Daw in 2006 and introduced new MoU arrangements for all INGOs in the country,

resulting in delays to operational activities. After Cyclone Nargis in May 2008, government, INGO and UN resources were diverted to respond to the disaster in the Delta. Delays were faced in program quality monitoring while senior staff had to direct their attention to the emergency situation, however this was only a temporary situation. More recently, military tensions in Kokang and Wa in 2009 forced the suspension of activities for two months due to security concerns. Despite these challenges, the project was able to complete activities although some were delayed compared to the scheduled activity plan.

The project has almost fully utilised its budget, with only a 2% underspend over the four years. Some variances were seen across budget lines, particularly in year one due to the difficulties faced in the project start up phase, but are not significant when looking at the overall project budget.

5. Unexpected Outcomes (positive and negative)

Some unexpected outcomes can be seen as a result of the project. For example, a very positive outcome has been the adoption of agricultural practices by non beneficiary farmers. This has been reported by project staff as well as community extension workers and farmers who were outside of the project. This has the effect of strengthening the project impact beyond the project area, effectively generating more outcomes from the available budget.

Indirect benefits of community asset creation have had a positive impact on the ability to engage in income generating activities at the household level. The main purpose of the community asset creation was to provide the most vulnerable with access to food through FFW programs, and to improve community assets for the future. Time saving benefits in water collection, fuel collection, access to goods and services and the reported attendance of children at school due to FFE has freed up time for household members to engage in other activities.

Increased market competition has been seen in relation to the savings activities. It was reported that as a result of people's ability to access savings through the project, money lenders have reduced their rates to remain competitive. This has had positive effects for the wider community.

Beneficiaries have been using the ability to raise pigs through the livestock groups as a saving mechanism, rather than for income generation or food consumption. It has been identified that income generation was limited due to issues with growing healthy pigs, and the final income from selling the pigs is not much greater than the cost of raising them. However, feedback suggests that the money is used for specific purposes in the household, such as for medical reasons, children's education, or for special occasions. Without the livestock scheme, it would be difficult for the households to save money. This does raise the question as to whether livestock is the most appropriate form of saving scheme, and whether alternative models could be used.

The reproductive health impacts of the health activities have been unexpectedly strong with women and men both stating the benefits of smaller family size, for example older children are not needed to look after younger siblings, they are able to send more of their children to school, and the child care role is reduced and more time is available for other activities. Men and women apparently discuss family planning and both use family planning methods, and it would appear that women have a role in these discussions and outcomes. Restricted access to condoms now the project has finished is however a potential impediment to these positive impacts.

The project has advocated a development approach to livelihood security, which is an important strategy for the local authorities to have been involved in. Seeing a shift from a relief mindset to a more development focused approach has been reported by the project team, and is important for future development work with the authorities. The same can also be said for the village based organisations, that their experience in the participation and management of the activities has been an important outcome. The project has also facilitated

improved linkages between groups, and also in some cases to other INGOs, which enables communities to take a more proactive role in addressing their future needs.

One village had installed pipes from the tap stand to the household and water meters at each household to monitor water usage and apply appropriate water use charges. The money is kept for repairs and maintenance. This initiative was undertaken by the community themselves and could provide a model that CARE could use to encourage other communities to replicate. It has important benefits for the sustainability of water consumption as well as maintenance of the infrastructure in the future.

One unexpected outcome was the significant reduction in daily wages as an income source. Respondents explained that there was less need to seek casual agricultural labour work as their household incomes were more secure, and they were needed for their own income generating activities. This is a positive development, however it may have future implications for the supply of labour at key times of the year, for example at cultivation and harvest times. The supply of labour will need to be taken into account in future program planning.

Another issue that was mentioned in the evaluation process was the social and economic impact that casinos have on the households and communities. While this is outside the control of the project, it nonetheless impacts on the context within which the project operates. Young people, girls in particular, leave the villages to work in the casinos in the urban areas, returning only for special occasions. This feedback is supported by income source mapping which showed that salaries had increased 250% as a source of income, typically from working in the casinos in the regional centre. While these earnings are undoubtedly a significant feature of some household incomes, there are risk factors for the people involved. Household income levels are not yet at a level where migration out of the village is no longer needed, and future project programming may need to consider targeting young people in order to reduce the negative social and personal impacts that can occur in the community as a result. The child focus groups also mentioned the gambling and playing Mah Jong that their mothers do as a social activity, and that often money is lost. Messages regarding gambling and its effects on the household could potentially be included in future programming, if this is assessed to be a significant problem.

