

Report: Social Innovation Case-study Write-shop

October 12-13, 2017



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Venue: Impact Hub, Yangon, Myanmar

Participating organisations: Fresh Studio, Greenovator, Myanmar Heart Development Organisation, Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation



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Rationale: Why this write-shop?

Pathways for agricultural commercialisation and nutritious foods

In 2016, Wageningen University and Research embarked on a research project on 'Global Food and Nutrition Security', focusing on the integration of food production, value and market changes, and increasing resilience. Within the scope of this project, Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation (WCIDI) has been exploring and identifying developmental agricultural pathways for viable commercial agriculture and consumption of nutritious foods. The main geographic focus is in the ASEAN region¹, and particularly the aspiring ASEAN member Myanmar. The research is funded by the Netherlands Ministry of Economic Affairs.

In this research, the theme of 'social innovation' for nutrition-sensitive and sustainable agriculture is of particular interest. Here, "social innovation refers to the generation and implementation of new ideas about how people should organize interpersonal activities, or social interactions, to meet one or more common goals" (Mumford, 2002, p. 253)². In addition, social innovation entails 'complex processes "introducing new products, processes or programs that profoundly change the basic routines, resource and authority flows, or beliefs of the social system in which the innovation occurs"' (Westley and Antadze, 2010, p. 2)³. In the field of agriculture and food and nutrition security, forms and cases of social innovation may highlight:

- Processes of resilience and adaptation
- Inclusive participation
- Community-led organisations and bottom-up initiatives
- Different interpretations and usages of technologies
- Partnerships
- Citizen science initiatives
- New roles for, and new connections between, stakeholders; also resulting in new ways of decision making

The idea of this part of the research is to **explore interesting cases and dynamics** relating to social innovation, food and nutrition security and agricultural transformation. By bringing out the experiences from local experts and practitioners it may be possible to pinpoint, analyse and bring out the special factors that contribute to social innovation in Myanmar.

During the scoping visit to Myanmar in January 2017, the team members of the WUR had the opportunity to meet with a number of organisations working from diverse angles and expertise on agricultural transformation and food and nutrition security. Some of these

¹ The Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN)

² Mumford, M. D. (2002). Social Innovation: Ten Cases From Benjamin Franklin. *Creativity Research Journal*, 14(2), 253–266. There are more definitions on Social Innovation (e.g. van der Have, R. P., & Rubalcaba, L. (2016). Social innovation research: An emerging area of innovation studies? *Research Policy*, 45(9), 1923–1935. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.respol.2016.06.010>)

³ Westley, F., & Antadze, N. (2010). Making a difference: Strategies for scaling social innovation for greater impact. *Innovation Journal*, 15(2), 1–19.

organisations showed potential in terms of projects and initiatives that touched upon the above-mentioned key concepts of social innovation.

Write-shop methodology

Four organisations, including Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation, brought forward a 'social innovation case'. To explore their cases further write shop methodology was applied, to bring out the organisational practices and to make the workshop link up with their needs. This methodology allows for the documentation of key findings and lessons learned coming from practitioners and, with the help of editors, put on paper. The process of repeated presentations, critiquing, and revising of drafts allows for papers or other products to be reviewed and sharpened substantially, development of new topics, and for topics to be combined, dropped or split into parts.

The write-shop method is particularly useful for really sitting down with colleagues and peers, take stock of practice, draw lessons, and work practically on a product that can be used after the workshop.

- Write-shops generally take the following steps:
 - First draft presentation
 - Participants criticise the draft and suggest illustrations
 - Draft re-written and edited
 - Final products are developed

The facilitators organised this write-shop with a twist: instead of all developing one product together, each organisation developed their own needed product, and in the process contribute to general learning and insights on Social Innovation. The following figure illustrates the content flow of the workshop, in which the four participating organisations work in tandem on their case, but also contribute insights to Social Innovation processes in Myanmar.



Objectives of the two-day write-shop

The objectives of the write-shop were that participants from the four organisations succeeded in:

1. Bringing a case related to social innovation, agriculture and food & nutrition security (Case 1.0) and, together with fellow write-shop participants, bring out the key messages, examples and make this into a new and more attractive, shareable product (Case 2.0);
2. Learning from each other's approaches and experiences and utilise the complementary capacities of the room to generate useful principles and insights in relation to Social Innovation.

