

### OVERVIEW

#### IIED Climate Change Group

**Project name:**

Myanmar National Climate Change Policy

**Project leader:**

Achala Abeysinghe

**Time frame:**

December 2016 – May 2017

**Budget:**

US\$70,000 (received by IIED from UN Environment to deliver this project)

**Objective:**

To support the Myanmar government in developing an overarching national climate change policy to integrate climate change into national priorities and planning and provide a long-term vision for Myanmar's sustainable development.

### PROJECT SUMMARY

IIED was invited by the Myanmar government to provide technical support to develop the country's national climate change policy. This followed previous work by IIED with the Myanmar government to develop a national climate change strategy and action plan. Building on that initial work, IIED conducted extensive consultations with government officials, civil society and development partners between December 2016 and May 2017. The final outcome – the Myanmar National Climate Change Policy – provides a long-term vision for equitable socioeconomic development and strategic direction for action on climate change, which acknowledges Myanmar's commitment to ambitious action in implementing the Paris Agreement.

### CHANGE IN ACTION

Myanmar's people and economy are increasingly vulnerable to climate hazards such as floods, droughts, cyclones and landslides, which hinders progress on socioeconomic development. Recognising this, and responding to its commitment to undertake ambitious action under the Paris

# Developing Myanmar's National Climate Change Policy

## A long-term vision to address climate change

As countries seek to fulfil their responsibilities under the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, many are looking to develop national climate change policies that set out their long-term vision and provide a coherent response to climate change across all levels and sectors.

The Government of Myanmar, having previously sought IIED's support to develop a climate change strategy and action plan, invited IIED to provide technical expertise to develop a national policy. Working with The Myanmar Climate Change Alliance – an EU-funded, government-led partnership involving national government, local authorities, development partners, civil society and the private sector, implemented by UN Environment and UN-Habitat – three members of IIED's global climate law, policy and governance team travelled to Myanmar in December 2016.

Extensive consultations had already taken place to develop the national climate change strategy and action plan, so government officials had already considered many of the issues and identified priorities. Parallel work on a National Environmental Policy and a National Urban Policy provided opportunities to coordinate and harmonise efforts.

Some of the approaches used and lessons from the project are highlighted below.

### Consultation, consultation, consultation

The initial December visit allowed the team to understand the priorities and

expectations of different parts of the government. This provided the basis for a draft outline for the policy, which was refined and developed through an iterative process of consultation, review and comment.

The team made a second visit in February 2017 when they presented a fleshed-out version of the draft at a full-day workshop with the Minister of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation, regional ministers and officials, and representatives from government partner agencies, civil society and the media, ensuring input from different sectors.

The team was particularly keen to consult with government officials at the regional level and received support from the Director General of the Environmental Conservation Department to do this. Regional officials would be responsible for much of the policy implementation and would also understand the realities on the ground. This resulted in a more informed approach for the team and helped ensure understanding and support for the policy at regional level.

Following further review and comment, the full policy text was presented at a validation workshop with ministers and other stakeholders in April 2017.

### A clear rationale

As part of this consultation process, the IIED team focused initially on providing a clear rationale for each element in the draft, rather than on specific language or provisions. Once a common understanding of the reasoning behind

Agreement, the Myanmar government sought to adopt a National Climate Change Policy integrating climate considerations into national priorities. Drawing on extensive consultation with relevant sectors, this policy acknowledges that the country's changing circumstances should improve its capacity to act on climate change over time. Due to be adopted in February 2018, the policy sets a direction of travel, providing recommendations for action and proposing cross-cutting measures to create an enabling environment for implementing these recommendations. Ultimately, the success of the policy depends on the government's continued commitment to addressing climate change and the ability of its people to hold it to account.

## KEY LESSONS LEARNT & INNOVATIONS

- Consultation at all levels was essential to understand the needs and scope for the policy, and to ensure the policy responded to local and regional needs
- Providing a clear rationale for the structure and elements of the policy was essential to gain broad support and acceptance – and this rationale helped all stakeholders reach a shared understanding and make sure the right language was used in the final document in the Myanmar language and in the English translation
- A climate policy must be fully 'owned' by the national government. This requires the involvement of different parts of the government and support at the highest levels, and time must be allowed for this. It is essential for the country to be comfortable with the policy they're adopting.

## PARTNERS' VIEW

*[With the new National Climate Change Policy, and the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan,] Myanmar is now better equipped to organize and guide the action, mobilize resources and finance to address climate change. It is our responsibility, as institutions, to make actual use of these instruments and turn our ambitions into actions, so to build resilience to climate change to the benefit of the people of Myanmar*

U Hla Maung Thein, Director General, Environmental Conservation Department, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation, The Republic of the Union of Myanmar. Source: Foreword, Myanmar National Climate Policy, draft, May 2017.

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Mandalay, Myanmar.

each aspect had been reached, specific wording could then be developed.

This was invaluable in ensuring a more efficient process. Government officials were able to focus on the key issues, avoiding deliberations over specific wording. This is particularly important since Myanmar government officials are not typically fluent in English and complex legal language could unnecessarily complicate the consultations.

## A negotiated approach

A climate policy is in its very nature a political document, which in the context of a least developed country such as Myanmar must overcome some challenging hurdles. While the consultative process ensured all views were heard, the IIED team felt the benefit of their climate agreement negotiating experience when seeking a common path forward on sensitive issues.

The need to decouple economic development from dependence on fossil fuels was one such area. Like many least developed countries, Myanmar currently relies primarily on fossil fuels. While the government sees the need to decarbonise, it must also consider the costs of doing so and balance this with its poverty-reduction objectives. It was important to clarify that decarbonisation is an ongoing process and part of the journey towards a more sustainable economy. The consultations and the drafting exercise involved finding the right language to capture this and clearly explain it to all stakeholders involved.

## The value of trust

The IIED team also appreciated having a direct link to the Director General of the Environmental Conservation Department for insights on contested areas of the policy. As technical advisors, the team's role was to advise on any potential consequences or

risks in relation to the options being considered. The government had the final say. Access to an ear within the government helped ensure the government's ambitions were reflected and that the draft policy was met with their support.

## A flexible approach

One challenge was the tight, and ever-tightening, timeline. Because the Myanmar government had already defined their climate change strategy and action plan, there was a desire to see an overarching policy in place. While the team benefited from the ground work done for the earlier strategy, extensive consultations were still needed to ensure a strong policy. This meant gathering views from a wide range of people in a relatively short amount of time.

As government timelines shifted, the team had to revise initial plans and condense the consultation process, with the first full draft of the policy delivered in early March and the revised draft presented in April 2017. What had been planned as an eight-month project was, in the end, squeezed into five months.

A key lesson for the team was the need to be flexible and adaptable. And to recognise what is needed to ensure the policy does the job it is supposed to do.



## Knowledge Products

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