



CASE STUDY

Green Initiative in Myanmar: Green Economy Green Growth (GEGG) Association Myanmar and Forums

To pursue the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Myanmar has set the stage with its Green Economy Green Growth (GEGG) forums. These events bring together diverse groups, individuals, and ideas, in a collaborative environment where they can work together toward their goals.

Background Information

Myanmar's fertile ecological zones have long provided bountiful agricultural production, along with much of the country's economic output. But in recent years, population growth, unsustainable extraction of mineral and forest resources, soil loss and degradation, and water and climate-related hazards have diminished Myanmar's resource base. Myanmar is also one of the fastest growing economies in East Asia. As its economy is still largely based on agriculture, forestry, and fishing, events that upset those industries, like the severe flooding in 2016, have a great impact on the country's economy making climate change an important concern.

Raising awareness of, and working on environmental and climate concerns is a collective effort in the ethnically diverse country. One leader on that front is a not-for-profit organization known as the Green Economy Green Growth Association (GEGG), which promotes knowledge exchange between groups within Myanmar, as well as with experts and interested parties from the international community. A primary goal of the GEGG program is to find a balance between the needs of humanity and nature, while helping business find a sustainable path forward. As Myanmar's former President U Thein Sein noted, "We don't want to have foreign or any investment in this country that will be damaging to the natural environment."

Initiated in 2011, GEGG has progressively gained influence on relevant policy discussions. The association runs annual forums that highlight strategic options for green growth, and sustainable development generally, while fostering cooperation with local and international partners. The forums provide a platform for diverse actors to connect, share, and learn from each other while working to develop a green economy for Myanmar and beyond.

Having started strictly as a forum for the open sharing of ideas, it has recently added a formal association that will develop green projects with partners from civil society and international organizations. The GEGG Association was created in 2012 to make the ASEAN Vision 2020 of a "clean and green Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) with fully established mechanisms for sustainable development to ensure the protection of the region's environment, the sustainability of its natural resources, and the high quality of life of its peoples," a reality.



Approach, Delivery, & Challenges

The GEGG started in November 2011 with the Nay Pyi Taw Forum (focusing on international trends, policy, finance, and economics). Since then, the annual forums have continued down the same path. The second forum worked to spread awareness of the opportunity and need of the GEGG program in Myanmar. The third GEGG Forum aimed to accelerate progress, while focusing on the nexus of energy, water, and food. The fourth forum worked to define concrete steps for expanding cooperation around sustaining natural resources, while providing social and economic development.

GEGG forums bring together many relevant actors, including internal groups like the Ministries of Environmental Conservation and Forestry, National Planning and Economic Development, Science and Technology, Education, Hotels and Tourism, Culture, and Education. They also receive support from many international organizations, including multiple UN agencies, the Smithsonian Institution, private sector firms, and countries like Norway, Sweden, and Japan that are working to help spread positive change beyond their borders. Although the aforementioned groups provide many of the participants at these forums, they also include others from a much wider group.

The GEGG platform is a model that could be reproduced and adapted throughout the Asia-Pacific region. And a supranational body, the ASEAN Institute for Green Economy (AIGE) is already being put in place to help the rest of the ASEAN countries. The AIGE was created thanks to a recommendation from Myanmar for an ASEAN-wide organization like the country's GEGG. The AIGE launched with a five-year work plan (2017-2021). The organization will be co-located with, and will receive technical, management, and administrative support from, the GEGG.

Benefits & Lessons Learned

GEGG forums are intended to be indirect drivers of progress on the overall 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). GEGG, in fact, provides support for the work around all the SDGs, in looking to accelerate progress across the board. Whether the forums are having the desired outcomes might be viewed as a measure of the country's overall progress towards the goals, but it also might be viewed as a measure of the progress from projects that are initiated through the GEGG forums or otherwise aided by the platform.

Creating a platform for SDG awareness, discussion, learning, and collaboration is a good starting point. But developing it in such a way as has been done in Myanmar provides multiple additional benefits, including a predictable, reliable space for all benefits to occur (rather than relying on ad hoc events to hopefully fill the gap). It also provides a touchpoint for the development of a community of practitioners and interested parties that will have to come together in pursuing the SDGs. Within that community, it also offers the possibility of developing a sense of shared accountability and responsibility for achieving the goals. The latter might be the most important factor in driving meaningful progress.

The GEGG forums could be replicated in any country, and supportive policy would help ensure that the programs are continually and purposefully executed. Crafting policy that encourages actors from all relevant sectors to participate and contribute could be greatly beneficial. Providing public funds for the effort, along with the alignment of objectives and possibly incentives for others to contribute funding and expertise, would help ensure the viability of such programs.

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Website

Green Economy Green Growth - <http://geggmyanmar.org>

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