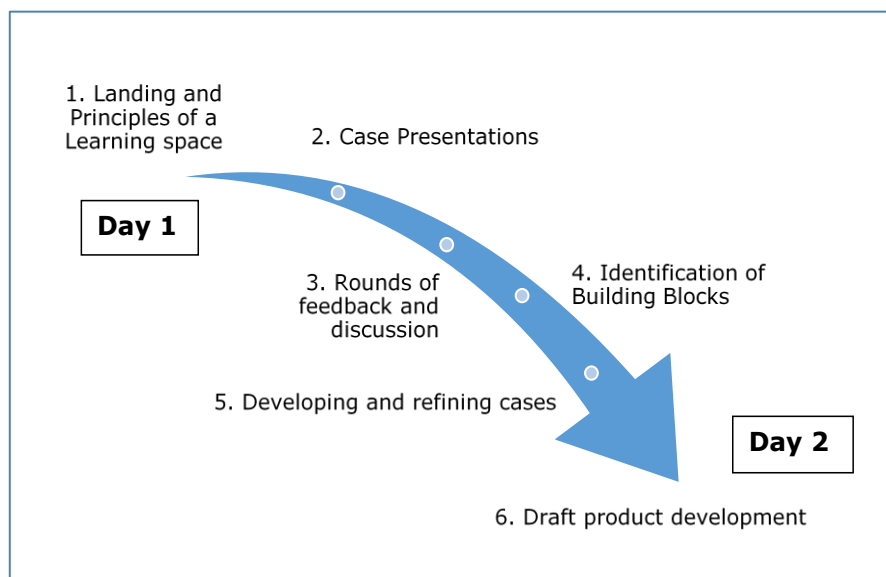
Day 1

Main activities and insights of the day

Introductions and creating a learning space

The day started with the welcoming of the four organisations to the Impact Hub centre in Yangon, with an introduction of the facilitators and the outline of the two-day write-shop. There were four different types of organisations joining: a development organisation, a social enterprise, a public private partnership organisation, and a research organisation. All had in common that they are working on food and nutrition security, agricultural development, and had an interest to see where innovations may happen or can be developed further.

It was clear that due to the diversity of participants and organisations, facilitators needed to adjust use of language and academic concepts so that all workshop participants could equally take part in the discussions and the presentations.



The write-shop process was introduced, with first a landing and defining of the learning space followed by case presentations. Then, a round of feedback and discussions. The main activities were case presentations, questioning and deepening, and consequently developing and refining case studies. The Social Innovation building blocks were to be identified at the end of the first day and throughout the second day. The final stage was having a draft product ready.

Getting to know each other

Introductions were made through use of a 'Shield form' for the participants to get to know each other a bit better. Participants were asked to interview each other in pairs to get to know one another. This involved the participants asking questions about family background, work background, hobbies, what the main thing was that brought them to the write-shop, and their personal mottos.

After a round of sharing, each form was put up on the wall so everyone could have a look at them. This exercise was valuable in the sense that it gave everyone a chance to ease into the write-shop and feel more comfortable, and to stimulate mutual learning and trust.

Hopes and Fears

Using a 'Hopes and Fears' exercise, the write-shop participants drew out some of the main expectations and concerns. Participants were asked to use green cards to write down something they hoped to gain, and red cards to write down what they were afraid might happen.

Hopes were clustered around:

- Learning more about what social innovation can be
- Exploring new ideas and visions
- Gaining some new knowledge and thinking skills
- And learn from the diverse experienced people in the room

Fears were clustered around:

- Some were a bit nervous about presenting their case
- Presenting in English
- Not having enough time to prepare draft and final report

Creating an open working environment

An important first in step creating something together and to know that one can freely ask questions, be critical and give feedback, is to be sure everyone knows what is needed for this. Four of the main principles that are important to keep in mind to make the environment an open working space were introduced:

1. Participatory learning
2. Effective communication
3. Working together
4. Constructive feedback

Each of these principles supports the way we learn as adults: experiential learning through practice, observations and new experimentation, which we engage in differently depending on different personal characteristics and preferences. All participants were asked to think about the four principles for open working environments: how would they like to see participatory learning happen for instance. In addition, in what way can we create a space that this is possible.



