



**Local Governance and Climate Change:**  
Decentralized Climate Adaptation  
Planning in Myanmar

**February, 2019**

# I. Climate Change in Myanmar

Myanmar is among the most vulnerable countries to climate changing: according to the latest updates of the Global Risk Index, the country ranks on second place. In the last six decades, the climate change effect has made the challenges more compelling. Studies have observed more frequent and more severe events, as for instance, the Cyclone Nargis in 2008, followed by other disasters.

In 2018, due to heavy rains of the Southwest Monsoon, 9 states/regions have been affected thus far with widespread flooding and landslides reported. Of these 9 states/regions, 4 states/regions have been affected more dramatically than the others. These are Kayin, Mon, Tanintharyi and Bago.

The following information reports the affected people and households, and the consequences of flooding until August 3rd, 2018.

- According to the data of the Department of Disaster Management and AHA Centre, there is now a total of 200 Camps where 132,972 people (28,481 households) have been affected by floods.
- It is also reported that 350 schools have been closed in Kayin State and the walls of one school in Tanintharyi Region have collapsed. In Bago Region, 224 schools are temporarily closed.

- According to the information from ADB, access to electricity is still low in the most affected areas in Kayin, Tanintharyi, Mon, Bago and Magway; i.e. on average, only around 20% of these rural areas are electrified. The lack of electricity prevents these vulnerable people from receiving early warning message of potential flood.
- Local news points out that the severe flooding is affecting Myanmar's rice export due to disruptions in transportation. Indeed, the rice supply coming from the flooded regions cannot be transported into the export depot located in Bayintnaung.

Under such circumstances, climate change is a serious threat to Myanmar's sustainable development. Myanmar government is committed to reduce its vulnerability and to play a role in the global community to combat climate change. On the other hand, Myanmar itself is affected by climate change and has, therefore, developed national strategies such as Myanmar National Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (MCCSAP) 2017-2030. Besides, Myanmar Sustainable Development Strategy (MSDP) was produced in 2018 and includes a strategy to address climate change. MCCSAP and MSDP are relatively new policy and strategy and thus, still not fully appreciated and operational at local level.

## II. Climate Change Policies and Strategies in Myanmar

Myanmar's government developed the Myanmar Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (MCCSAP, 2017-2030), and includes six Sectorial Action Plans. It presents a roadmap to guide Myanmar's strategic responses to address climate-related risks and opportunities over the next 15 years and beyond. The Strategy and Action Plan intends to support key actors in their decision-making at national and local level to respond to challenges and opportunities associated with climate change.

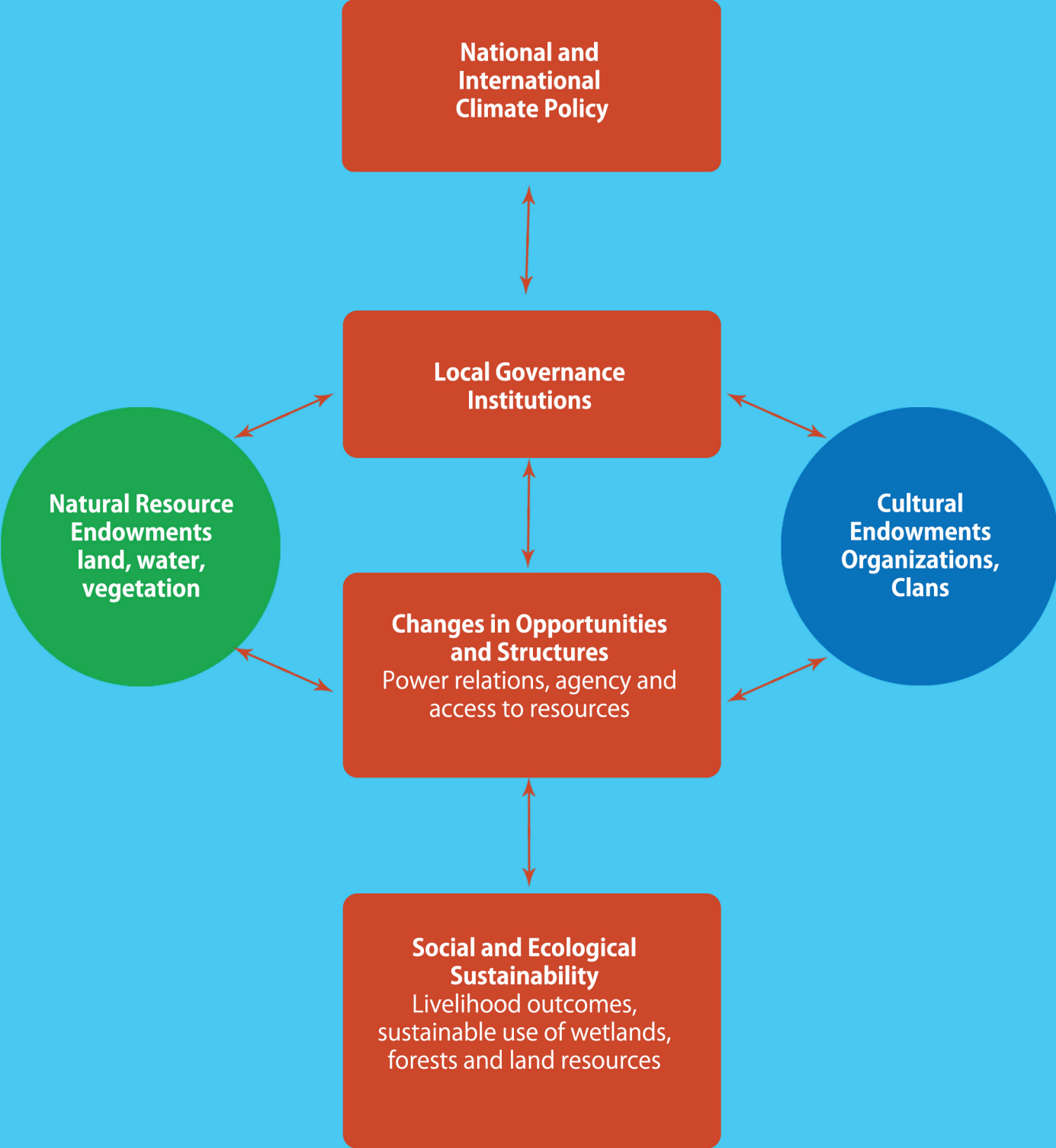
The strategy classifies the priority actions in key development sectors with the purpose to build the adaptive capacity of communities and sectors and to promote low carbon development. It also outlines an implementation framework to coordinate and implement climate-resilient and low carbon development initiatives.

