

Chindwin Futures

Key sustainability challenges for the Chindwin River Basin: A scoping exercise for an assessment and dialogue

Geographical focus:	Chindwin River Basin
Project name:	Chindwin Futures
Partners:	Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) in collaboration Myanmar Environment Institute (MEI) and other organizations from Myanmar and Mekong regional experts and other organizations
Funder:	Blue Moon Fund (BMF) and Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI)
Starting date:	July 2014

Introduction: Towards an assessment and dialogue process

The Ayeyarwady River is extremely important to the people of Myanmar. The choices being made on how to develop and manage its water-related resources will have profound, long-term, consequences for human development. The Ayeyarwady River Basin is a very large and complex basin, requiring understanding of all its parts, and how those parts fit together and contribute to development at the national level.

The Chindwin River is a major tributary of the Ayeyarwady, important to multiple uses and users of water with distinct interests, and vulnerabilities to climate and flow modification or allocation. How can we ensure fair and reasonable allocation of water? How can we integrate uses some of which may not be easily compatible with each other? How can we plan for very dry years? Which water resource development and management strategies will do most to improve livelihoods and human well-being?

We believe it is very important that there is discussion among stakeholders among different water users and water managers and developers about their hopes and concerns for the future of the Chindwin and the Ayeyarwady. We also believe that assessments collaborative processes which bring together different types of knowledge in reports, of managers and water users, or from statistics and models can help inform dialogues and negotiations towards making strategic decisions. As an important example of a partnership built with the government, a formal cooperation agreement for the period Jan 2014 - May 2015 was reached with the Directorate of Water Resources and Improvement of River Systems (DWIR), which acts as the Secretariat of the National Water Resources Committee (NWRC).

Purpose of the scoping exercise

The primary purpose of this scoping exercise for assessment and dialogue is to pave the way for a full report on the key sustainability challenges faced in all or certain parts of the Chindwin River Basin. The scoping exercise will refine the objectives, identify users and their needs, and design a suitable and agreed process for a set of assessment and dialogue activities over a two-year period. The exercise will address specific, priority aspects of alternative development strategies for the Chindwin Basin.

A secondary aim is to contribute to related dialogue activities at the Ayeyarwady Basin at national and regional levels: First, through raising awareness of the values and limitations of particular tools for

integrated, basin-level, analysis, planning and management. Second, by strengthening the capacity of state and civil society actors to engage in deliberations on water resources planning and development strategies and decisions. While initial steps will be undertaken during the scoping year, the main dialogue activities would take place in subsequent years.

This fact sheet summarizes the details of this preliminary assessment and dialogue scoping effort. The subsequent sections describe the design and approach to be used; key issues and questions that will be explored; and the proposed guiding questions in carrying out the scoping exercise for the Chindwin Futures Assessment

Design of scoping study

The preliminary assessment was guided by five initial questions:

Questions 1 and 2: What are the core livelihood, social development and environmental issues related to water resources development and management in the Chindwin Basin and how are they driven?

Questions 3 and 4: What are some of the alternative strategies for water resources development and management in the Chindwin Basin and what implications would they have for livelihoods, social development and the environment?

Question 5: What information, analyses, models, technical advice and multi-stakeholder, deliberative processes are needed and could feasibly be undertaken to assess and refine plausible alternative development strategies?

Core sustainability issues and their drivers

A number of key activities, many engaging local or national stakeholders, and others involving review and analysis of existing policies, proposals and datasets, are envisioned to help identify a small set of core sustainability issues for further strategic assessment.

Initial consultations and reviews suggest that core issues in the Lower Chindwin River Basin, include:

- Securing livelihood options and local employment opportunities
- Effectively allocating and managing water for the dry season irrigation
- Maintaining water quality for drinking water supplies, fisheries and agriculture
- Managing bank erosion and sediments for human settlements and river transport
- Integrating water resources development and management plans

These are just suggestions: we welcome other views on the core issues that should be addressed by the Chindwin Futures Assessment.

Each of these core issues is influenced by a set of drivers and actors that need to be identified and evaluated. The scoping study will begin this process of raising questions where more information and analysis is needed.

Alternative strategies, alternative futures

The assessment will explore alternative strategies in alternative futures. In this preliminary, scoping assessment, an effort will be made to identify some of the existing alternative visions and strategies implied by current plans and proposals or held by different stakeholders. Most of the work on exploring alternative Chindwin Futures, however, will be undertaken with stakeholders as part of the assessment process.

Assessment needs and tools

An important task for the preliminary, scoping, assessment is to define the exact needs, processes and tools by which the assessment proper will be carried out.