This challenging exercise was new to many people in the write-shop. However, it was interesting to see that many ways to make it work revolved around things like being honest, learning by doing, not making things personal, carefully formulating feedback, offering suggestions to make work better, and getting to know each other.

Introduction to Social Innovation

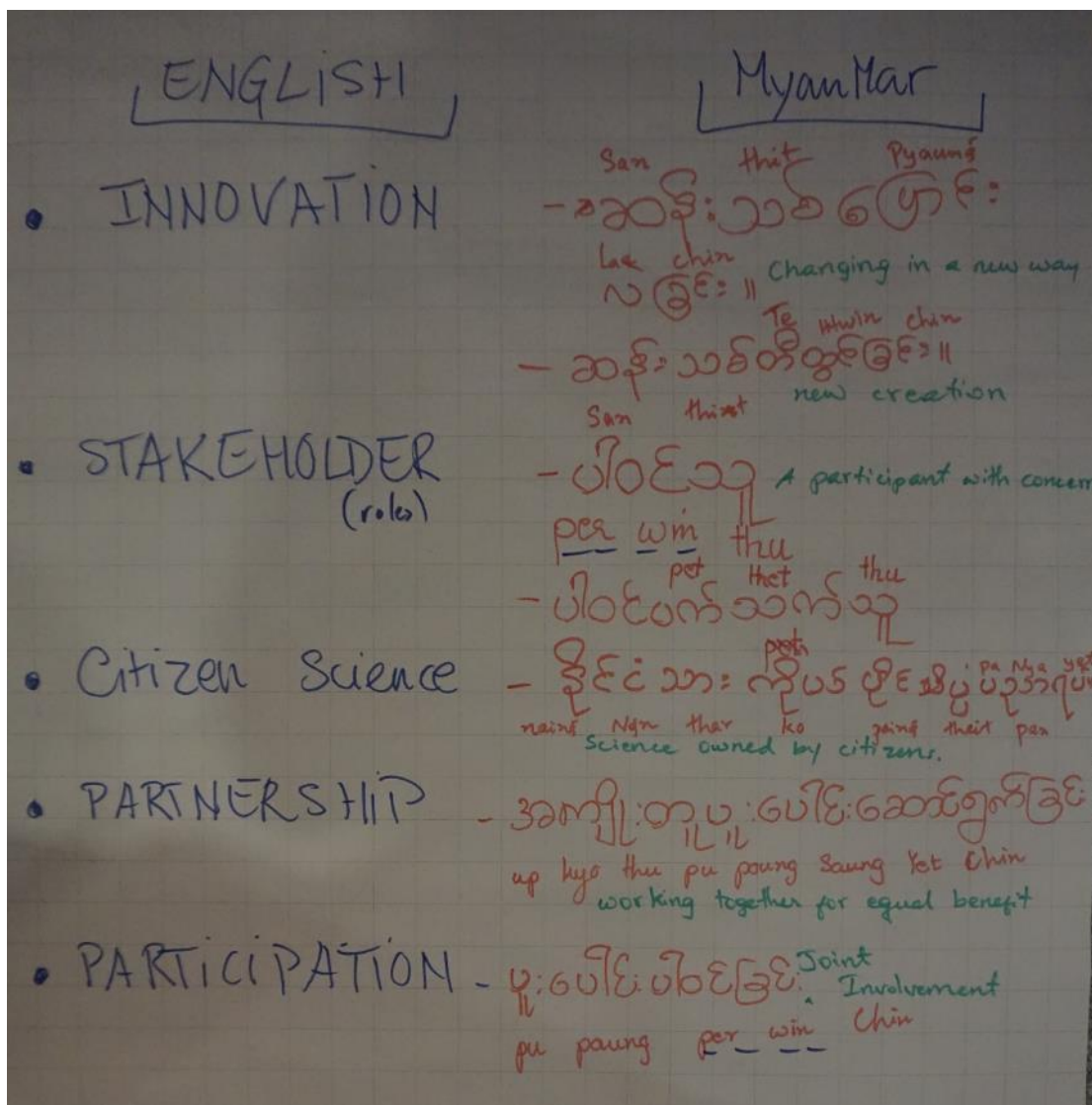
In order to get everyone on the same page on the topic of social innovation, a short presentation was given including a video clip of WCDI colleague Jan Brouwers. In a video message, Jan gave a short summary of Social Innovation and the kinds of topics important from that perspective. This included things like:

