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SUCCESS STORY

Establishing a Balanced Dialogue Between Local Authorities and Community Members in Burma

Photo: Aung Myo Hlaik, Tetra Tech



Minhla Member of Parliament Mr. U Aung Aung speaks to land resource stakeholder meeting attendees about the importance of instilling greater trust in local land authorities and his personal commitment to support a process to ensure land issues faced by the communities of Yway Gone Village Tract are discussed transparently and resolved peacefully.



Location of Yway Gone Village Tract within Burma

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Historically in Burma, limited communication has occurred between community members and local land administration authorities. This has fostered distrust by citizens and a lack of responsiveness from local land authorities. USAID works with both groups as part of participatory mapping activities in the Yway Gone Village Tract to demonstrate models for resolving land disputes and promoting coordination in sustainable land management.

After several months of community engagement, USAID's local partner facilitated a stakeholder meeting, representing the first time that local residents and government officials have been able to meet collectively to discuss land resource management and tenure issues.

The community used the products of participatory mapping exercises to voice their land resource concerns to local government. The forum also allowed local authorities to explain their role in land management. The newly elected Member of Parliament for Minhla Township, Mr. U Aung Aung, pledged his long-term support in resolving land resource issues faced by community members as a result of land leasing under the Vacant, Fallow and Virgin Land Law, but added that community members themselves must also be involved.

Speaking to meeting attendees, Mr. U Aung Aung said, "In the past, local land authorities have acted without considering the interests of all the community members. This must end if land conflicts are to be avoided in the future. Meetings like this are an important opportunity for all parties to discuss these sensitive issues in a safe environment and will result in improved transparency between citizens and government departments."

The successful stakeholders meeting also stimulated community members to request additional support to better understand existing land legislation and the relevant provisions in the new National Land Use Policy on community land and resource rights.