With a similar aim, the Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan (2018-2030) was ratified on August, 2018. The MSDP is structured on 3 Pillars, 5 Goals, 28 Strategies and 238 Action Plans.

All are firmly aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Goal 5, pillar 3 and Strategy 5:2 states "Increase climate change resilience, reduce exposure to disasters and shocks while protecting livelihoods, and facilitate a shift to a low-carbon growth pathway." As the infrastructure gap remains significant in Myanmar, strategic infrastructure planning that takes into consideration social, environmental and economic costs and benefits will be necessary to ensure that the country can acquire the greatest possible benefit from infrastructure development.

Myanmar will embark upon a low-carbon, green economy development trajectory that prioritizes the efficient use of natural resources; integrate climate-sensitive approaches to existing laws and planning processes; will work with individuals and communities at all levels to improve natural resource management; and mitigate, potentially even reverse, the impacts of climate change.

# Climate Change and Variability Context



Source: DIIS POLICY BRIEF AUGUST 2015

## III. Local Options to Climate Change

Local governments in Myanmar is in many aspects influenced by the stated ambitions of national climate change policies. However, these policies are ambiguous and contain a broad range of sectors; this is due to optimistic expectations about possibilities to synchronize and mobilize highly skilled human resources. In reality, there is uncertain access to large levels of funding. In some cases, local authorities are highly aware of the risks associated with climate

change, but they are not sure on how to apply policies and their implications for practical action. The Integration of climate change policies into the work of local governments requires recognition of the local capacity and the situations they manage, in regard to both climate change and economic development. The following points will be addressed further below.

### 1) Local governments relevant to interface with climate change

Local governments can engage in both CC mitigation and adaptation actions:

- **Adaptation** involves helping their constituents to cope with and adjust to any changes in their climate regime or natural resource base. This might involve targeted poverty reduction, asset building, early warning planning and disaster response planning.

- **Mitigation** involves helping their constituents to reduce their GHG<sup>1</sup> (Green House Gas) emissions. This might involve forest management or energy conservation interventions.

Due to the needs of specific local knowledge and local cooperation in the design and implementation, local governments have an added value for such interventions.

### 2) Local governments relevant to interface with climate change via three key instruments

According to the studies, local governments (like central governments) interface with CC via three key instruments:

- **Local planning and regulation**, largely in the form of by-laws and land use (or strategic) planning and zoning. Regulation can be used to enable or constrain certain types of activity, with direct, indirect, deliberate or unintended impact on CC issues;
- **Delivering goods and services** that impact adaptation to CC or promote climate resilience. This refers to the choice of investment, public expenditure management (PEM) and financing, and the process by which expenditures are made and tracked (planning,

budgeting, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation);

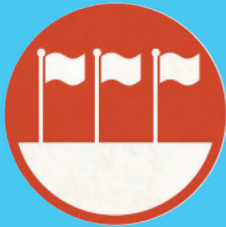
- **Local fiscal revenues**, raised in the form of taxes, fees and charges. LG revenues are clearly linked to local PEM (as one set of financial inputs) – but, more importantly, are also instruments which can provide incentives or disincentives for the ways in which CC issues are managed (or mismanaged);

These three instruments can have positive or negative consequences for CC adaption. To reach positive outcomes it is necessary a strong understanding of how present investments shape future options, and an understanding of how and why LGs invest (or don't invest) in short- and long-term climate remediation.