- New products, but more especially new ideas, processes and institutions that enable doing things differently
- Working from an interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary perspective
- Striving for not only economic but also social and environmental goals
- Working with the knowledge and expertise of citizens, not only academics
- New ways of working with partners from different parts of society and creating new forms of organisation

The idea of Farmer Field Schools was shared as an example of an interesting social innovation. This idea emerged in response to the Green Revolution and the idea that farmers should also have the chance to share and give their opinions and best practices. By letting farmers test and choose key practices and letting them compare between

different farming approaches a new way of supporting technology and knowledge uptake was facilitated.

After the presentation, the participants together translated the key concepts of SI into Myanmar language and back to English. It turned out for instance that there are two definitions for innovation in Burmese: 'to change in a new way, or new creation'. This exercise was useful to both create a shared understanding of social innovation, and to bring it closer to the practical situation in Myanmar.



Case 1.0 presentations

Fresh Studio

Each organisation presented their own Case 1.0. The first organisation was **Fresh Studio** with the SAPA programme (see box on this page) as the main case. The Fresh Studio presenters prepared a visually attractive poster about the goals, challenges and target groups of the programme (see box 1 for more information about the project). The focus for this write-shop was to explore further how social innovation can manifest itself within the SAPA programme activities and in the relations with partners and stakeholders. They saw potential in the way the public-private partnership is able to raise awareness, expand the network of farmers within corn and poultry value chains, and reach a diversity of smallholder farmers. The main activities SAPA works on are trainings for corn and poultry farmers, for corn merchants, and setting up a poultry-training centre in three cities across Myanmar. The partners that Fresh Studio is collaborating with are quite diverse: they include Dutch and Belgian private sector, Myanmar research institutes, government ministries, and the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Fresh Studio: SAPA programme

SAPA (Sustainable and Affordable Poultry for All) aims at improving the food security and rural incomes of smallholder poultry and corn farmers in Myanmar through a public private partnership with Dutch, Belgium and Myanmar parties involved.

One of the key problems SAPA is addressing is the low agriculture productivity in Myanmar in general and in corn and poultry production specifically. The low agriculture productivity results in low rural incomes and relatively expensive food. With 25 to 50% of rural inhabitants being landless, and often without sufficient income to obtain food, it is crucial that a thriving agri-business sector is developed to generate jobs and lower the cost price of food.

The project goals are to improve food security and rural incomes of smallholders in Myanmar, through the introduction of more productive and sustainable farming practices for poultry and corn production. This will result in lower cost prices and productivity gains, making poultry more affordable, and as the major source of animal protein in Myanmar, contribute to food security.

Myanmar Heart Development Organisation

The Myanmar Heart Development Organisation (MHDO) did the second presentation. The mission and vision of the organisation was shown, with a focus on a specific case in Rakhine State. In this state, MHDO is active for a GIZ-funded programme to reach out to vulnerable communities along the coast. Many of these coastal communities are facing food and nutrition security challenges, due to combinations of economic, social and political factors. Land is difficult to reach so transport is mainly by boat along the coast. In realising food security, most communities are dependent on fishery, and space for agricultural land is limited. The crop-growing season is also relatively short: land tends to get salty due to its proximity to the sea.

The objective of the GIZ and MHDO case is to make sure the food and nutrition situation of people in selected communities in Rakhine State, especially of women between 15 and

Myanmar Heart Development Organisation

The **Myanmar Heart Development Organisation** was founded in 2006 to create and/or provide opportunities for improved livelihood for the needy in Myanmar.

Project Activities

- Food for Education, Food for Work, Food for Training and Non Food Item
- Integrated Farming
- SRI, Wind pump generator, Biogas, Home garden, Nursery, Vermiculture, Compost making, Fish Cultivation, Training, Rabbit raising, Pig & Duck keeping
- Cash for Work

Project Areas

- Kutkai Township, Northern Shan State
- Thayet Township, Magway Region
- Myebon Township, Rakhine State

49 and children between 6 and 23 months, has improved. This involves combined approach toward malnutrition involving different sectors: nutrition-relevant basic health services, agriculture, as well as water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH).

