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NATIONAL
CONSULTATION REPORT

SUSTAINABLE
FOREST TRADE IN THE
LOWER MEKONG REGION

MYANMAR



Summary Notes
from National
Project Consultation
Workshop

Date

Tuesday, 5 January 2021



Background:

In March 2020, the government of Norway approved a new UN-REDD Programme initiative for Sustainable Forest Trade in the Lower Mekong Region (SFT-LMR). The initiative is being implemented in five countries of the LMR - Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam, and will also promote engagement and collaboration with China.

The SFT-LMR project in Myanmar was initially introduced to the Myanmar Forest Department (FD) on 20 August 2020, establishing the need to identify the country's priority outcomes under the project. To that end and in order to gain wider support for project implementation from national stakeholders, a national consultation workshop was a key activity held during the project inception period.

Objectives:

A

Introduce the SFT-LMR project to Myanmar's wider stakeholders and provide opportunities for questions and answers, clarifying the main visions of the project;

B

Gather feedback on identified country priorities from different groups of stakeholders, to develop SFT-LMR activities that support the national work plan for Myanmar

C

To further identify government priorities and existing initiatives that would be potentially supported by the SFT-LMR project.

Structure of the Workshop:

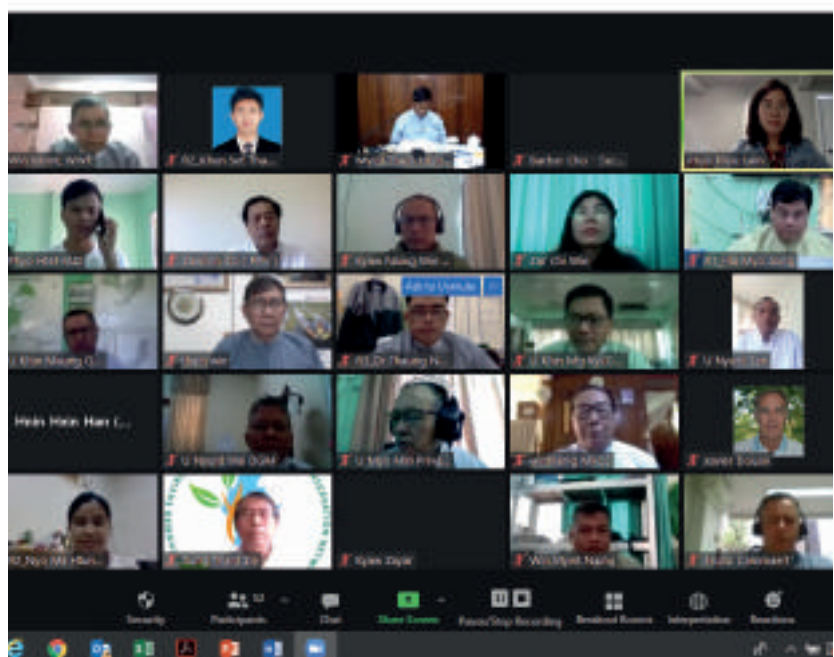
The consultation workshop was organized online, in view of Myanmar's current government guidance on limiting the spread of COVID-19, using Zoom as platform. Workshop sessions included: (a) opening session; (b) introduction of the participants; (c) presentation session; (d) group discussions session; and (d) closing session. The national consultation workshop was officially inaugurated by Dr. Thaug Naing Oo, Director

of Planning and Statistics for FD on behalf of the Director General of Forest Department. He is also the Government Focal Point of the UN-REDD Programme Myanmar. Mr. Ben Vickers, Regional Advisor for Asia-Pacific, FAO/UN-REDD Programme provided the workshop's closing remarks. The agenda of the workshop is as attached as Annex I.



Participants:

In total, 50 participants joined the workshop (24% female participants; 76% male participants), representing various institutions: 30% represented MoNREC (the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation), 16% INGOs, 8% local NGOs, 14% the private sector, and other participants from FAO, UNDP, UNEP, and the project team. Workshop participants are listed as Annex II.



