

Terms of Reference for Environment Thematic Working Group

Introduction

The Millennium Development Goals highlighted the importance of the environment-poverty nexus in achieving sustainable development; this is recognized in Goal 1 on eradication of extreme poverty and in Goal 7 on environmental sustainability.

In Myanmar, where the environment and natural resources underpin the livelihoods of most of the country's population, the linkages between environment, poverty and livelihoods need to be addressed in a coherent and coordinated manner with the active participation of all stakeholders: UN agencies, donor community, Government, I-NGOs, and N-NGOs.

The PONREPP recognized environment as a crosscutting issue and included it as part of the theme on "protected lives". The recovery strategy for environment in the PONREPP focuses on ensuring sound management of the environment and natural resources through strengthened systems at the community, townships and national levels. However, environment and natural resources related issues are also addressed in other parts of the PONREPP; these include livelihoods (Outcome 4 – mangroves, Outcome 2 – fisheries, and Outcome 1 – restoration of farmers' livelihoods); Shelter (Outcome 1 – safer and durable shelters); WASH (Outcome 1 – access to safe drinking water); DRR (Outcomes 3, 4 and 5).

In response to the PONREPP, a number of thematic groups are being set up, based on the structure set out in the PONREPP.

Geographical coverage

These thematic groups will initially focus on the Nargis recovery efforts in the Ayeyarwady Delta, but will eventually expand their coverage to address environment, poverty, livelihoods and other relevant issues in the rest of Myanmar, with a particular focus on climate change.

Proposed Coordination Activities

The proposed coordination activities for the thematic working group on environment will focus on two broad areas:

1. Those specific issues directly related to environmental and natural resource management, such as forestry, biodiversity, land and marine / aquatic resources, and climate change. The latter would include both the incremental impacts such as increased salination, sea-level rise, and increased incidence of drought, and the higher frequency and severity of major catastrophic events such as floods, landslides and cyclones.
2. The thematic group will also address the cross-cutting aspects of environment that impact on livelihoods and food security, shelter, water, education, DRR, and protection (land tenure and gender). The aim will be to ensure that environment is mainstreamed into these different working groups.

Note: The current TWG on mangroves and forestry under the agriculture sector will be integrated into the work of the environment thematic group; this may meet as a sub-group.

The environment thematic group will provide a forum for:

- ⇒ Networking and sharing of information on environment and natural resources in Myanmar, with an emphasis on environmental aspects;
- ⇒ Knowledge sharing on specific technical issues on environment, as well as the way in which environment relates to other thematic working groups;
- ⇒ Support for policy related issues on environment and natural resources;

- ⇒ Discussion of issues related to multi-lateral environmental agreements such as the Framework Convention on climate change, CBD, etc with specific regard to environment, livelihoods, and DRR.

Proposed membership of the environment working thematic group

It is proposed that the environment thematic group is open to all members of the IASC: NGOs (international and national) and UN agencies (UNDP, UNEP, UNICEF, Habitat, OIM, etc), as well as to Government agencies; we would also expect participation from the NCEA (for environment) as well as other ministries (for livelihoods and poverty aspects): Forestry, Agriculture, Fisheries, Livestock, Health, DMH, MSWRR, Home Affairs, General Administration Department, as well as representatives from local authorities, professional bodies and academic institutions.

The thematic working group on environment will be co-chaired by UNDP and UNEP, and will meet once a month; this may be made more frequent if needed in future.

Relationship to other working groups

The ETWG will be part of the nation-wide thematic working groups and will attempt to ensure close coordination with these groups so that environmental issues are adequately addressed in them. The ETWG will also work with the PONREPP Recovery Groups that will focus on the Delta so as to ensure that environmental issues are addressed in the Physical and Social Protection, Livelihoods and Basic Services Recovery Groups. Where possible, this group will promote participation of the relevant Delta recovery group in the ETWG.

The Chair of ETWG will also be responsible for reporting on the deliberations of the environment thematic group to the IASC so that coordination is maintained with other groups.