The principal activities implemented:

- Improving advisory services on nutrition and nutrition-relevant basic health services
- Diversification of fruit and vegetable cultivation
- Improving access to water and latrines as well as to know-how about hygiene practices and handling drinking water

Greenovator

Greenovator gave the third presentation. It showed the work that Greenovator has been doing and how the organisational approach is to link development work in agriculture with a business enterprise mentality.

The 'Greenway' mobile application was shown. This app enables farmers to know more about farming practices, gives them access to up to date information and brings them into contact with a manner of different stakeholders such as government extension officers, input suppliers, NGOs and traders.

Greenway shows the potential a technological innovation can have to become a kind of social innovation. In a sense, it is a new kind of service and source of information for Myanmar farmers. The fact that many of the

Greenovator

Greenovator is a social enterprise launched on the 1st of May 2011 in Yangon, Myanmar. It was founded by three core members graduated from the Yezin Agricultural University. All three of them share a passion and commitment in promoting sustainable agricultural production, the use of natural resources and environment conservation.

The Greenovator vision is to share alternative agricultural techniques with farmers to help them improve their agricultural outputs and income levels. A key part of the work is the Green Way mobile application. The app is meant to serve the needs of the farming communities, by giving access to practical information. Key features include:

- Farming practices information
- Weather forecast
- Daily news
- Q&A
- Daily crop market prices

Myanmar people now have access to smartphones makes this a promising way to improve connections and sharing between agricultural stakeholders. The app seems to help farmers who have trouble with reading and have difficulty accessing markets.

According to Greenovator, the coverages of the Greenway app is all over Myanmar, and that it draws around 50,000 users, in 230 townships, which shows pretty fast growth compared to the 1000 users in 2015. Greenovator won the Myanmar Entrepreneurship Award of 2016.

Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation

The fourth and final presentation given was by WCDI. The presenter from WCDI was involved in qualitative data collection for the research project 'Farmer's Tales: Rural Narratives on Agricultural Commercialisation and Food and Nutrition Security in Myanmar'. This research project sought to explore farmer household sense- and decision-making processes with regard to agricultural livelihood and food security outcomes. This means looking at farmers as producer as well as consumers of food. The objective of the research was to find out the various adaptive strategies used by successful farm households to deal with stresses and utilise the diverse resources and capabilities they have.

Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation

Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation facilitates innovation, brokers knowledge and develops capacities with a focus on food systems, rural development, agri-business, conflict, disasters and reconstruction, and the management of natural resources. Our work links Wageningen University and Research knowledge and expertise with processes of society-wide learning and innovation.

[WCDI](#) is currently conducting research funded by the Netherlands Ministry of Economic Affairs to identify development pathways in agriculture that stimulate both commercially viable (climate-smart) agriculture and improve the production and consumption of nutritious foods. It also explores what socially happens in processes of agricultural commercialisation and the implications for food and nutrition security, especially at farmer household level. Evidence will be built through local case studies and bottom-up initiatives aimed at improving food and nutrition security of farmer households. This way, social innovation can foster the transition to a sustainable food system.

For this write-shop, one village was selected to highlight a number of activities and strategies that could signal the development of socially innovative strategies. In one community in the research area in Pakokku, Magway state, some interesting activities and dynamics were taking place. The working title of the case was 'Kan Zauk, the Prize-winning Village'. In this community there seem to be forms of strong social cohesion, which was guided by the community leaders to translate into various economic and social opportunities and goals. Firstly, the community farmers were organising themselves gradually to bypass the role of wholesalers and brokers by collecting their produce together and hiring a truck to bring it to the market themselves. Secondly, it was also seen that, through support of an NGO, that community members had combined a traditional oilseed mortar and pestle with a modern fuel-driven engine to make groundnut oil themselves. This enabled the community to make good quality oil (free of contaminants they perceived other oil products from the market to have) and at the same time provide a service accessible

to the whole community. The third example identified other activities such as collective labour to rebuild dams and water containers, and a strong willingness to participate, and share the knowledge from, trainings given by NGOs, universities and businesses.

Rounds of questions and feedback

After the four presentations, there was a round of deliberation in which different groups who were listening were given the chance to discuss the presentations with each other, and formulate questions and suggestions for the group. This helped the presenters of the case to know whether their main message had come across.



