

# Land Core Group at a Glance



**L**and Core Group (LCG) is a not-for-profit organisation promoting fair and equitable land governance in Myanmar. We work with Government, Parliament, and civil society to reform policy, law and procedures that impact people's rights to their land - particularly women and men smallholders and indigenous communities – and promote implementation of equitable aspects of the law.

**Our Vision** is for the people of Myanmar, including men and women smallholders, indigenous communities and other vulnerable land users, to fully enjoy equitable access to, use of, and control over land and related natural resources.



Photo: Daw Hla Pa Zain

**Our Mission** is to promote equitable land and natural resource rights and use in the formulation and implementation of policies and laws to strengthen people's ability to effectively claim their land rights through formal and informal mechanisms, and to serve as a hub for research, information, and coordination for land-related work in Myanmar.



Photo: Lin Bojian

## Our Donors



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## Land Governance in Myanmar: *A Case for Change*

In Myanmar, it is estimated that 70% of the population depends directly on land and land-based resources. These people are mainly smallholder farmers and indigenous communities who have held their land for generations. Their land tenure rights are central to their survival, culture and identity.

The policies, laws, and procedures that make up Myanmar's land governance system do not adequately recognise or protect smallholders' and indigenous communities' tenure over land and forest resources. Instead, existing laws place many at risk of having their land indiscriminately acquired or 'grabbed'. In addition, the parts of these laws that may protect them are often not implemented.

### Impediments to Change

By law, individuals and communities are not allowed to own land in Myanmar, as all land is owned by the State. There are ways to formally register land tenure, but they only provide specific types of rights, like the right to use the land, and not others, such as the right to exclude others from their land. Land governance in Myanmar is made more complex by the many thousands of unresolved land grabs. There are also many different ideas about the future of land governance, including its relation to a future federal system of government, amongst Parliament, Government, and the military, as well as Ethnic Armed Organisations, CSOs, and community groups also have different ideas. Further, armed conflict continues to displace people from their land.

### Opportunities for Change

While there are challenges, LCG believes that the political opening of the country makes it possible to bring about important change to land governance in Myanmar by working within the government system. One of the most significant causes for optimism is the National Land Use Policy (NLUP). The NLUP has the potential to guide a process for the formulation of land-related laws, including a national land law, and regulations that better serve the interests of all the people of Myanmar. The NLUP also mandates the creation of the National Land Use Council, the body tasked with implementing the NLUP.



# Our History

In 2010, the Land Core Group emerged within the Food Security Working Group (FSWG) as a coalition of individuals and organisations interested in advancing land rights of smallholders and indigenous communities in Myanmar. In 2015, LCG formally separated from FSWG and became an organisation.

Despite being a young organisation, LCG has established itself as a key player within a network of individuals and organisations creating change in land policy and law reform in Myanmar.

A defining achievement was our role in facilitating an unprecedented public consultation process for the National Land Use Policy, in cooperation with the Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry (MoECAF), donors and civil society from 2013 to 2015. As a result of that process, the NLUP incorporates a number of progressive principles that advance the rights of women and men smallholder farmers and indigenous communities.

This work also laid the foundation for LCG's involvement in implementing the NLUP, including supporting the National Land Use Council to hold the first National Land Use Policy Forum in 2018.

## Who is a smallholder?

A smallholder is someone who owns or manages a smallholding - a small farm that usually supports the livelihood of a single family.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ActionAid (2015) *Smallholders and women farmers* <<http://www.actionaid.org/what-we-do/food-rights/smallholders-and-women-farmers>>



## What is "tenure"?

In this context, tenure refers to a bundle of rights over land that includes use rights, control (or management) rights, and transfer rights. Tenure may be formal, recognised under law, or informal, recognised under customary or traditional systems but not law.