Objectives:

1. Introduction of the SFT-LMR project

Dr. Phyu Phyu Lwin, National Project Coordinator provided a brief introduction of the SFT-LMR project, including the key project facts, outcomes and outputs, as well as the essential statistics on timber production and certification, and laws and regulations in Myanmar.



2. Activities to support sustainable forest management in Myanmar

Dr. Yu Ya Aye, Assistant Director, FD and Government Focal Point of the SFT-LMR project, presented FD activities for sustainable forest management in Myanmar, focusing on the sustainable management of forest resources. The main five initiatives are:

- (a) A 30-year national forest master plan (2001-2002 to 2030-2031);
- (b) A comprehensive forestry sector development plan (2011-2012 to 2030-2031);
- (c) Myanmar's reforestation and rehabilitation plan (2017-2018 to 2026-2027);

- (d) Re-introducing natural habitats programme for some selected protected areas (2019-2020 to 2028-2029); and
- (e) 10-year district forest management plan for 68 districts.

Dr. Aye also mentioned the components of Myanmar's Selection System (MSS)¹, statistics on community managed forests (CF), and issues around tackling illegal logging. Dr. Aye also highlighted Myanmar's challenges in managing forests sustainably and shared FD's vision for the way forward.



¹ The Myanmar Selection System (MSS) is the science-based system of forest management and harvesting in Myanmar, which evolved from the Brandis Selection System developed in 1857. The MSS prescribes the harvesting tree species of prescribed minimum girth limits within the boundary of the annual allowable cut. Further information can be accessed [here](#).

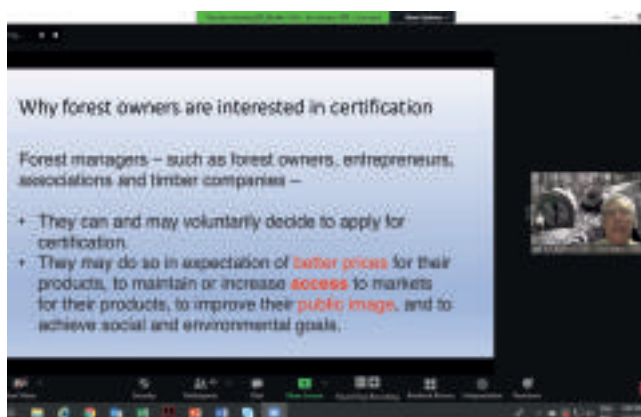
3. Progress on FLEGT program Myanmar

Mr. Min Min Oo, Staff Officer of FD, and member of FD's FLEGT Unit introduced the objectives of FLEGT in Myanmar and the configuration of the FLEGT multi-stakeholder group. The presentation also included the initial results in preparing Myanmar's FLEGT Work Programme (2020-2021) and proposed areas of work highlighted by a series of consultation meetings conducted in different states and regions of Myanmar.



4. Timber certification and sustainable forest management in Myanmar

Mr. Barber Cho, Secretary of MFCC (Myanmar Forest Certification Committee) introduced the concept of forest certification in general, and in the context of Myanmar. The presentation explained the efforts of the MFCC to develop the MTLAS (Myanmar Timber Legality Assurance System) and MFCS (Myanmar Forest Certification Scheme).



Discussions:

The four pre-identified topics for group discussions were:

- (1) Transboundary cooperation between Myanmar and LMR countries;
- (2) Sustainable Forest Management and Legality in Myanmar;
- (3) Data sharing and real-time monitoring; and
- (4) Private sector and SMEs.

The key outputs of the group discussions in relation to each specific outcome of the project are highlighted as follows:

OUTCOME 1

Strengthened bilateral and regional cooperation in place to facilitate legal and sustainable trade in forest products across the LMR and (China)

- Existing MoUs between Myanmar and LMR countries: FD has signed a MoU with the State Forest Administration (SFA) of China.

