Plan for Engagement with EAOs on the Draft National REDD+ Strategy

Background

Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAO’s) are key stakeholders in the Myanmar REDD+ Programme, since the decision has been made that REDD+ will be implemented at the national scale, and significant areas of forests are under the control of EAO’s.

Engagement with EAO’s, by its very nature, is complex and involves multiple challenges. There are also a significant number of EAO’s, meaning that there needs to be a prioritization process for engagement.

The PMU, in discussion with the NPD has identified prioritization criteria for engagement with EAO’s. The criteria are:

- Signed the NCA (see Note 1, below)
- Control “significant” amounts of territory (subjective decision)
- Have internal governance structures with which consultation is likely to yield results (e.g., Forest Dept., or similar)

Our current analysis suggests the following picture:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signatories of NCA</th>
<th>Significant areas</th>
<th>Governance structures (FD or equivalent)</th>
<th>Priority (See Note 2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Karen National Union</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Very high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Karen Buddhist Army - Brigade 5</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KNU/KNLA Peace Council</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restoration Council of Shan State</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chin National Front</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lahu Democratic Union</td>
<td>No(?)</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Mon State Party</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pa-O National Liberation Army</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Burma Students’ Democratic Front</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arakan Liberation Party</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note 1: Some EAO’s have long-standing bilateral ceasefire agreements with the government, and therefore did not sign the 2015 NCA. All such EAO’s which control significant areas of forest are high priority for engagement. Examples are the Pa-O National Organization.

Note 2: Priorities are also linked to political issues and therefore subject to change. The advice of DG/FD is a valuable input into political adjustments to priority setting.

Proposed engagement approach

The engagement approach envisaged for each EAO includes the following steps:
1. Initial meetings with representatives of ethnic political parties, legislators representing ethnic areas, and representatives of CSO's associated with ethnic issues, to introduce the issues, including the concept of REDD+, the status of the Myanmar REDD+ Programme, and examples of draft PAMs.

2. As determined by feedback from the initial meetings, organize [a] more formal meeting[s] to develop an on-going engagement plan tailored to the needs of the EAO.

3. Provision of awareness raising/capacity building for ethnic stakeholders (political and civil society organizations); for example, a “mini-REDD+ Academy”; study tours may also be an option in some cases.

4. A formal meeting to discuss the draft National REDD+ Strategy and to develop a plan for on-going engagement

Initial engagement with EAO’s began in May 2018. Informal meetings were held with representatives of:

- Karen National Union (KNU)
- New Mon State Party (NMSP)
- Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS)
- Pa-O National Organization (PNO)

Meetings were also held with Union and State Members of Parliament representing Karen, Mon, Shan, and Pa-O ethnicities, and with CSO’s associated with ethnic groups.

In all meetings, a brief introduction to REDD+ was provided, emphasizing:

- It is a mechanism under the UNFCCC, under which developing countries can receive results-based payments if they can demonstrably reduce GHG emissions from forests;
- For many developing countries, including Myanmar, emissions from forests account for a large proportion of all emissions;
- In order to qualify for results-based payments, a country must develop a national REDD+ strategy, outlining how it intends to reduce emissions;
- REDD+ (in Myanmar) will be implemented at a national level, meaning it will report on emissions reductions at a national level;
- All relevant stakeholders need to be involved in actions to reduce emissions;
- This means that all stakeholders need to be engaged in the strategy process and feel “ownership” of the strategy;
- Since natural resources and land underlie most of the ethnic conflicts in Myanmar, engagement with EAO’s and ethnic CSO’s is especially important;
- Consequently, we plan to hold an initial consultant event with each ethnic group (hopefully leading to further engagement activities), and sought to understand the issues to consider in organizing an initial consultation.

All those met expressed support for the REDD+ concept and for engaging with EAO’s and ethnic CSO’s. All offered their assistance in the process. Some key messages:
➢ KNU focused a lot on implementation arrangements for REDD+, noting that their experience is that the government insists that their own policies and regulations must be followed in any cooperation. KNU has subsequently requested a more formal meeting to discuss the initial engagement process.

➢ For some ethnic groups (e.g., Karen), there are multiple EAO’s, which may have very different priorities and visions for the environment. There is conflicting advice on whether engagement with different groups representing the same ethnic groups should be integrated or segregated. The appropriate approach is certain to be specific to the different groups; further discussion is required in the case of the Karen.

➢ The NMSP welcomed the opportunity for a REDD+ consultation and offered to organize the event in Mawlamyaing.

➢ Similarly, the PNO are open to organization of a consultation event.

➢ RCSS were concerned to ensure that any engagement process, and especially a consultation event would enjoy the endorsement of the State government (a subsequent meeting with the Shan State Parliament Land Use Committee confirmed that this would be the case).

Initiating engagement with EAO’s is challenging. Engagement with Karen, Mon, Shan and Pa-O groups was facilitated through local UNDP offices, but for some groups, such facilitation is not feasible. Consequently the PMU is investigating the possibility, advantages and costs of recruiting an engagement specialist for several months in late 2018.

**Engagement with non-signatories**

Because EAO’s that are not signatories to the NCA are viewed as illegal organizations by the Government of Myanmar, it is not possible to engage directly with them. However, some non-signatories control significant areas of territory, so they cannot simply be ignored.

Consequently, the PMU proposes to engage with ethnic CSO’s that are known to serve as intermediaries with non-signatory EAO’s, and in this way indirect engagement with the EAO’s can be promoted without exposing the programme or participating entities to direct engagement with non-signatories.