

# SEI Environmental Strategy for Myanmar (2019-2028)



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## Introduction

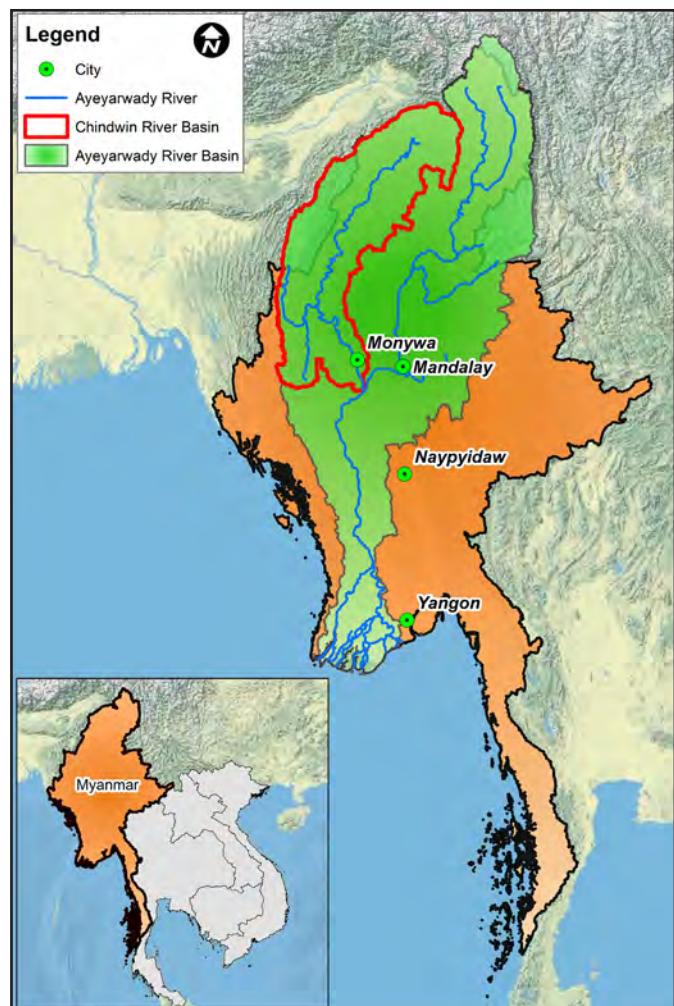
Since 2013, SEI has engaged with Myanmar partners and stakeholders to support sustainable development through evidence-based participatory planning processes in the Ayeyarwady and Chindwin River Basins.

SEI's Environmental Strategy for Myanmar lays the groundwork for a new chapter of work to build on our achievements and lessons learned in Myanmar. The Strategy will guide our research, policy development and capacity development collaborations on environment and development in Myanmar for the next 10 years (2019-2028) as we continue our mission to support science-based decision-making towards a transformative change for an environmentally sound and socially equitable Myanmar.

This Strategy recognizes that innovation, adaptation, resilience and long-term partnerships are key to our future success. Thus, this is a living document, subject to revision and refinement that will ensure our gains and success are both adaptable and sustainable. A comprehensive impact assessment and review will be performed every three years, in 2022, 2025 and 2028, through application of SEI's monitoring, evaluation and learning system to evaluate our progress in delivering benefits at scale and in recognizing lessons to be drawn upon in the future.

## Our Goal

Our goal is to support Myanmar in meeting their commitments to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – and the associated Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 and Paris Agreement on Climate Change – through collaborative research, policy engagement, capacity building and joint action related to environment and development issues, with specific consideration of gender equality, social equity, environmental rights and poverty reduction.



# SEI's Research & Policy-informing Agenda

## Theme 1: Water Resources Management and Agriculture

**Vision:** Safe and secure water resources and food security for present and future generations in Myanmar

**Our Mission:** Enhance the capacity of households, communities, industry, agriculture, energy and the environment in Myanmar to achieve water and food security.

### 1.1. Institutional transformation and water resources management.

- We will continue to support the Chindwin River Basin Organization (RBO) through assistance with drafting of institutional policies and embedding RBOs as part of the institutional arrangements under the oversight of Myanmar's National Water Resources Committee.
- Along with water quality monitoring, we will explore frameworks for the establishment of groundwater monitoring systems and options for groundwater recharge.

