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SUCCESS STORY

Progress on Developing a National Land Use Policy in Burma



Photo: Rob Oberndorf

A dry-zone agriculture plot in Burma.

The legal and governance frameworks around land use and tenure in Burma need to be harmonized and updated. USAID's Tenure and Global Climate Change (TGCC) program is providing technical assistance to the Government of Burma's Land Use and Land Allocation Scrutinizing Committee to help develop a comprehensive National Land Use Policy that will address many of the harmonization issues.

Recent rapid changes in Burma have led to concerns related to the land tenure and property rights (LTPR) of smallholder farmers and communities throughout the country. The limited harmonization and dated nature of the overall legal and governance frameworks related to land use management and tenure security in the country adds to these concerns. The Government of Burma is well aware of the concerns and recognizes the importance of addressing LTPR issues to strengthen the fledgling democratic reforms and social stability developing in Burma.

To properly assess and begin addressing the issues relating to land use management and law harmonization in the country, the Government established a multi-ministerial Land Use and Land Allocation Scrutinizing Committee (LUASC) in 2012. One of LUASC's primary tasks is to develop a comprehensive National Land Use Policy for the country, which would ultimately help to guide effective implementation of existing legal frameworks and also lead to the development of an "umbrella" Land Law for the country that would address many of the current legal harmonization issues.

USAID's Tenure and Global Climate Change (TGCC) program, in close coordination and cooperation with USAID/Burma, other development partners, and civil society stakeholders, has provided technical assistance to the LUASC during the development of the National Land Use Policy. As part of this assistance, TGCC's Land Tenure Advisor has been helping the Committee capture lessons learned and experiences with land tenure reform processes from regional neighbors. Guidance has also been provided on ways to incorporate international best practices, such as those reflected in the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security, into the National Land Use Policy. Issues relating to REDD+ and women's ownership of property have also been addressed in the policy development process.

Most promising is the Government of Burma's clear commitment to utilizing issue-specific working groups within the LUASC and a multi-stakeholder consultative process for the development of the National Land Use Policy, an approach that was outlined in a policy development "roadmap" developed with assistance from USAID. The roadmap's approach is apparently being utilized elsewhere by the Government of Burma, as it has been recently reported that the Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry is interested in using the same approach for development of a National Policy for Protected Areas Management.

TGCC is committed to continuing its successful engagement with the LUASC and other stakeholders in the further development of the National Land Use Policy in Burma.