Day 2

Main activities and insights of Day 2

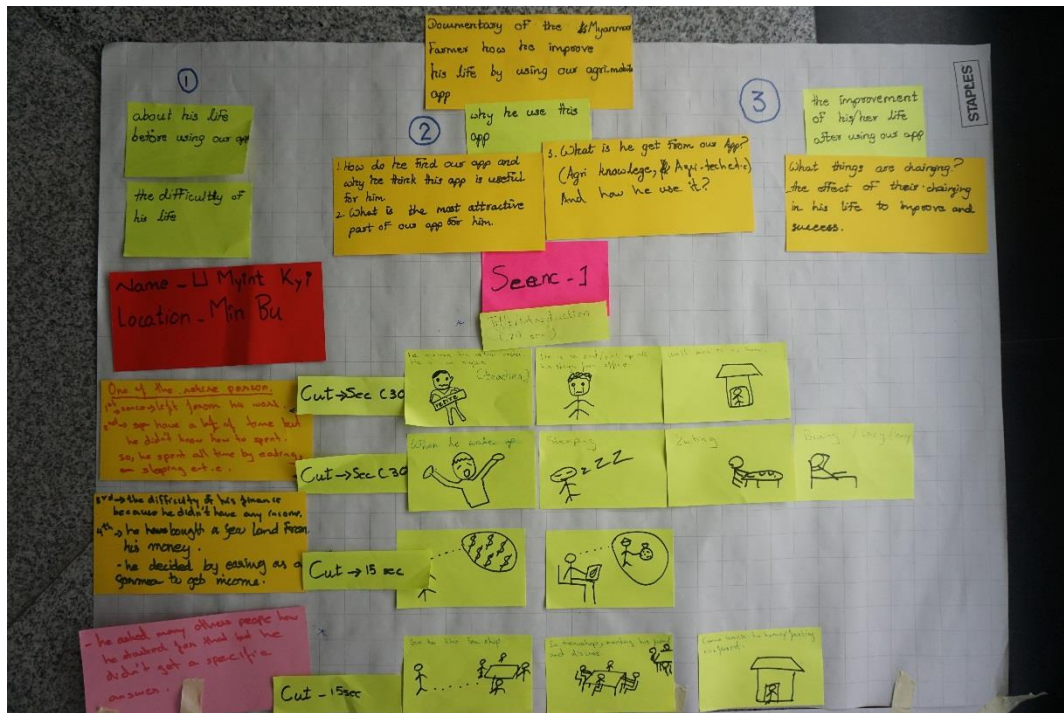
After a brief start-up exercise to reflect on the happenings of the previous day, the groups got to work on their cases. In developing their cases they were urged to clearly think about what *kind of product* they wanted to develop, *what message* it should be and *for whom*.

The groups were primed to think about three main ways in which people read:

- Some only scan and only have time for the main message. For these readers you have to inspire them and give them the idea straight away. This means asking what is the main message and goal of the product
- Some have an interest to learn more. This means giving a bit more information and more of an overview
- Finally, there are readers who want to know precisely what is written and what the evidence is. A strong case study can therefore give details or at least point to other sources.

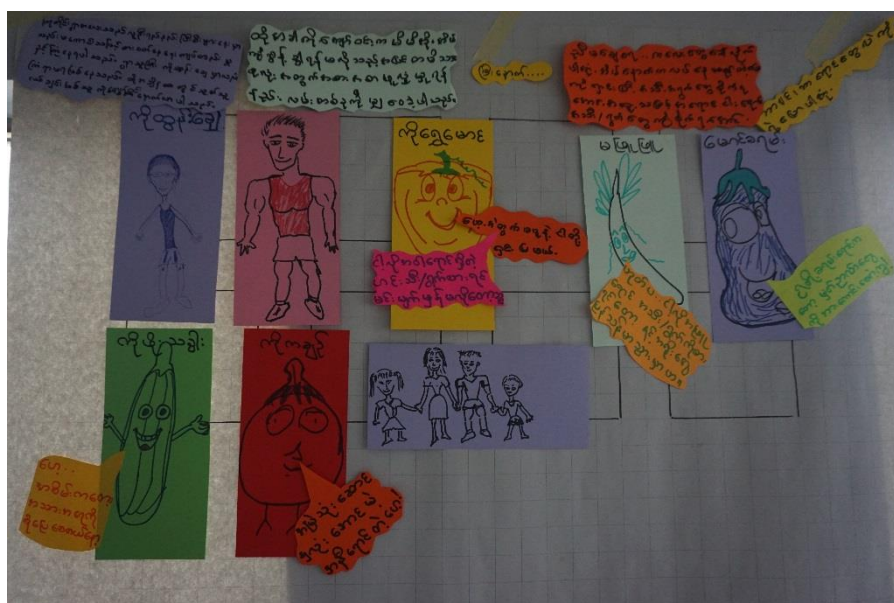
Fresh Studio went to work to develop a case study document that highlighted elements of social innovation in their work and practices. This was based on their own poster presentation and SAPA programme document, but also their experiences from the past year and a half implementing the programme.





