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SUCCESS STORY

Land Policy Reforms in Burma



Karen community members engage in community land-use planning.

The USAID Tenure and Global Climate Change Project is supporting policy development that secures the customary land and resource rights of rural stakeholders in Burma, particularly the rights of women in and around forested areas.

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The majority of Burma's population lives in rural areas, where poverty is high and communities depend on sustainable management of forests and agricultural land for survival. The Government of Burma is working with a USAID project to design strategies that strengthen community land rights, increase engagement among civil society, local communities, and government, and encourage learning from pilots implemented across the ethnically and geographically diverse country. Strengthening the land and resource rights of communities will improve livelihoods and increase the success of development activities in Burma.

The project supports the Government of Burma to develop, draft, and publically disseminate a comprehensive National Land Policy that recognizes, respects, and protects the traditional land rights of communities, including women, minorities, and other vulnerable populations. In support of this effort, project staff engaged local communities, civil society organizations, and other stakeholder groups to identify the land tenure and property rights issues impacting their lives. These findings were then presented to the President's Office and the Land Use and Allocation Scrutinizing Committee during a multi-stakeholder workshop on land issues. During the workshop, the project advisor worked to ensure community land rights issues were comprehensively understood by government stakeholders, and advocated for the inclusion of key provisions that protect community land rights in the National Land Policy.

The 5th working draft of the National Land Use Policy was finalized and approved by the President's Office following the workshop. The draft addressed a number of critical areas, including land information and transparency, dispute resolution, and the rights of ethnic minorities and women.

Dr. Nyi Nyi Kaw, the Director General of the Forestry Department, said, "This draft policy will strengthen the land tenure security of all people in Myanmar, particularly vulnerable groups such as the poor, smallholder farmers, ethnic communities, and women. It is designed to help create effective mechanisms for land dispute resolution, and support economic development in the country."