The Landscape and its people

The Dawna Tenasserim is one of Myanmar’s most productive and most threatened landscapes. This transboundary landscape of 6.4 million hectares straddles across the Dawna and the Tenasserim mountain ranges, the Malay Peninsula and into Thailand. The Mergui Archipelago contains more than 800 islands and the largest remaining mangroves in Myanmar. The island-vegetated forest, an Indo-Burma biodiversity hotspot, harbours globally significant populations of tigers, leopards and dhole. The Dawna Tenasserim is home to the Burmese, Karen, Mon, Salakhet, Pao, Sakaine and Melay (Bashu) ethnic groups as well as thousands of refugees and internally displaced people who do not have land tenure.

Illegal logging and land encroachment drive deforestation and make local communities even more vulnerable to other threats. We offer three entry points for action that will foster sustainable pathways and livelihoods.

1. Empower local communities to secure their land tenure and resource rights. The government has reached only 32 percent of its 2031 target of establishing community forests. In 2001, Myanmar adopted a 30-year forestry master plan but its capacity to enforce laws and protect its landscape remains weak. Under the Forest Law, forest land can be leased to private companies, which leads to displacement and conflict

2. Find alternative livelihoods and foster gender equity. We are the only non-governmental organization of our kind in Asia and the Pacific. We have more than 30 years of experience in Dawna Tenasserim. This will lay the foundations for democracy and lasting peace in a landscape currently facing the challenges of climate change, deforestation, land tenure and conflict. Empowered local communities must lead the work of many other organizations. Through investments in Dawna Tenasserim we can contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations.

3. Support the development of inclusive forest-based business opportunities for women and other marginalized groups. Dawna Tenasserim’s 10,500 hectares of mangrove forest are prime habitat for the world’s largest population of Irrawaddy dolphins. Furthermore, Dawna Tenasserim is one of the most threatened landscapes. This transboundary landscape of 6.4 million hectares straddles across the Dawna and the Tenasserim mountain ranges, the Malay Peninsula and into Thailand. The Mergui Archipelago contains more than 800 islands and the largest remaining mangroves in Myanmar. The island-vegetated forest, an Indo-Burma biodiversity hotspot, harbours globally significant populations of tigers, leopards and dhole. The Dawna Tenasserim is home to the Burmese, Karen, Mon, Salakhet, Pao, Sakaine and Melay (Bashu) ethnic groups as well as thousands of refugees and internally displaced people who do not have land tenure. Illegal logging and land encroachment drive deforestation and make local communities even more vulnerable to other threats. We offer three entry points for action that will foster sustainable pathways and livelihoods:

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