Collaborative activities will include sustainable forest management and jointly combating illegal logging and associated trade, scientific research, forest fire management, and encouraging Chinese investment in the forestry sector of Myanmar, within the duration of five years (2017 – 2022). However, this MoU is not much operationally active, and the group discussion highlighted that more communication and consultations are needed to facilitate the collaboration between Myanmar and China.

- As a gap for transboundary cooperation between Thailand and Myanmar, borders between the two countries have not been clearly marked; that is the main barrier to initiate transboundary cooperation.
- Export on forest products through the border gates/check points at transboundary areas is not allowed in Myanmar; the only channel for exporting timber is through Yangon port.

- Export of round wood harvested from forest plantations is now being planned; however export of round wood from natural forests is still banned since 2014.
- For the National Single Window System, the Ministry of Commerce is cooperating with ASEAN. The updated information is in this [link](#).
- If tax exemptions or reductions to the amount of tax is applied for importing timber to Myanmar, interest for investments in the forest sector will be high from private sector in importing timber.
- As investment in the forest sector is long-term, it can encounter financial deficit while the market for interim harvesting (e.g thinning) is mostly lacking in Myanmar.

OUTCOME 2

Improved forest governance for legal and sustainable trade of forest related products

- Myanmar Selection System (MSS) has been practiced since 1856 as Sustainable Forest Management. Currently, there are pilot studies on modified MSS and ecosystem-based forest management in collaboration with local NGOs.
- There are no public procurement policies in Myanmar, which represents one gap for future follow-up.
- In Myanmar, deforestation rates, corruption index, and the amount of seized timber are high. Therefore, timber exported from Myanmar has high risk of illegality. And, the number of required documents/evidences from Myanmar for due diligence systems is higher than those in other countries.
- The definition of legal timber is still being developed by the FLEGT MSG (Multi-Stakeholder Group members), with further discussions, consultations and technical support needed to take the process forward.

OUTCOME 3

Improved monitoring of forest and land-use through enhanced data accessibility and management

- Currently, there is no official or formalized mechanism for near real-time monitoring system in place. However, pilot activities have been conducted (e.g., cellular trail cameras have been set up in pilot areas).
- CMRS (Community based monitoring and reporting system) is also one of the activities involving participation of local people in order to report illegal logging related activities in a timely manner.
- Current priorities of Myanmar related to monitoring and data sharing include: REDD+ national forest monitoring system, national forest inventory (NFI), forest information management system, and community forest spatial data².
- As there is still lack of geospatial monitoring system even for the existing programmes, the group discussions mentioned some prioritized programmes such as Myanmar Reforestation and Rehabilitation Programme (MRRP) and CF database system.
- Some of the important information systems related to environmental and social outcomes in the forest sector include: Safeguards Information System (SIS); National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP); OneMap; National Indicator Framework, etc. Some new initiatives may be relevant, such as the National Forest Inventory, and World Bank 'Forest Restoration, development and investment project'.
- Collaboration between and among institutions is mandatory for promoting data sharing in Myanmar. Database systems for all sectors should be promoted. Some of the key actors mentioned included: Forest Department and Environmental Conservation Department, MONREC; Myanmar Timber Enterprise; Community Forestry National Working Group. This collaboration could be supplemented

² This refers to geospatial data collected during the establishment of community forests to ensure that they do not overlap with the establishment of forest plantations or other land-uses.

by learning exchanges with other countries to learn how they undertake transparent data sharing and enact measures to ensure accountability and responsibility for shared data.

The detailed questions and answers for each identified topic of the group discussions are attached as Annex III.

Key messages of the workshop and the way forward:

OUTCOME 1

Strengthened bilateral and regional cooperation

Myanmar has a MoU with China in the context of tackling illegal logging and promoting sustainable forest management, which is considered as operationally not very active. SFT-LMR project can support strengthening of the cooperation under this MoU as well as other existing collaborative activities by considering that the project seeks to support Myanmar's ongoing efforts in transboundary cooperation.