<sup>1</sup> GHG (Green House Gas) emission means the emission into the earth's atmosphere of any of various gases, esp carbon dioxide, that contribute to the greenhouse effect

# Relevant to Interface

Adaptation involves helping their constituents to cope with and adjust to any changes in their climate regime or natural resource base.



targeted  
poverty  
reduction



Asset  
Building



early  
warning  
planning



disaster  
response  
planning

## Interface with CC via three key instruments

largely in the form of by-laws and land use (or strategic) planning and zoning.



Local planning  
and regulation



Delivering goods  
and services



Local fiscal  
revenues

### 3) Local delivery of goods and services

There are a number of ways in which LG's delivery of goods and services can address CC risks and opportunities.

#### ● Environmental management

Most LGs have responsibilities for natural resources, such as forest management and fisheries regulation. There is a number of ways in which natural resource management contributes to both CC mitigation and adaptation objectives:

- Forest conservation can reduce carbon emissions;
- Healthy ecosystems can provide services for livelihoods and industries, helping households and businesses build assets that can buffer them against climate stressors (trends or shocks);
- Maintaining healthy forests, pastures and fisheries can provide fallback options during periods of drought or shortfalls in food production.

### 4) Disaster Management

CC will affect in more frequent extreme weather events (such floods), which entail significant human suffering. One of the key adaptive responsibilities for many LGs in developing countries is developing and implementing plans for disaster management. However, this is something that current LGs PEM and public financial management (PFM) process may not be very good at, for a variety of reasons:

#### ● Infrastructure and service delivery

Most LGs have certain infrastructure and service delivery (ISD) functions. Adapting these functions to CC can involve a range of options:

- Retrofitting existing infrastructure to better handle flooding, increased likelihood of subsidence, etc.;
- Replacing old infrastructure if the cost of retrofitting is prohibitively high;
- Designing and constructing additional infrastructure and assets (such as roads) that are climate-proof and built with an eye to future adaptation (if needed); and
- Improving water and sanitation services in order to reduce water consumption, mitigate against the spread of vector-borne diseases, etc.;

The information above stated that there is generally a high degree of convergence between CC adaptation and provision of basic municipal or LG services.

- Planning and budgeting for the unpredictable is always challenging;
- Financial resources and cash flow are an inevitable constraint;
- Reactive capacities are often very limited.

As a direct consequence of CC, otherwise, LGs will need to focus more and more on disaster risk management.

# Local delivery of goods and services

There are a number of ways in which LG's delivery of goods and services can address CC risks and opportunities



Environmental management



Infrastructure and service delivery

## Disaster Management

One of the key adaptive responsibilities for many LGs in developing countries is developing and implementing plans for disaster management



Planning and budgeting



Financial resources and cash flow



Reactive capacities



## 5) Facilitating livelihoods adaptation

In addressing longer-term consequences of CC (lower rainfall, sea level rises, higher temperatures), LGs can facilitate livelihoods adaptation, especially in rural areas. Many, if not most, of these adaptations have taken place impulsively and at the household level. Three examples are provided of how LGs can facilitate this process and spread the benefits more effectively:

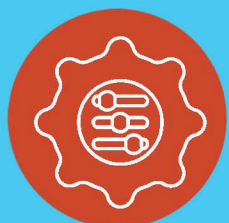
- **Brokering information flows on different household-level coping measures.** This enables households to exchange experience and learn about successful adaptation strategies and techniques. To expand this role will
- **Implementing a planned adaptation response.** This is a more “proactive” approach, requiring a higher level of human and financial resources. It can contain providing households with information on key risks and adaptation measures available, providing state grants, equipment and insurance services.

# Facilitating livelihoods adaptation

Many, if not most, of these adaptations have taken place impulsively and at the household level.



**Brokering information flows on different household-level coping measures.**



**Implementing a planned adaptation response**

## IV. Key Points/Key Messages

- A starting point is to create clear links between national CC policies and sub-national governance policies.
- Enrich content and pace of dialogue between national level and sub-national level policymakers on climate change adaptation.
- Local governments need to have better understanding of who is vulnerable to climate change and tailor adaption to their needs.
- Local government should be strong in disaster-response and protection of communities through better infrastructure. A broader perception is needed to secure that economic development initiatives contribute to mitigating disaster risk.
- Foster local government funding and capacity for implementing climate change adaptation.
- To fulfill the Sustainable Development Goals, local governments need to consider climate adaption and resilience infrastructure in sub-national climate adaption policy on the long term.

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