6. Lessons learned and good practices

Women's empowerment

The project demonstrated that health activities were particularly important in facilitating women's participation and moving towards empowerment at the household and community level. This could be an integral component of livelihood strategies in future programming. Women's participation and the positive impacts of health and livelihood activities ensured that their contribution was valued at a household and community level.

It is difficult to assess whether women have meaningful influence in community level decision making. Committee representation for the women's activity groups was approximately equal male and female, although in the VDCs only two of the 13 committee members were women. It is important to work with men with regard to women's empowerment in parallel with the women specific activities. Significant achievements have been made in this project in the recognition of the contribution that women make to the community; this should be built upon to encourage male leaders to embrace women's input into village committees. Successful women could also be encouraged to become 'role models' for other women, and also have the opportunity to address community level meetings to share their experiences.

Women face different barriers to participation and decision making among different ethnic groups. Gender analysis and programming should take into account the ethnic diversity in the project area, and this project demonstrated evidence of this in its efforts to recruit staff from the different ethnic minority groups.

Relationship building with local authorities

CARE began emergency food relief in Kokang in October 2003, as a response to the immediate food shortages in the region following the government's opium eradication

program. This allowed CARE the chance to build good working relations with other agency partners and local authorities. In Wa, it took longer to gain the trust of the authorities, and the project faced restrictions in implementation in the first year. The focus on regular advocacy meetings and constructing community assets with tangible benefits were important strategies to address this issue, and succeeded in facilitating better working relations with the Wa authorities.

Despite these efforts, challenges can still be faced in activity implementation because of the difficult operating environment of these two special regions. In 2009 the Kokang regional authority was re-structured and new personnel installed, following the military disturbances in the region. Discussions with other INGOs also reflect concern over the fluid nature of the current operating environment. This reinforces the importance of maintaining positive relationships with local authorities, highlighting the humanitarian nature of the work and the tangible impacts that have been evident so far, in order to retain trust at the local level. CARE's long term presence in the region aids its ability to understand changes in power dynamics, how these might affect its work, and develop risk management plans for the future.

Working with village based organisations

In this project environment, decision making is typically a top-down process, so the project worked to mobilise the communities to have more direct input and influence into decision making, rather than relying on support from outside. VDC's played a key role in the implementation of project activities, most notably in community asset creation and supporting other village based groups. This provided the opportunity to gain experience in managing community projects, as well as instilling a sense of ownership of the assets so that they will be managed and maintained into the future.

Feedback from the groups indicated that membership was fairly open, with the income generating and savings groups giving preference to poor people. This indicates a high level of equality of access to these community groups.

Access to FFW/FFE

From the food source mapping exercise, it was estimated that food distributed from FFW and FFE activities accounted for approximately 4% of the total food available to the communities. Looking at rice specifically, rice from FFW and FFE accounted for 22% of the rice available from all the sources (either self produced, bought, collected, FFW/FFE). This has significant implications for the longer term ability of communities to access sufficient rice when WFP programs are no longer implemented. The partnership with WFP is important in relief projects and the early stages of development projects, however longer term livelihood development needs to ensure that communities have the ability to replace this food source from their own means, once project support from organisations like CARE and WFP is no longer available. Achievements have been made towards this, but given that communities still face food short months for half the year, there is still arguably a need for continued support to communities in FFW programs and longer term development strategies.

Appropriate training and information dissemination models

Training and the dissemination of information through community extension are effective methods of improving knowledge in a community and reaching large numbers of people in a cost effective way. Improved knowledge and capacity building leave important benefits in the community for the long term. However feedback from the EoP evaluation notes the importance of using appropriate training tools, including visual aids, to take into account low literacy levels in project areas. Cross visits were used within the project to allow people to see new techniques and methods in practice, and it is suggested that greater use of these could facilitate the adoption of project promoted activities. Beneficiaries who have had particular success in some activities could also be encouraged to share their experiences or to take a role at the VDC level. This could particularly be applied to women, to give further opportunity to raise their status in the community.

Diverse livelihood options

Livelihood security has been addressed in this project by promoting a variety of income generating activities and agricultural production techniques. It is clear that this is a good

model, and that focusing on just one or two elements alone will not provide the impacts necessary to improve livelihoods to a significant degree. Promoting a variety of activities enables all sectors of the community to participate, including women, landless and the most vulnerable. The project focused its support to improve agricultural production on a number of crops and products. This is important to avoid relying too heavily on one crop. Diversity aids people's ability to maintain their livelihood in the future, by being more resilient to external threats such as market, climatic or political forces.