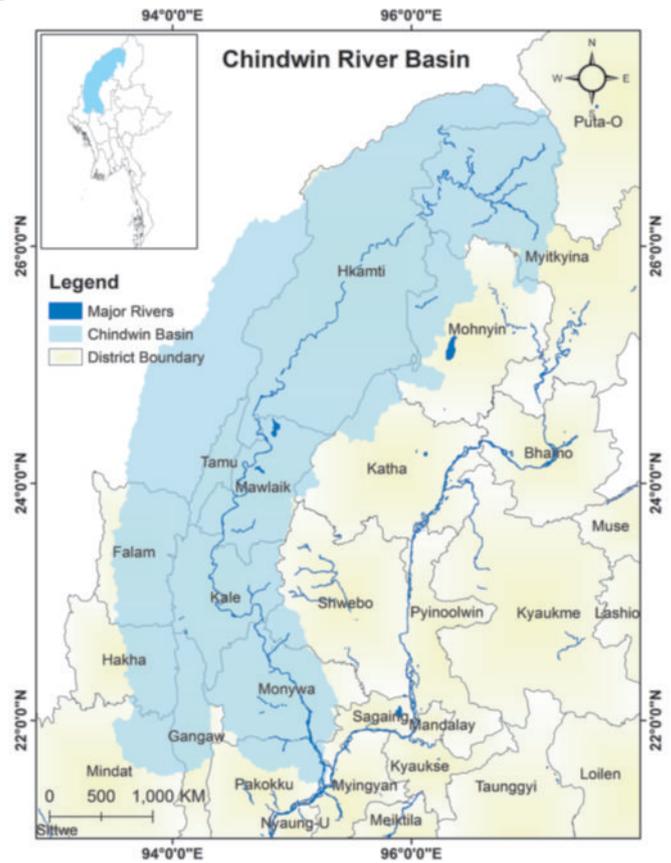
One important activity, therefore, will be to carefully review existing and proposed decision-support tools and suggest how they could be used in the assessment process. Experience with similar strategic environmental and ecosystem service assessments elsewhere will also be reviewed taking into account data information requirements and socio-political context.

Towards the Chindwin Futures Assessment

The main policy question proposed to guide the Chindwin Futures Assessment and Dialogue process is:

How can strategies for development and management of water resources and the river, including investments in irrigation, navigation, erosion control and electricity generation, be guided so that they best contribute to improvement of livelihoods of all the people living in, and depending upon, the Chindwin River Basin?

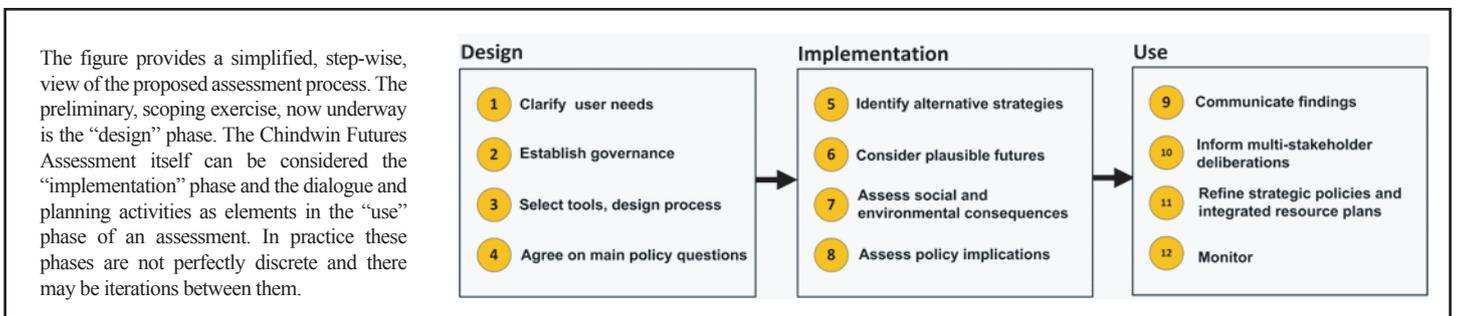
Depending on the results of the preliminary scoping assessment a subset of core sustainability issues will be agreed upon as the primary focus for the assessment. For example, if the decision was to focus on dry season water allocation and management for the Lower Chindwin Basin, the specific questions the assessment and dialogue process could address might be:



1. What are the principal livelihood, social development and environmental issues related to securing livelihoods in the Chindwin Basin, in particular, dealing with conditions in the dry season and especially in very dry years?
2. Which actors, institutions and socio-economic processes play an important role in driving or potentially responding to dry season livelihood and water-resource related sustainability challenges?
3. What are plausible alternative strategies for water resources development and management in the Chindwin Basin, and what implications would they have for livelihoods, social development and the environment?

Products

The assessment findings will be synthesized in a report in Burmese and English languages with a concise summary for policy-makers.



Published by:

Stockholm Environment Institute-Asia
 15th Floor, Witthyakit Building
 254 Chulalongkorn University
 Chulalongkorn Soi 64
 Phayathai Road, Pathumwan
 Bangkok, Thailand 10330
<http://www.sei-international.org>

Your views:

Your views on the proposed scope, priority issues, or process for the proposed Chindwin Futures Assessment are sincerely welcomed.

Please contact:

Rajesh Daniel at rajesh.daniel@sei-international.org
 Chayanis Krittasudthacheewa at chayanis.k@sei-international.org