One of the group discussion outputs indicated that borders between the Thailand and Myanmar have not been clearly demarcated, making it the main barrier to initiate transboundary cooperation. To strengthen bilateral and regional cooperation among LMR countries, a feasibility study/situational analysis is recommended. Public awareness on forest crime should be encouraged because illegal logging and associated trade are Myanmar's challenges in sustainable forest management.

OUTCOME 2

Improved forest governance

Myanmar's current forest management system has been practiced since colonial times, starting from the 19th century. Accordingly, FD now realizes that this forest management system should be modified given the current situation of forests and global trends forest management. This is one of the gaps to be potentially addressed by the project to improve sustainable forest management of Myanmar.

MFCC (Myanmar Forest Certification Committee) is a semi-governmental organization which is leading development of the MTLAS and MFCS. The technical and financial support to MFCC will facilitate the development of the MTLAS and MFCS.

For most cases including issuance of CoC certificates, exporting and importing matters, the system is still processed manually by loads of paperwork. It is time consuming and costly. Introduction of database system/ IT technology should be encouraged. To do so, capacity building should be supported for government staff and also other relevant stakeholders, and knowledge exchanges conducted with other countries.

According to the Community forestry instructions 2019 (CFI 2019), the Government acknowledges the important role of people in forest management, and is seeking to encourage Community forest enterprises (CFEs) to foster sustainable livelihoods in forest dependent communities. Therefore, enabling conditions for community-based groups and smallholders to invest in forest-related business, to produce and access legal and sustainable timber, and engage in smallholder certification schemes, should be prioritized.

OUTCOME 3

Improved forest monitoring and data accessibility

Forest monitoring systems that are being piloted include setting cellular trail cameras in forests, involving people in reporting, i.e. community-based monitoring and reporting system (CMRS). In this context, the SFT-LMR project can support the development of a near real-time monitoring system for deforestation and forest degradation of Myanmar.

Collaboration between and among institutions is mandatory for promoting data sharing in Myanmar. Therefore, the project can develop a mechanism to improve collaboration and accessibility of data between and among institutions.

Annex 1: Agenda

Agenda for National Consultation Workshop – Developing Work Plan for Myanmar

| Time | Event | Organization | Speaker |
|------------------|---|---------------------------|--|
| 12:30 – 01:00 PM | Arrival and Registration | | |
| 01:00 – 01:20 PM | Opening remarks | Myanmar Forest Department | Dr. Thaug Naing Oo, Director of Forest Department (FD) Myanmar |
| 01:20 – 01:30 PM | Round of self-Introduction and Group Photo | Participants | Participants |
| 01:30 – 01:50 PM | PowerPoint, project presentation on SFT-LMR SFT-LMR project overview Question & Answer session 1 | FAO (SFT-LMR Project) | Dr. Phyu Phyu Lwin, National Project Coordinator |
| 01:50 – 02:10 PM | Presentation on government priorities Question & Answer session 2 | FD | Dr. Yu Ya Aye, Assistant Director, Government Focal Point of SFT-LMR |
| 02:10 – 02:30PM | Presentation from resource group (Progress on FLEGT program Myanmar) Question & Answer session 3 | FLEGT Unit, FD | Mr. Min Min Oo, Staff Officer, Forest Department |
| 02:30 – 02:50 PM | Presentation on certification/SFM Question & Answer session 4 | MFCC | Mr. Barber Cho, Secretary |
| | Group discussions | | |
| 02:50 – 04:00PM | Group 1 Transboundary cooperation Group 2 Sustainable Forest Management and legality Group 3 Data sharing and real time monitoring Group 4 Private Sector (SME, Community forest groups) | | |
| 04:00 – 04:30 PM | Plenary presentation of group discussions; Q&A 6mins per group | | |
| 04:30 – 05:00 PM | Wrap up and closing remarks | UN-REDD | Ben Vickers |

Annex 2: List of participants

The national consultation workshop on 5 January 2021

| Sr. | Name | Position | Institution | Email |
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