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Myanmar A/D/C and JDR 3RD Scholars Reconnect with Winrock

Winrock International

Improving Lives and Livelihoods Worldwide



CSSDD Farm Director Saw Hei Moo demonstrates the aquaponic system.

“It means to me that Winrock did care for the former recipients of its scholarships.”

- Professor Maung Maung Htwe

In July 2007, former A/D/C Fellow Maung Maung Htwe, then age 70, received a call telling him that a Winrock staffer was in Yangon and wanted to meet him for breakfast. He was shocked. “I lost touch with Winrock in the 1970s,” he says. “So I was very surprised to get the call.”

Professor Htwe reported that he had spent 30 years teaching at Yezin Agriculture University, but noted that university training was out of reach to the children of farmers, who lacked the grades to get in and the funds for tuition. After retiring in 1998, Professor Htwe joined the board of the Myanmar Baptist Convention’s Christian Social

Services and Development Department, which acquired 18 acres of land north of Yangon and opened a demonstration farm for poor farmers in 2007.

Now, nearly six years later, the CSSDD demonstration farm—now 32 acres—is a recipient of the first USAID agricultural development aid to Myanmar in 25 years, through the Farmer-to-Farmer Program implemented by Winrock. Drs. James Rakocy and Dilip Nandwani, of the University of the Virgin Islands, traveled to Yangon in March 2013 to teach a five-day aquaponics course and direct the construction of a low-tech aquaponic system for the production of local vegetables and stinging catfish, a highly prized food fish in Myanmar. The system is powered by solar cells.

By November 2013, the CSSDD farm had replicated the aquaponics course for 22 additional trainees, and constructed two additional aquaponic systems. One participant has signed a small contract with a new organic food store in Yangon to supply basil and vegetables.

Professor Htwe had been interested in aquaponic systems and had intended to travel to the Philippines to receive training, since the technology is entire-

ly new to Myanmar. “But,” he says, “luckily Winrock arranged to have this aquaponic training in Myanmar. We hope to establish a center for aquaponics at Yezin Agricultural University to do more research and extension, because the authorities in Naypyitaw recognize this as a promising technology for small farmers.”

In 2013, Winrock won a five-year, \$8 million Farmer-to-Farmer Program award covering three countries, including Myanmar. Winrock will send more than 100 volunteers to Myanmar to benefit thousands of farmers by strengthening local host institutions, including non-profit organizations and farmers associations.

Winrock’s history in Myanmar through the A/D/C (1960s) and the John D. Rockefeller-



Dr. Ai Thanda (4th from left) with women workers at Shwe Pazun Coffee Farm, and Farmer to Farmer volunteer Rick Peyser of Green Mountain Coffee (center).

ler 3RD Scholars Program (1007-08) were part of the reason that USAID agreed to authorize the Farmer to Farmer Program to begin operations in Myanmar.

Dr. Ai Thanda, lead principal researcher for the 2007-08 Myanmar JDR 3RD Scholars team, now serves as Winrock’s Farmer-to-Farmer Country Director. “When I was asked to work for Farmer-to-Farmer, I happily agreed,” says Dr. Ai Thanda. “I know Winrock will continue to build my capacity to do this work, and I am happy to help provide technical assistance to many Myanmar farmers and entrepreneurs who have a strong wish to improve the quality of their products.”



Trainees and aquaponics system constructed in downtown Yangon on top of a four-story building.

Winrock International is a nonprofit organization that works with people in the United States and around the world to empower the disadvantaged, increase economic opportunity, and sustain natural resources.