Photo: Daw Shwe Kyi



# How We Work

To create meaningful change in the complex environment of land governance in Myanmar, we seek to play to our strengths:



Our trust-based relationships with progressive individuals in Government and Parliament



Our ability to provide access to comprehensive information

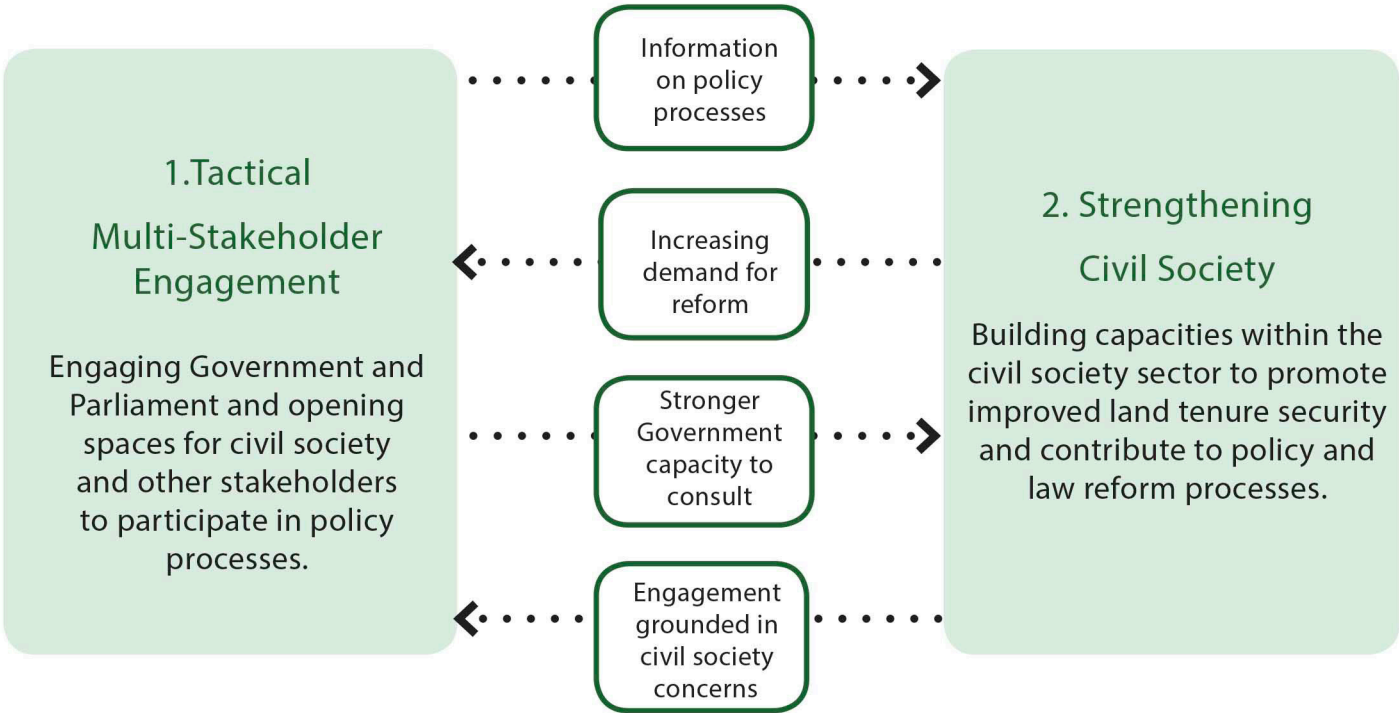


Our ability to co-ordinate discussion and analysis within civil society



Our ability to facilitate multi-stakeholder dialogues in policy processes

Drawing on these strengths we make use of two distinct, but interrelated, strategies:



Across both strategies, we have four main policy aims:

Land Tenure Security for Smallholders & Indigenous Communities	Recognition & Protection of Customary Land Tenure
Gender Equity in Land Governance Systems	Just Resolution of Land Grabs



# Customary Land Tenure

Existing laws fail to recognise and protect customary practices of land ownership and use in Myanmar, many of them communal in nature. Without such protection, smallholders and especially indigenous communities are at risk of losing their rights to land that they have accessed, managed, and controlled for generations.

