

## Ms Aye Sandar Phyto

The 2015 Crawford Fund Fellowship has been awarded to Ms Aye Sandar Phyto from Myanmar. Ms Phyto is a Research Associate at the Asian Institute of Technology. She has a Master of Science (Regional and Rural Development Planning) from the Asian Institute of Technology in Thailand.

The focus of Sandar's research is the application of socioeconomic research to support improved agricultural practice. By linking agricultural innovations with social science knowledge on the social, cultural and institutional settings, agricultural innovations may be designed and adapted to better suit the local and regional context, and have more lasting impact for smallholder households.

Since joining the ACIAR funded project *Strengthening Institutional Capacity, Extension Services and Rural Livelihoods in the Central Dry Zone and Ayeyarwaddy Delta Regions of Myanmar*, Sandar has lead qualitative and quantitative analysis of household livelihoods, change and rural dynamics. One of the project aims is to integrate an understanding of household livelihoods and farmer decision making into extension and agricultural research as part of a broader ACIAR program developing agricultural technologies in rice, legumes, livestock and fish. Sandar's work contributes directly to this aim by providing evidence of the complex dynamics between rapid mechanisation, rural migration and landless rural labour, and how these have played out differently in the two study areas. Sandar has been essential in gathering and analysing data related to characterisation of rural households, labour availability, migration patterns, and developing a typology of rural households.

Prior to joining the ACIAR project, Sandar was a research associate with the Myanmar Development Research Institute, where she researched fish value chains in the Delta Region. The research involved identification and cataloguing of pond clusters in the Delta, and in-depth interviews with actors along the value chain to understand the extent of the aquaculture sector and current changes and trends. Preliminary findings highlighted constraints within the system which were limiting the potential of aquaculture to contribute to rural development. Sandar was contributed to all aspects of this work, which provided recommendations to better support the industry's development and support small and medium scale producers.

Sandar also has several years' experience working to improve agricultural production and livelihoods through the provision of training and other support to farming communities in Myanmar.

While in Australia she will be hosted by the CSIRO Land & Water Flagship in Brisbane. The program will combine formal training and mentorship with a range of academics and scientists based in Brisbane and Canberra.