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Headline: NGO, private sector cooperates to improve livelihoods in Labutta

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Myanmar Awba Group (Awba), Mercy Corps, and Golden Sunland have formed a coalition with the objective of improving the livelihoods of paddy farmers in Labutta town, Ayeyarwady region, via a project called Link to Labutta Market.

The project, which aims to raise the farmers' earnings, was initiated by Mercy Corps, the international non-government organisation (NGO), as a humanitarian programme to rebuild Labutta in the wake of cyclone Nargis, which took place in Myanmar 11 years ago.

The project will bring benefits to all parties. Awba, Myanmar's leading agricultural company, will make input product sales, while Golden Sunland, a Singapore-based agricultural firm, will purchase high quality paddy, ultimately enabling farmers to earn more income.

Golden Sunland, which also promotes responsible farming from seed to harvest, signed a contract farming agreement to purchase paddy grown based on Good Agriculture Practice from Labutta paddy farmers at a price higher than the market average. The firm will then export the procured paddy internationally.

"The Link to Labutta Market is a great opportunity for Awba to apply its farming advisory capabilities to support farmers to achieve higher productivity. We are keen to work with other NGOs and crop trading partners, and to make further use of precision farming capabilities such as satellite remote sensing, agriculture technology and pest identification to assist the farming community," said Jin Young Choi, head of business development at Awba.

There are currently 40 farmers and families farming across 200 acres of land in Labutta working under the project. The programme is expected to improve their livelihoods by 30 percent. If successful, it will also demonstrate the effective integration of the agendas of both NGOs and the private sector.

"We are constantly looking for new ways to add value to the supply chain and being a part of this partnership allows Golden Sunland to work closely with Myanmar farmers to ensure a stability of income while bringing local products to the international market," said David Chen, co-founder and COO of Golden Sunland.