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USAID PROJECT BRIEF

BURMA LAND TENURE PROJECT

Prior to and during its transition to a multi-party democracy, Burma has experienced rapid economic transformation across multiple sectors in urban, peri-urban and rural areas. This transition created both risks for the environment and economic opportunities for Burma's diverse population, and placed new importance on responsible governance of land and natural resources. As policies and legislation are developed, existing communal and customary rights must be incorporated. At the same time, policies must be piloted in various communities to demonstrate broad applicability before national activities are launched.

Land-based natural resources in the country, including farmland and forests that are needed for urban expansion or infrastructure projects, have been essential components of a more equitable approach to national economic development. Decisions on how land will be used, by whom, and for what purposes could have far reaching consequences for the people of Burma, 70 percent of whom live in the countryside and rely on agriculture for their livelihood.

Between 2013 and 2018, USAID worked in close collaboration with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation (MONREC), multiple civil society organizations, and other groups, both public and private, to ensure the successful implementation of this project, under the Tenure and Global Climate Change Program (TGCC).

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

LTP had a number of inter-related objectives focused on contributing to the goals of broad-based economic development, improving livelihoods in rural areas, promoting sustainable land use management, and achieving resilient community development. Specific goals included:

- Supporting the development and implementation of a National Land Use Policy and related laws that clarify rights and encourage sustainable use of land and natural resources;

PHOTO: NICK THOMAS TETRA TECH

- Strengthening the land tenure, resource, and property rights of rural individuals, households and communities, with particular attention to women, ethnic minorities, smallholder farmers and other vulnerable groups; and,
- Increasing consultation among government, civil society and business on issues of broad public concern related to land tenure and land use.

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

USAID support focused on the following activities:

- Providing technical assistance to further develop the policy, legal and regulatory framework for land governance. This work focused on land, forests and resource rights and management;
- Conducting pilots that included mapping and formal recognition of customary land and resource tenure, as well as approaches to alternative land dispute resolution;
- Raising public awareness and participation on the policy and pilot implementation process with educational and outreach materials; and,
- Conducting research and monitoring to inform further legal development and policy implementation.

RESULTS

- Supported the development of the National Land Use Policy and associated land-related laws, policies and regulations.
- Conducted community resource documentation and participatory mapping activities in eleven village tracts, which produced village boundary and land use maps for 59 villages, and established 52 community representative committees with average women’s representation of 34%, to impact a total population of almost 34,000.
- Between 2015-2017, hosted 370 events reaching over 10,500 participants to strengthen understanding and awareness of property rights and resource governance-related issues. Of these events, coordinated 28 multi-stakeholder dialogues to promote interaction between government and communities.
- Produced 36 educational materials, briefs and reports to explain relevant policies, laws, regulations and procedures to a variety of audiences to increase informed public participation in development of the land legal framework.



Representatives of civil society organizations participate in a project-sponsored training on the use of digital mapping applications.

PHOTO: NICK THOMAS, TETRA TECH



A female Member of Parliament speaks to constituents during a public consultation on the National Land Use Policy

PHOTO: ROB OBERNDORF, TETRA TECH



Shifting cultivation in Heingyu Village in Minhla Township

PHOTO: NAYNA JHAVERI, TETRA TECH

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