

Myanmar Water Framework Directive

(2014)

Introduction

The National Water Resources Committee (NWRC) is a national APEX body in the water sector of Myanmar. The NWRC consists of Union Ministers, Regional Ministers, Mayors, Permanent Secretaries, Director Generals, and representatives (Chair, Secretary and Joint Secretary) of the Advisory Group Members. The members of the Advisory Group are contributing their talent, time and energy to make sure that our most important and precious water resources are properly developed, managed and shared among all citizens of Myanmar.

Many consultation meetings were held across Myanmar in 2014 the whole year. The intention of those consultations was to share the MNWFD draft document, seek comments, input and advice from the Civil Society and non-state actors to further improve the draft Framework Directive. Also opportunities were given to various stakeholders to work more closely with the Advisory Group of NWRC and members of NWRC during the Myanmar National Water Law drafting process. The MNWFD was finalized in December 2014.

Key purposes

- to ensure water security, water-related disaster risks reduction, good water governance, sustainable development and acceleration of the promotion of Water Security and Green Growth through Integrated Water Resources Management practices;
- to realize the mandate of NWRC, i.e. to conserve, protect, manage and develop water resources of Myanmar for sustainable development and reduce and manage water-related disaster risks in Myanmar;
- to achieve the status of clean and sufficient water for all purposes by a set deadline;
- to begin the implementation of integrated water resources management (IWRM) based on proper spatial unit called basin-wide approach;
- to create an approach of green practices and quality standards;
- to set the water and sanitation tariffs with priority on pro-poor prices in respect of human rights while boosting the economically viable prices for development and commercial uses;
- to promote proper perspective and priorities in relation to water-energy-food-ecosystem nexus and Climate Change impact;
- to encourage citizens' active involvement and hands-on projects to achieve dire need for Peace and Prosperity through fair water sharing and allocation;
- to formulate a continuum of water legislation in Myanmar to ensure water security and direct and indirect revenues from water-based economy.

The Water Framework Directive

The “**Water Framework Directive**” of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar aims to establish “**a framework for all walks of life towards the National Water Law and National Water Policy**”, which

overarches the Myanmar's water sector in the sense that it prescribes steps to reach the common goals rather than adopting the pretext by top down approach.

Goals

Three main goals of Myanmar National Water Framework Directive (MNWFD) are:-

1. getting Myanmar rivers healthier, waters cleaner and more beneficial for all purposes;
2. getting the citizens involved in a peaceful way; and
3. getting Green Economy momentum quickly and achieve Green Growth shortly.

Text of the Directive

There are seven directives as listed below.

Directive (1): Good status for all ground water and surface water

The Water Framework Directive aims for 'good status, i.e. clean and sufficiently stored' for all ground water and surface water (rivers, lakes, transitional waters, and coastal waters) in Myanmar.

Directive (2): National Water Budget (Available Water Quantity)

The Water Framework Directive stipulates that National Water Budget must be estimated under the current hydrological and meteorological conditions taking into consideration of the Climate Change impacts already visible. The surface and groundwater must achieve "good quantitative status" and "good chemical status" (i.e. not polluted) by 2030. Classification of bodies, "good" or "poor" according to the current status, should be examined.

Directive (3): The ecological and chemical status (Continuous Water Quality Monitoring)

The ecological and chemical status of surface waters should be assessed according to the following criteria:

- Biological quality (fish, benthic invertebrates, aquatic flora);
- Hydro-morphological quality such as status of river banks, river bank structures, river training works, river continuity or substrate of the river bed;
- Physical-chemical quality such as temperature, oxygenation and nutrient conditions;
- Chemical quality that refers to environmental quality standards for river basin specific pollutants. These standards specify maximum concentrations for specific water pollutants. If even one such concentration is exceeded, the water body will not be classed as having a "good ecological status".

Directive (4): Cooperation between the Union Government and the States and Regional Governments

The Water Framework Directive requires State and Regional Governments "to encourage the active involvement of interested parties" in the implementation of the Directive. This is generally acknowledged the requirement of frequent consultative and coordinating meetings yielded by capacity

building workshops across the country. It also emphasizes the need to have clear mandate, duties and responsibilities as well as finance sharing between the Union and the State and Regional Governments.

Directive (5): Spatial management of river basins

One important aspect of the Water Framework Directive is the introduction of River Basin Management approach. These basin areas have to be designated within the national boundary, not according to administrative or political boundaries, but rather according to the river basin (the spatial catchment area of the river) as a natural geographical and hydrological unit. As our main rivers cross many administrative boundaries, i.e. States and Regional Administrative Boundaries, the Local Governments have to cooperate and work together for the management of the river basin (so-called national basins) such as Ayeyarwady, Sittaung, Chindwin, etc. and international basin such as Mekong and Thanlwin. All major basins in Myanmar need River Basin Development Plans, which provide a clear indication of the way the objectives set for those river basins, are to be reached within the required timescale. They should be updated every ten years.

Directive (6): Transgressions (River Water Transfer projects)

The River Water Transfer projects are very popular due to water scarcity around the world and heavily criticized as being contrary to the principles of Sustainable Water Resources Management of each River Basin. Therefore this topic should be addressed in a proper manner. Thus it has a place in the Water Framework Directive as precautionary principle/section.

Directive (7) Restructuring Process

Citizens of Myanmar expressed their concerns over water scarcity, safety and water pollution issues through media and various workshops as well as direct communication to the President's office. This is one of the main reasons to draft this Water Framework Directive and Myanmar National Water Policy. New sectorial and/or thematic water policies will be formulated and proposed along the line after holding a number of public consultations at the regional and community levels. In achieving three goals and seven directives, the changing role of the Government and that of citizens and civil society groups will be crucial. This is the reason that the new Myanmar Water Policy was also drafted with citizens' involvement in order to achieve Peace and Prosperity. That also indicated that a serious restructuring process (or) water sector reform is necessary!

Key issues under Myanmar National Water Framework Directive and Myanmar Water Policy

1. Water Pollution
2. Environmental Flow
3. Water Allocation
4. Water Pricing
5. Mandate Sharing between authorities
6. Effective use of Integrated Water Resources Management
7. Water use Efficiency for economic development towards Green Economy and Green Growth
8. Phase by phase tackling of "water legislation" – water law, policies and procedures, regulations and Acts, etc.

9. Efficient communication mechanism by the NWRC Secretariat to up and down channels; the Union Government, States and Divisional Governments, Ministries, Line Agencies and Citizens of Myanmar – setting up an open process
10. Coordination of objectives to achieve a good status for all waters by a set deadline
11. Coordination of measures
12. The river basin management plans
13. People-centered Public Private Participation (PPPP) for secure investments
14. Water-related Data Bank and Hydro-Informatics Centre (i.e., not only limited to hydrological, meteorological, geotechnical, environmental and climate change data but also including economy, market, trade, product, innovative technologies, societal, cultural, research and investment opportunities as well as financial aid data)
15. Water-related disaster risk reduction, Integrated Flood Management System and early warning systems
16. Water for peoples, water for food, water for energy, water for industries, and water to sustain the ecosystem
17. Water projects for social inclusion and good governance
18. Water, sanitation and hygiene programmes
19. Water and Peace – meaning Good Water Governance
20. Streamlining legislation to abolish the outdated ones and to enact the new ones which are suitable for the present time. This is extremely important for the revenue creation.
21. Getting the appropriate prices for the business and for the peoples
22. More topics can be added

Conclusion

In reality, it is a political process!

Let us share the momentum from the President led national reform process.