Greenway sought to develop a storyboard for a documentary they were planning to make. The basis of the idea was that they already met a few farmers who stated that they had really benefited from use of the Greenway application. The challenge for the Greenovator group was to identify elements that make the application a social innovation and to make that visual for the documentary viewers.

Myanmar Heart Development Organisation decided to get to work on a picture book that illustrated the way they tried to create more awareness about food and nutrition in communities in Northern Rakhine state. Using inspiration from the five colours approach to vegetable and fruit, they drew characters and developed a storyline that tried to tap into the knowledge they already had from the region, the adaptive capacities of communities there, and insights on nutrition.



Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation developed the story of the Prize-Winning Village into a short SI brief that illustrated the community and brought out some key trends and factors that seem important. This focused on building a form of timeline in the life-course of the community members, and identifying tangible and intangible elements that contributed to social innovation.

Presentations and rounds of feedback

Each group worked towards building their Case 2.0, and at the end of the second day each group presented their work. After the presentations, all groups gave feedback and suggestions that could be further developed.

Fresh Studio

Clear elements of SI that came forward from the case were the approach of short-cutting the value chains of maize and poultry by more strongly connecting consumers of safe chicken to the farmers producing broiler chicken and the farmers providing maize for these chickens. Coming from a 'Myanmar consumer' and a 'quality' perspective to food is a new way of looking at things in Myanmar. However, it was also noted that there is a technical component to understanding and working with this, but also a cultural element that is important to pay attention to. Fresh Studio can build on this idea to strengthen the partnership further as it works on social innovation. Another key element that was interesting to develop from an SI point of view was the fact that many different types of stakeholders are working together in this Public Private Partnership. This is a new form of collaboration in Myanmar, and has the potential to create opportunities and synergies not considered before.

Greenovator

For the Greenovator team the challenge of developing a storyboard for a short video or documentary was valuable, since they were already intending to do this sometime soon. They found out that developing a documentary storyboard was not easy, and that the difference between a documentary and a promotional video is not only about the length of the video. The team was challenged to exactly identify what makes the Greenway application different from other agricultural extension training interventions. These elements, and that is where the SI potential was seen, had to do with the communication flows between farmers, experts and value chain actors, and the potential for exchanging different forms of knowledge. If Greenovator is able to make the bridge between expert knowledge and farmer/community practice and traditions, changing the roles of these groups in the process, it can be very interesting.

MHDO

The MHDO case presentation focused on how to best combine activities that contribute to food and nutrition security. One of the examples of methods used was the '5 Colours' approach to fruits and vegetables: different colours give different types of good nutrients. Another part of the work is on agricultural development through support in making organic fertilizer. In the picture book, the MHDO group sought to develop the story of how a development worker came to a community in Northern Rakhine and met a community leader. They started talking about good food, healthy food and nutritious food. The development worker had ideas about what that meant, and the community

leader as well. Together they decided to work on food and nutrition security together, inspired by the 5-colours approach, but also building on the communities' resilience and local agro-ecological circumstances.

Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation

The Prize-winning village concept that was developed by WCDI showed that combining life-course research methodologies with ideas of change in the community could lead to interesting perspectives on social innovation. In the process of developing a Case 2.0, it became clear that though there was quite some interesting information already there, more data needed to be collected to make it into a solid case study. The key message that this story brought was about inspiration and basic building blocks of social innovations. These do not necessarily occur in only this village, but in many communities across Myanmar. The activities mentioned, such as the community oil pressing mill, the collective truck or the new partnerships with research and businesses may not seem very inventive from a general development perspective, but in Myanmar these are new opportunities and ideas arising through bottom-up initiatives. This is essential for policy-makers to know about, and support.