### 1.2. Reducing risks from climate change and disasters on water resources and agriculture.

- We will continue to develop the river morphology tool with SERVIR Mekong<sup>1</sup> as well as other tools such as Web-SWARM<sup>2</sup> and provide capacity building.
- We will research foreign direct investment as a means of stimulating agricultural output and the development of export driven markets.
- We will undertake studies, and enable conditions and associated policy reforms for greater engagement across young people, inclusive of gender, ethnicity and class.
- We will work to enable all economically active groups, especially women, to engage in water resources management, agriculture and viable livelihoods.

**Expected outcomes:**

- Functional river basin organizations and the legal structures to support the sustainable management and monitoring of water resources
- Sustainable development of groundwater resources in the dry zone
- Tools to assist in improved water resources planning and management for floods, droughts and river morphology change
- Policy reform that leads to alternative livelihood and employment opportunities for youth in rural Myanmar
- Increased and sustained participation of women and youth in the water resources management and agricultural sector

<sup>1</sup>SERVIR Mekong is a joint initiative by the US agency for International Development (USAID), NASA and five other countries which are Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. The project aims to use the latest technologies to help the Mekong river region protect its vital ecosystem. (<https://servir.adpc.net/>)

<sup>2</sup>Web-SWARM is an online river basin management game, developed in 2017. The game is intended to provide general insights regarding integrated water resources management (<http://hsb.weap-game.net/>)

## Theme 2: Gender, Environment and Development (GED)

**Vision:** Agreed policies that prioritize gender equality, social equity and sustainability, for decisions on people's lives, the economy and the environment

**Our Mission:** Improve people's well-being through gender and socially inclusive sustainable development.

Despite the government's increasing focus on promoting and ensuring gender equality in Myanmar, policy narratives and implementation do not always address the issues, and major challenges persist. The health and education and political sectors continue to have gender gaps: Myanmar has the lowest female participation in parliament among all the Mekong countries. Overall, there is a limited recognition of a rights-based approach that would advance women's rights in livelihood resources such as land, water, finance capital, technologies and skills.

Gender equality in Myanmar must be reframed from being a women's issue to being a political issue at subnational and national levels that requires more commitment from government actors.

### 2.1. Innovative planning and decision-making for empowerment and sustainable and inclusive development of natural resources.

- We will support women to fully integrate into the political process and public administration by building capacity, developing enabling environments and supporting the evidence-based policy process, as well as sensitizing line agencies and partners to this issue.
- Women are often harmed disproportionately in these processes for exploitation of natural resources such as gems, gold, coal, industrial minerals, oil and natural gas, affecting their family and community power balances, in addition to workloads and emotional stress. We will undertake research to understand these gendered consequences and, in partnership with the mining sector and policymakers, develop interventions and approaches that address women's needs and ensure their inclusion in decision-making processes.

**Outcomes:**

- Enabling conditions for transforming gender and social inequality in environmental and resource use and management contexts
- Integration of gender and social equality into environmental and poverty alleviation policies, actions and initiatives

### **Theme 3: Sustainable Energy**

**Vision: A secure and just transition to low-carbon energy systems in Myanmar**

**Our Mission: Support decision makers with improved knowledge and capacity to foster a just transition to low-carbon energy systems that will ensure adequate, reliable and affordable modern energy for all.**

Over the next few decades, energy demands in Myanmar are expected to increase significantly as population increases and urbanization and the economy grow. A more flexible and agile approach to energy provision through a policy environment that supports a diversity of technologies and service delivery modes is necessary.

Realizing alternative energy pathways;

**3.1 Governance of the energy sector is currently centralized, and the Union Government often takes a lead in making decisions and signs energy contracts around the energy projects. Engagement of relevant regional governments in this process should be enhanced.**

- We will address governance challenges around distribution of responsibilities in energy planning and development through the use of political economy/ecology analysis, socio-technical approaches, and modelling, specifically using SEI's system for Long-Range Energy Alternatives Planning, popularly known as LEAP.

**3.2 The country's energy shortage is significant, particularly in rural areas, while coal and hydropower development presents a challenge.**

- We will analyse and develop different energy access approaches for achieving the relevant SDGs.
- We will work with regional governments to explore local energy planning and identify energy-access interventions.
- We will research off-grid and mini-grid solutions to expanding electricity access and seek innovation and diffusion of clean cooking solutions.