It was difficult for the project to realise significant savings impacts. Low levels of saving were possible for household expenses, but regular saving was not reported. Defaulting on loans was also raised as a problem. The livestock groups had important saving outcomes for the beneficiaries; this is despite the challenges faced with animal nutrition and health that negatively impacted on their potential to generate income. A review of the savings models should be undertaken and other savings models could be evaluated, taking into account the operational context in the region.

Income Generation

Income generation activities that were adopted on the whole were agricultural - livestock, tea and home gardening. Few people undertook other activities such as trade, sewing, snack making. The project focused on the agricultural products identified through the AEDP, however it can be seen that many households adopt a diverse range of income generating options to protect their livelihood security. More analysis could be undertaken to understand why more people did not adopt other income generating activities, whether it was due to market demand, skill levels, access to inputs, or other reasons, and whether these could be promoted in future programs.

Women also reported that a lack of capital hindered new income generating activities such as animal trade. Options to encourage women to work together could be explored, to look at market demand for goods and access sufficient capital as a group.

An important factor facilitating the uptake of income generating activities was the time saving impacts of other project activities. This underlines the relevance of an integrated livelihood approach, where project components support each other.

Livestock

Associated fodder and capacity building programs should be strengthened to maximise the benefits from livestock raising. Opportunities should also be explored with regard to breeding, to increase income generating potential from selling piglets, and also improving the breeding stock through cross breeding. Piglets and pork products in the markets in the region were observed to be from China, indicating that there is demand, and there may be opportunities for local products to replace these imports.

The routine vaccination of animals is recommended in future livestock activities, to prevent losses to disease and also to establish linkages between community extension workers and government veterinary staff. This recommendation is based on the project's experience and quick coordination response to an infectious disease outbreak in the region in 2007.

Agriculture

Composting was a popular method adopted by over half of the respondents. This is a low cost, low impact way to increase yields, and important to improve soil quality. Farmers still reported that they could not afford to buy fertiliser; this implies that the compost was not sufficient for all agricultural purposes. Further exploration could be made, to assess why composting has not been adopted by all farmers, and possible ways to increase the supply of compost to replace the need for fertiliser.

The promotion of crops with medium to long term returns should be considered in agricultural interventions. Now that the benefits of improved agricultural production are being realised by the community, the inclusion of cash crops with longer term returns is feasible and would provide further opportunities to diversify the agricultural base.

The facilitation of land certificates for vulnerable households has been an important factor in allowing beneficiaries to invest in tea as a cash crop, and has been included in other projects due to its success. CARE undertook significant advocacy and negotiation with the local authorities to achieve this, and is a good example of the importance of establishing good working relationships with the relevant authorities.

The questionnaire revealed that 21% of the sampled respondents did not experience any increase in their agricultural production, either because they did not adopt any new practices, or did not see any improvements as a result of the practices they did adopt. The questionnaire could not capture the reasons why, and it would be interesting to explore further the reasons for this, to understand whether it was due to incorrectly adopted methods, lack of interest or ability, or other factors outside the project control.

Health

The WHGs are a successful model for implementing health activities, and have been well received in the community by women, men and children. The organisation and delivery of health activities has had important impacts for the participation of women and people's attitude towards women's contribution to the community. Significant improvements have been seen in personal hygiene, and key indicators suggest that improved practices have been implemented. However some health messages have not been completely understood, as can be seen with the responses regarding diarrhoea and malaria causes and prevention. The health training tool kits should be reviewed to see if key health messages can be disseminated in a more effective way. Many households also spend significant amounts of time away from their home for agricultural purposes. Further analysis should be undertaken to assess whether the improved health practices are used away from the household.

Water and sanitation

Water supply systems were installed in the project, but testing the quality of the drinking water was not carried out. Feedback suggests that testing can be simply carried out and recorded at the field level, by testing turbidity by observation, and using a pH test kit for acidity. This would provide reassurance to the project of the quality of its water systems, and allow for the monitoring of any changes in water quality in the future that may negatively impact households.

Some villages reported that their water supply needs were not met. It is expected that there were challenges in addressing all water supply needs within the budget and timeframe available. For some villages the water source may have been too remote to easily bring the water to the village. However, other options such as rain water tanks could be explored, to provide some water collection benefits.

7. Analysis of relevant cross cutting themes

Gender participation and social status

Due to the cultural context of the project area, special attention was given to women's participation and empowerment in the design of the project. Activities were implemented to specifically encourage women's participation, for example the livestock, savings and income generating groups, and the WHGs. The community as a whole was encouraged to include women as committee members in the various village based organisations, and female headed households were targeted as being amongst the most vulnerable in the communities. Empowerment frameworks recognise the ability to not only participate in activities, but to have more influence and ultimately control over decision making, at the household and community level. With this in mind, participatory relationship mapping exercises were conducted in two communities, with a group of women, men and children in each location, to ascertain if there had been any changes since the project in the women's role in the household, socially in the community and in access to goods and services.