## Our Approach

We promote the protection and recognition of customary tenure in Myanmar using diverse approaches that drive change from different angles.

In direct work on policy, we include the recognition of customary tenure among recommendations for policy and law amendments. We also educate those in power to understand customary land tenure and why it should be recognised.

Working from the ground up, LCG supports indigenous groups in advocating for customary tenure, for example by developing presentations for key forums that amplify their voices and strengthen their positions.

As part of broader coalitions of organisations, we help to advance understanding of customary tenure by supporting forums that bring together national and international perspectives and facilitating discussions.

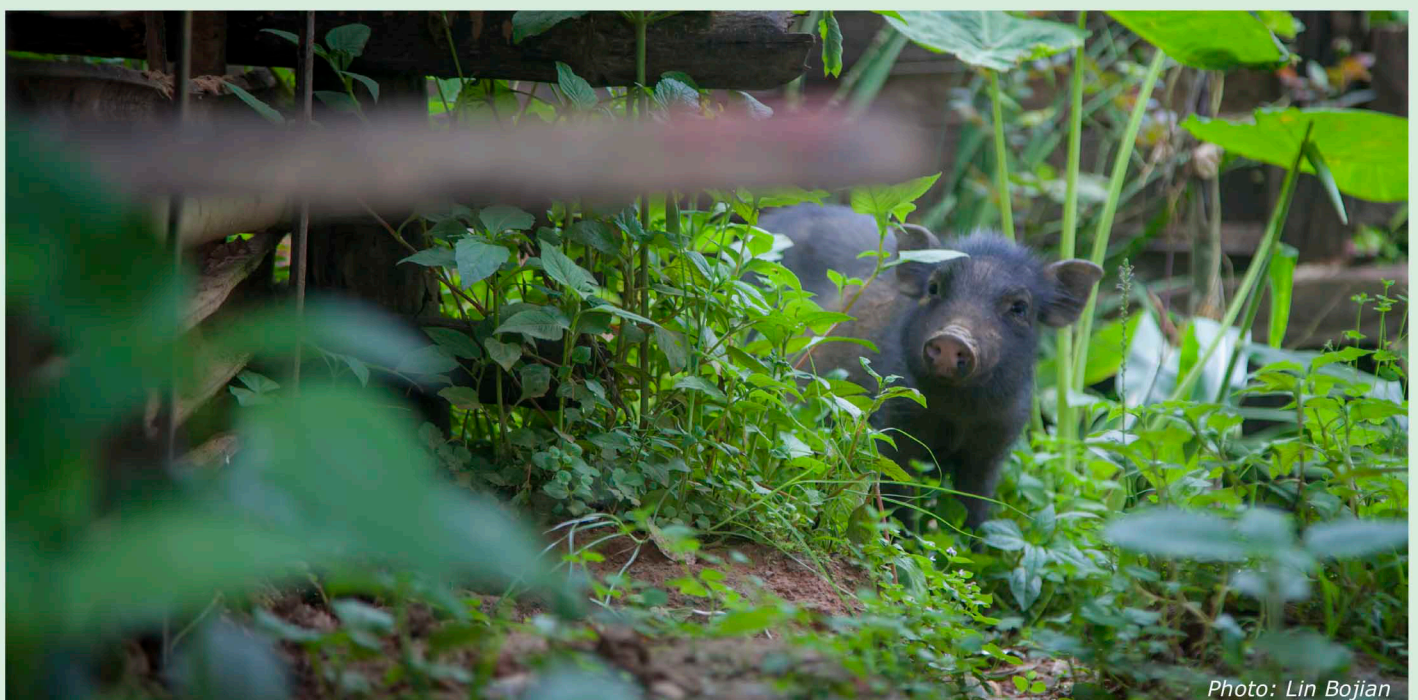
We also support research projects that provide evidence that can deepen civil society understanding of issues related to customary tenure and strengthen advocacy work.