**Outcomes:**

- Enhanced capacity of line agencies to improve decision-making processes related to Myanmar's energy needs
- Robust and sustainable energy plans based on renewable sources and decentralized approaches
- Integration of off-grid and mini-grid systems in the electricity supply to enhance energy security



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### **Theme 4: Climate Change, Disasters and Development**

**Vision: Reduced disaster risk in the face of climate change across Myanmar**

**Our Mission: Use research, policy engagement and capacity building to reduce vulnerability and enhance individual and community resilience in response to a changing climate.**

Myanmar is disaster prone due to seismic activity, fires, floods and drought. Mandalay and the Sagaing regions lie on a fault line and minor earthquakes are frequently reported. Climate change is expected to affect the frequency and intensity of floods and droughts in the coming decades. Local communities who base their livelihoods on water and the river suffer the most from floods and droughts, in particular women, who often have less access to adaptation and disaster risk reduction (DRR) measures. Disaster management, preparedness and response in Myanmar still need to be further enhanced, in line with the priorities of the Sendai Framework for DRR (2015-2030).

**4.1 Knowledge that will enable poor and at-risk communities to anticipate, absorb and adapt to climate change and disaster risk impacts.**

- We will contribute to meeting the challenges faced by communities affected by disaster and develop interventions to address damaging impacts using rights-based approaches.

**4.2 Identification of options to manage residual risk associated with disasters and climate change.**

- By understanding trade-offs in disasters and development planning and post-disaster recovery and reconstruction, we will support policies that help reduce vulnerabilities and build resilience.

**4.3 Capacity building for government and civil society to foster inclusive and effective responses to the challenges of disasters and climate change.**

- We will work with relevant Ministries to design a monitoring and evaluation framework to realize adaptation-related commitments associated with Myanmar's Intended Nationally Determined Contributions to the Paris Agreement.

**Outcomes:**

- Policies and interventions that protect displaced individuals and communities in Myanmar affected by disasters and climate change
- Increased capacities of line agencies to fulfil Myanmar's commitments to the Paris Agreement, implement the Sendai Framework, and ensure it meets its SDG targets

## Strategic Partnership Approach

SEI will support our Myanmar partners as they take a leading role in natural resource management and informed decision-making, while our partnership approach creates opportunities for capacity building of state and civil society actors. Myanmar's partners will have an opportunity to lead or co-lead joint activities with regional and international experts from SEI and its collaborative networks.

It is critical to build new partnerships, as well as nurture our existing collaborations with concerned state and non-state actors. Through our research areas, we will build on our current long-term partnerships and collaborative agreements with state agencies, Directorate of Water Resources and Improvement of River Systems and the Sagaing Regional Government and non-state agencies (e.g. Myanmar Environment Institute, Asia Development Research Institute) as well as expand partnerships with line agencies.

Additionally, we will engage with development agencies that focus on Myanmar, in partnership with the public and private sectors while securing alignment with Myanmar's national development agenda. We will develop stronger collaborative partnerships with donor agencies that focus on up-scaling results, and deliver research outputs and innovations that are relevant and progressive. We will continue to pursue strong ties with development agencies and decision makers to drive our work forward in bringing positive change to Myanmar's people and communities.



### Our work in Myanmar contributes to the following SDGs



## Measuring Our Success

- Research outcomes: Improved knowledge on critical issues related to the water, agriculture and energy sectors, and to support the emerging needs of the country in the fields of natural resources management, environmental conservation, climate change, gender equality, social equity and environmental rights.

Indicator: Increased publications, annually, generated by SEI and partners associated with Myanmar.

- Policy outcomes: Improved natural resource governance, reduced disaster risk, and enhanced poverty reduction – despite uncertainties related to climate change – with consideration of sustainable livelihoods for all, while ensuring equal and equitable access to natural resources.

Indicator: Increase in number of policies and published policy briefs as well as policy dialogues and engagement efforts that are clear contributions of SEI.

- Capacity outcomes: Enhanced capacities of state and non-state actors in using rights-based approaches to assess and address socioeconomic and ecological implications among different social groups in ensuring long-term equitable and sustainable development.

Indicator: Increased number of SEI organized or assisted formal capacity training activities.

- Communications: Increased public awareness and understanding of issues related to environmental conservation, gender equality, social equity, environmental rights, and how to improve environmental sustainability.  
Indicator: Increased SEI and partner produced communications and knowledge products including news and features, photo essays, blogs, short films and public awareness events.



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