Follow-up of the write-shop products

At the end of the workshop each of the groups were asked how they were going to give a follow-up to the work that had been done during the workshop. Since quite some nice work was done, it was important that the participant groups mention in some way in which they intended to follow-up.

Fresh Studio group reported that they intended to work on the document further in the coming weeks, with the intention of making their own social innovation case study for SAPA.

The **Greenovator** group stated that they had a number of things they would like to follow-up on: they enjoyed hearing from the various cases that were brought forward, and would like to maintain contact with Fresh Studio and MHDO to see if the Greenway application might be of any use to them. As for the storyboard of the promotional video, they intended to pitch this to their fellow colleagues, and if this is accepted, to develop an action plan with budget to make it happen before the end of the year.



MHDO reported that they would pass on the messages and learnings from the workshop. However, they did note that for the case they brought forward for Rakhine it was

somewhat difficult to suggest changes in the programme logic and theory of change. Key elements for them were to pass on the insights, and to try to apply their participatory approaches for this project. Furthermore, they intended to see if they could get a cartoon artist or picture artist to help them develop the idea of the picture book further.

The **WCDI** research project team noted that the major next step was to develop the insights in a word document to make a short 2/3 pager on the social innovation examples in the 'Prize-winning village'. However, this did mean that they would need to get touch with the MHDO local office in Pakokku in order to do some follow-up questions via telephone with the community leader.

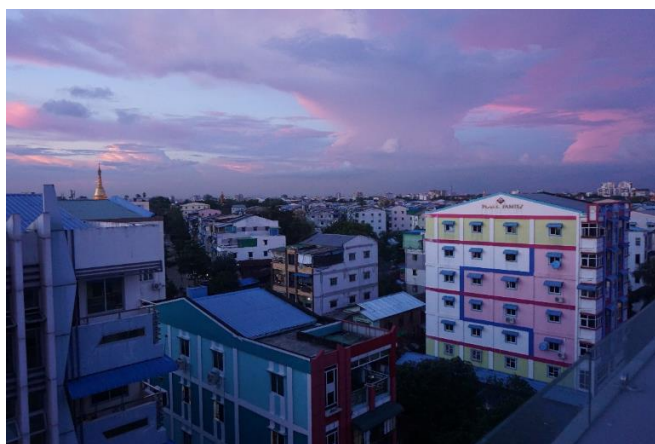
The facilitator team from Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation underlined their commitment to give further support for the development of the cases. The facilitators stated their intent to develop the Social Innovation Case study write-shop method further.

Evaluation

At the end of the workshop, the participants were asked to write down their feedback on the workshop by means of tips and tops: something they liked about the workshop and something they think can be improved.

Some key tops were:

- Getting a good idea of Social Innovation
- Improving analytical skills
- Critical thinking and deepened understanding
- Creating own ideas and developing them in the write shop
- Sharing much knowledge from different backgrounds



Key tips:

- Need more time to develop products
- Need more time to have the workshop
- Need to speak more clearly

These tips and tops were noted, and especially with regard to time the facilitating team agreed that indeed more time would have been good, in order to really develop the products in a more detailed and finalised fashion. In that sense the first objective of the write shop was not fully met.

The WCDI team committed to offering further support in developing the cases and in giving distance advice. In 2018, the research continues and it is anticipated that more case studies will be developed.

Annex 1: Programme

Day 1

Time	Programme section
09:00	Introduction participants, objectives and programme
09:45	Expectations: Hopes and Fears
10:30	Write-shop methodology
11:00	Creating a learning space
11:45	Discussion on Social Innovation
12:30	Lunch
13:30	Presentations
15:00	Questioning, feedback and deepening
16:30	Presentation on refining case studies
17:00	Close of the day

Day 2

Time	Programme section
09:00	Reflection on lessons from the previous day
09:15	Writing case documents
12:30	Lunch
13:30	Continuation of case work
15:30	Presentations of cases developed and feedback
17:00	Evaluation and closure

Annex 2: List of participants

	Name	Organisation	E-mail
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