*Photo: Daw Hla Pa' Zain*



*Photo: Lin Bojian*



*Photo: Lin Bojian*





Photo: Daw Haung Nge Lone

## Land and Gender

Women in rural Myanmar play a critical role in supporting their families and communities and in crop and livestock production, forestry and fisheries. For many, their rights to use, access and control land may depend on men - whether their husbands, fathers, sons or brothers. In many instances, women also face obstacles in accessing information on land rights or institutions that can help.

As a result, women are often more vulnerable than men in terms of land tenure security and at a greater risk of becoming landless or dependent on others for survival.

### Our Approach

To build a strong foundation for advocacy on gender equity in land governance across the civil society sector, we focus on contributing to the development of an evidence-based understanding of the experience of women with regards to land.

In 2015, LCG launched the Land and Gender Project, which employs experts to use a range of methods to conduct research and produce briefs and reports highlighting key land and gender issues in Myanmar. Funded by Trocaire and LIFT, the Project has produced Myanmar's first Female Farmers' Forum, policy briefs on key issues, and an exhibition of photos taken by women farmers as part of LCG's participatory research. These photos are also showcased throughout this brochure.



Myanmar's First Female Farmers Forum: Governance



Formalising Land, Marginalising Women? Norms and Customary Practices Regarding Land Rights in Dawei

### A Woman's Place: life through the lens of Myanmar's women farmer

By MYANMORE - May 23, 2017





# Our Workplace Culture

LCG's commitment to reflection, education and learning is at the core of our culture and values. We continually reflect on our approach and work, both individually and as an organisation, to find new and improved ways of working.



*"At LCG we have a learning and mentoring environment... In a short time I've learnt so much and tried different ways of thinking."*

Han May

Monitoring & Evaluation Co-Ordinator

## LCG's Research and Advocacy Internship Program

In 2017, LCG introduced the Research and Advocacy Internship Program and recruited six university students or recent graduates.

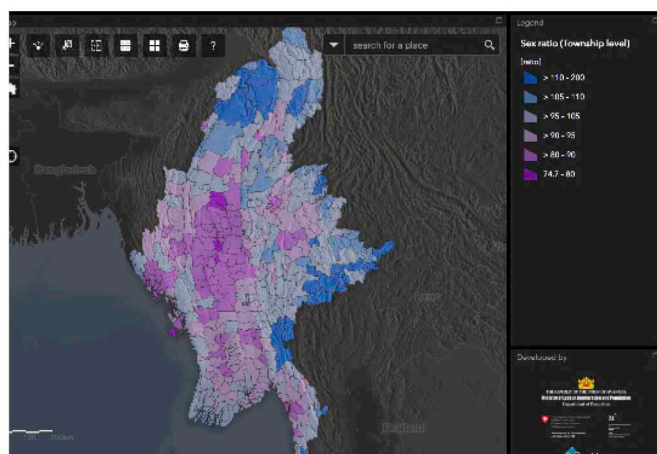
The program is designed to strengthen the quality of current research while building the capacity of young people who will work in the development sector in the future.



## LCG and OneMap Myanmar

Effective decision-making and planning for sustainable, national development requires accurate data and information. In Myanmar, accessing this type of information is often difficult. OneMap is a Government initiative that is working to solve this problem, by providing access to accurate, consolidated and user-friendly data related to people, land and natural resources.

LCG is an implementing partner of OneMap, providing technical assistance on issues relating to land governance, policy and law reform, and multi-stakeholder dialogues. OneMap is funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation (SDC) and is also partnering with the Centre for Development and Environment (CDE) at the University of Bern.







Find out more...



Like us on Facebook for updates on our work and land policy developments: @landcoregroup



Visit our website to read more about how we work and our publications: [www.lcgmyanmar.org](http://www.lcgmyanmar.org)

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*Photo: Lin Bojian*