Within the household, the key impacts that were identified included improved health and hygiene, improved home gardening yields and livestock raising practices, and improved access to other villages and water. Women's participation in these activities was high, and recognised by the men and children as well as the women.

Within the wider community, women were recognised as participating in more meetings and training activities, whereas previously there had been none. Women had more opportunities to meet and discuss with others, more access to capacity building opportunities and also the ability to take part as they did not have to worry about daily survival as much as before. The perception of others also changed, that when women met each other they were not seen to be just discussing trivial affairs but things that contributed to their family and community.

Improvements in access to goods and services related mainly to children attending school, with the reduced child care burden that this brought for the women. Within the productive role in the wider marketplace, some men explicitly acknowledged women's success in trade and their ability to earn income from the increased options available.

Importantly, women were seen to have some influence in decision making at the household level. Income from pigs was controlled by women, and the decision of when to sell the pigs was taken jointly. Both men and women discussed education for their children, and it was reported that the FFE was an incentive to send girls as well as boys to school, whereas previously boys would have had the priority to attend. Decisions regarding family planning were also apparently taken together, with many women accessing various family planning methods, although these options have become harder to access since the project ended. Behavioural change was seen in improved hygiene practices, with the men reportedly very happy to see the women and children 'clean and tidy', while the women reported that with their new knowledge on health and hygiene that 'they would never go backwards'.

Women were also seen to have more of an organising role at the community level, particularly with the health activities. Some reported better links to other community groups, and women are involved in various committees ranging from livestock, income generating groups, savings groups and also VDCs.

There were differences seen within the cultural groups represented in the project area. Kokang women have more influence in household decisions, whereas other minorities such as Palaung and Wa do not have the same status and are more restricted in daily activities, for example in staying at home to do domestic work and even in the traditional dress that they wear.

It is a challenge to see changes in decision making influence and control in a relatively short timeframe, and broader community change rather than just at household level, however some steps towards this have been achieved in this project. The women themselves stated that they noticed positive changes in their social status and people's attitude towards them, that they did not need to ask help from others as much and that they understand each other better. These are important steps towards a longer term goal of equality and empowerment.

Climate and environmental concerns

The project was designed to promote environmentally appropriate agricultural techniques, to address the poor quality of the soil following intensive poppy cultivation and to reduce damaging practices such as slash and burn and shifting cultivation. Facilitating land ownership for tea cultivation provides assurance of long term land tenure, encouraging investment in this income generating crop and also reducing the need to practice shifting cultivation. It was reportedly difficult to address community views with regard to shifting cultivation, but farmers who adopted permanent farming noted many benefits, including the ability to grow cash crops, improved soil fertility and reduced labour needed for land clearing.

Introducing low environmental impact farming methods such as intercropping, terracing and line planting, and using natural soil improvers such as compost were designed to achieve maximum yields from available land. They also require few inputs and can be implemented by all, as seen by the high replication rates amongst beneficiary and non beneficiary farmers. Raising livestock in pens has also been introduced, and communities noted the improvements in their village with the reduction of scavenging by pigs as well as the ability to use the manure. The installation of water supply systems underlined the community commitment to maintain catchment areas.

Project staff in Kokang have noticed climate change impacts in the length of the hot season and changing rainfall patterns. This highlights the importance of designing project activities that have low environmental impact, as well as the ability to monitor and understand localised climate change impacts and the effect these will have on project activities and future programming.

8. Sustainability Strategies

A number of strategies were adopted to promote the sustainability of project activities. These are important to facilitate long term impacts for the communities, so that positive impacts are maintained even when the organisation is no longer able to provide project support.

Working with village based groups is a strength of the project. Building capacity and experience at the village level enables communities to take a more proactive role in addressing their future needs, however it has been discussed that training and information dissemination could have been more effective in some sectors. Increased linkages with other groups in the village, other villages and also other organisations was reported, as well as the establishment of health referral systems. There was however little evidence of linkages at the village level with veterinary support services, and this would aid the flow of information about disease at the regional level as well as support for future vaccination and animal health activities. All the groups stated that they will continue their activities, with one group indicating that they cannot rely on improvement in the region and will therefore take a more proactive role themselves. There was mixed feedback however on whether they thought new group activities would start in their community, with some indicating that they thought others would copy their activities while others stated that support from organisations like CARE was needed for new groups.

