Myanmar’s farming, fishing community benefits from region

Posted: 25 Jan 2012 09:00 PM PST

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A four-day health expo conducted by the church's Health Ministries and the Adventist Development and Relief Agency in Myanmar recently drew more than 1,500 attendees and was a first for the Adventist Church in the Irrawaddy Delta region.

Church officials there report that efforts paid off and community members flocked to hear health lectures and receive free medical screenings and consultations. Staff discovered that while 60 percent of those screened had been diagnosed with hypertension, few understood what high blood pressure is or how to treat it.

Local authorities, who were at first reluctant to let the church host a health expo, changed their minds after observing community members leave with newfound health and lifestyle knowledge, church leaders said.

"[The authorities] started to understand the program," said Dr. Htwe Lay, Adventist Health Ministries director for Myanmar. "Not only did they fully support the health program, they also asked us to conduct more of this in other neighboring areas in the future."

Comprised of nearly 700 villages, Myanmar's Labutta region was the country's hardest hit region when Cyclone Nargis made landfall in 2008. ADRA Myanmar has been active in the region since then, implementing rehabilitation and development projects and addressing health, livelihoods, water hygiene, sanitation and food security concerns.

The region is largely Buddhist, but church leaders hope the health outreach finds traction in the community. Lay said she hopes "the Adventist message will be reached through the health message."