According to the World Bank (2017), the new government of Myanmar has launched new economic policies, finalized new health and education sector strategies, started new priorities such as nutrition and rural development, and accelerated efforts for the peace process. The World Bank further states that “there are opportunities to further deepen reforms, create shared prosperity for all, and for the country to resume its place as one of the most dynamic economies in Asia.”

With its current emergence from decades of economic and political isolation, Myanmar has strong potential for broad economic expansion. The country has abundant natural resources, a strategic location at the crossroads of Asia, a young population, and a sizable market with wide-ranging investment opportunities. Two important milestones in Myanmar’s transition include the successful national election in November 2015 and a peaceful shift to a new government in April 2016. However, the country needs to achieve and maintain stability both on the macroeconomic front and in terms of peace and reconciliation. According to the Asian Development Bank (2017), Myanmar needs to address substantive infrastructure and human resource deficits, which constrain social and economic development. Poverty in Myanmar is concentrated in rural areas where 70 percent of poor people rely on agricultural and casual employment for their livelihoods. Many live near the poverty line and are sensitive to economy-wide shocks (World Bank, 2017).

Though it has made progress in laying the building blocks for an inclusive market economy and improved livelihoods, significant challenges remain for Myanmar. ADB (2017) said that successful empowerment and inclusion in Myanmar will depend on citizens who are able to make a better future for themselves and on transparent institutions that allow people to do so. A key player in this is the country’s education sector.

With Myanmar’s economic and democratic transition in rapid progress, the higher education sector needs to re-engineer itself. Efforts have to be made to enact higher education and private education laws, incorporate citizenship education, and increase engagement with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Higher education can be key to supporting the country’s economic development and democratic transition (Kamibeppu and Chao, Jr., 2017).

The country’s higher education is now charged with the responsibility of producing enough graduates with the required skills, knowledge, and attitudes demanded by an economy increasingly connected to the global market. Universities need to re-engineer themselves and their curricula to effectively adapt to the requirements of Myanmar’s fast changing economic and social environment.

To strengthen its human resource development, Myanmar, especially its higher education sector, needs to vigorously pursue relevant projects that address gaps and jumpstart its agricultural and rural development (ARD) from new perspectives. From its five decades of experience in agricultural and rural development in the region, the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA) asserts in its current Tenth Five-year Plan that such projects ought to be inclusive and sustainable.

It is in this light that SEARCA, the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation (MOALI) and the Ministry of Education (MOE) of Myanmar through the Yezin Agricultural University (YAU), jointly offer this five-day training-workshop on developing, planning and implementing fundable ARD projects for higher education institutions in Myanmar. Using adaptive project cycle management, this training-workshop will focus on three major phases of project development and management, namely: (1) development; (2) planning, design, and proposal packaging; and (3) results-based project management of fundable ARD projects.
At the end of this five-day training-workshop, participants will be able to:

1. Distill the pressing needs for focused direction-setting in research and development in agricultural and rural development (ARD) in Myanmar that is inclusive and sustainable;
2. Discuss the project design cycle and project proposal packaging continuum vis-à-vis identified directions for fundable ARD projects in Myanmar;
3. Undertake steps of analyses and prepare a logical framework matrix (based on theory of change) applying results-based project management principles;
4. Outline a fundable project proposal on ARD anchored on inclusiveness and sustainability principles;
5. Initiate a plan for preparing or updating a syllabus on developing, designing and implementing results-based projects in Myanmar; and,
6. Outline a relevant research, development, and extension (RDE) agenda on inclusive and sustainable agricultural and rural development (ISARD) in Myanmar.

The expected outputs are:
• Graduates of the training-workshop with enhanced knowledge, skills, and attitudes on ARD imperatives for Myanmar and the Mekong Sub-region, tempered with inclusiveness and sustainability principles;
• Rough draft of project proposal/s;
• Initial action plan toward preparing a course syllabus on developing, designing and implementing results-based projects; and
• RDE options for ISARD in Myanmar.

Intended Participants
The workshop is intended for 40-45 officials and technical staff of higher education institutions in agriculture, forestry, and environment studies in Myanmar, including government agencies whose mandate is to promote agricultural and rural development.

Modules
The workshop will cover the following modules:
• Module 1. Analysis of the Mekong Sub-Region and Myanmar Context and Needs in Inclusive and Sustainable Agricultural and Rural Development: Drivers, Domains, and Project Cycle Management
• Module 2. Problem Analysis; Generation and Prioritization of ISARD Project Ideas
• Module 3. Designing and Packaging the Winning Project Proposal
• Module 4. Results-based Approach to Project Implementation
• Module 5. Higher Education and Institutional RDE for ISARD

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