

Interview with Mar Lar Soe

East-West Seed Knowledge Transfer Team

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The role of the East-West technical staff is to provide technical training, theory training, and practical training. Seeing is believing, so we also set up the demonstration farm and give regular advice. Mercy Corp's role is to organize the farmers. They invite the farmer and then they facilitate the training for us. Before we start the project we always discuss it with our marketing colleagues. If according to our commercial colleague's the area has potential, we select that area together with our partner. After that our staff and the Mercy Corps staff assess the village area together. Mercy Corps then organises a first farmer meeting in the village.

In the farmer meeting they introduce the project, and after that we collect the nomination who is interested in trying to improve their technology. So after we have the nomination, we assess the village a second time and set up a demonstration farm.

Demonstration farm

So for the demonstration farm we provide farm input like seedling tray, plastic mulching, screen nets, and cover of the nursery house free of charge. For example, the first cropping cycle we provide 100%, second cropping cycle 75%, and third cropping cycle at 50%. From the farmer's side they have to buy their local material, for example, bamboo, labor cost, and seed package. We also help them with recommendations of other farm input like fertilizer, and pesticide.

Changing their process needs time, right? One cropping cycle is not enough, that's why we do two, three cropping cycles in different seasons and with different kinds of crops because seeing is believing and they can learn from that. Between the village also we have different levels: early adaptation and late adaptation. We need motivated farmers who want to try the new improved technology So we select the kind of farmers, that may be the most helpful for our project

Extension targets

In this project I have ten staff; six staff for Shan and four staff for Rakhine.

We have targets for the individual staffmembers. One staffmember trains approximately 800 farmers per year. We have three kinds of season: summer season, winter season, and rainy season, and each season we set up 16 demonstration farms per staff. That's two to three demonstration farms per village, so they have to cover, each staff, around about eight to ten villages. So per year that means a total of approximately 32 to 48 demo farms for each staffmember plus the training of about 800 farmers.

Incentives

Some people think we are only doing promotion. Because mostly in Asia the farmer meetings are about promotions. They can get an incentive or something like that. But in our training we don't have an incentive; we only provide the materials. So actually when we introduced the improved technology, for example, seedling tray, plastic mulching, and then trellis, so they think we are selling. Actually East-West is not selling that kind of material. We are only selling the vegetable seed, but we want to be the anchor to the improved technology for the small scale farmer. In the village, the farmer, he wants to try different variety, right? So it might be the East-West or other company, their variety. That is their choice. Remember, yesterday, when the lady saw the East-West logo, and asked for a present ? I said, "This is our big present. You already got it."