It is also clear that it can be difficult to maintain the level of participation and positive impacts once the project support had ceased. This was seen in the health activities, that it was no longer easy to access condoms, and it is difficult to attract people to health education sessions because the information was being repeated and they did not have detergent to distribute to the participants.

The promotion of multiple agricultural production and income generating activities has been necessary for communities to see improvements in their livelihoods. Locally appropriate options ensure that improved methods are accessible to all. There are opportunities to promote cash crops with medium to long term returns, now that the communities have seen increases in short and medium term returns as a result of the project activities. The ability to engage in a number of livelihood options is vital to building community resilience.

Impacts on women's empowerment will have long lasting effects at the household and community level. The focus on women's participation and empowerment has been an important strategy to build sustainability into the project, to encourage women in their confidence and ability to take more active roles in community decision making.

Crucially, the provision of food through FFW and FFE programs in partnership with WFP was very significant, accounting for approximately 22% of rice that was consumed in the community. While this has had obvious short term impacts, continued support is evidently needed before the communities are able to replace this food source by their own means.

Revolving fund schemes were introduced in a number of activities, however this evaluation was not able to properly assess whether these are sustainable in the long term. It is recommended that an assessment be made into the various revolving fund schemes, to establish whether the funding level is maintained and growing to allow more people access to the scheme and to counteract any inflationary impacts.

9. Conclusions and Recommendations

It can be concluded that livelihood security in the beneficiary population has been improved through the project activities. The focus on adopting a variety of locally appropriate improved agricultural techniques and income generating activities is necessary to improve diversity in livelihood options, and thus resilience in the future. Household income levels and food security have improved compared to the time just after poppy eradication, but are not yet sufficient to ensure food security all year round; households still report having to borrow money to buy food in food short months.

The project strategy of women-specific activities has been successful in ensuring the participation of women in the project. The evaluation revealed positive evidence of women's ability to implement community level health activities, and attitudinal change towards women as a result, at the household and to some extent at the community level. Significant demonstration of women's influence in decision making at the community level is yet to be seen, and would have to be a longer term goal of future programming. The project has worked with village based organisations and local authorities to instil a participatory development mindset to the challenges they face, and it is hoped that the experiences and capacity built during the project will enable communities to continue this approach.

Lessons learned, project strengths and best practice have been documented to inform future programming, and recommendations have been made with regard to technical support for project activities, training and the dissemination of information through community extension. CARE has built good working relationships with the communities, local authorities and other stakeholders in the Kokang and Wa regions. At this stage significant achievements have been made, but CARE's continued support to the target population is necessary to ensure greater livelihood security and resilience.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Technical support

- Assess the performance of any revolving fund schemes, to ensure that fund levels are maintained and are growing, to allow more people access to the scheme and to counteract any inflationary impacts
- Review the savings models promoted in the project and evaluate other savings approaches, taking into account the operational context in the region.

Training, dissemination of information through community extension

- Training programmes for the various village based groups be reviewed and updated with appropriate visual aids to address the illiteracy levels in the communities.
- Demonstration and cross visits should be strengthened.
- Encourage successful women as role models and have opportunities to address the wider community at the VDC level, to demonstrate their contribution.
- Facilitate veterinary support linkages.

Agriculture

- Facilitate issuance of land certificates for agricultural purposes
- Explore why composting was not adopted by all farmers, and possible ways to increase the supply of compost to replace the need for fertiliser.
- Start the trial and demonstration crops that have medium to long term returns, to further increase options available to the communities.
- Follow up with beneficiaries that did not see any increase in their agricultural production, to ascertain whether it was due to incorrectly adopted methods, lack of interest or ability, or other factors outside the project control.

Livestock

- Address key issues with regard to feeding, animal health and improved dissemination of training and extension services to further strengthen the income generating potential of this activity.
- Explore opportunities with regard to breeding, to increase income generating potential from selling piglets, and also improving the breeding stock through cross breeding.

Income Generation

- Analyse why more people did not adopt other income generating activities, whether it was due to market demand, skill levels, access to inputs, or other reasons, and whether these could be promoted in future programs.
- Explore options to encourage women to work together, to be able to access sufficient capital as a group.

Health

- Further analysis should be undertaken to assess whether improved health practices are used away from the household, and look at ways to incorporate these messages into the health materials.
- Review ability to distribute sufficient mosquito nets.

10. Annexes

- 1. Evaluation Terms of Reference**
- 2. Evaluation Tools & Guidelines**
- 3. Evaluation Respondents**
- 4. References**
- 5. Logical Framework**
- 6. Map of project area**