

**THE REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR
NATIONAL HOUSING POLICY & STRATEGY**

**Prepared for
Department of Urban and Housing Development,
Ministry of Construction**

With technical assistance from UN Habitat



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ABBREVIATIONS

CHDB	Construction and Housing Development Bank
CSO	Central Statistical Organization
DALMS	Department of Agricultural Land Management and Statistics
DAO	Development Affairs Organizations
DUHD	Department of Urban and Housing Development
HUTF	Housing and Urban Task Force
MoAI	Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation
MoC	Ministry of Construction
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NSSA	National Skills Standards Authority
TDAC	Township Development Support Committee

SUMMARY

This strategy provides a blueprint for government action in support of Myanmar's housing and urban communities in the years immediately ahead. It consists of a comprehensive set of strategic objectives and actions in support of the principle, *Appropriate affordable housing for all in sustainable inclusive communities*. The approach is different for:

- the formal sector of the housing market where the upper middle class live, and
- the general community who live mostly in housing of traditional impermanent materials with few services.

In the **formal market**, the intention is to establish the rule of law:

- to formalize land title and land and housing transactions
- to nominate a single responsible body for decisions, avoiding legal and procedural overlap
- to lay out Master Plans and five-year development plans that allow for projected urban expansion and seek to acquire and release land in a timely fashion
- to establish transparent clear approval processes integrated locally within one-stop shops, while following national and local plans
- to establish a formal financial sector with contract-based loans and mortgages

The general principles of market economics and consumer-driven choice are also to prevail, through:

- producing a range of unit types according to demand
- general principles of full costing with transparent subsidy
- greater competition in all markets including finance; small and medium enterprises to provide variety and customization
- value capture on speculative land profits; land banking solutions
- development of a formal rental sector

In the **informal or semi-formal sector**, in which the majority of the people of Myanmar currently live and work, people will be encouraged to earn livelihoods without undue interference or harassment, while improving community safety and quality of life, through:

- Land for incremental building, with a range of plot sizes, paying attention to access/ right-of-way, livelihoods and inclusiveness
- Settlement upgrading according to good practice, with certificates of occupation
- Building community solidarity and representation

General sustainability principles are to be supported in all activities. These include low footprint, resilience and disaster readiness, inclusiveness and democratic rights, with attention to cultural values, ethnic identity, gender and the support of vulnerable groups.

INTRODUCTION

Myanmar is in the initial stages of emerging from a long-standing isolated command economy to a democratic market economy. As in other rapidly urbanizing countries, housing and residential communities are a vital concern. Dwellings and neighbourhoods require a complete range of active responses to the many urban challenges that arise as cities modernize and take on expanded structures and roles in a new economy and government.

Since the economy was liberalized and democratic structures were introduced in 2011, the economy has begun to expand rapidly after decades of stagnation. As in other developing countries, many households have now come to the major cities seeking work and better livelihoods. Planning and construction operating in the usual way have not been able to keep pace with the influx, and is stressed in adjusting to the many demands of a modernizing economy.

The rate of growth of the urban population is 1.7 per cent annually, lower than the global average (mostly due to delayed marriage resulting from political and economic uncertainty); but it is still much more rapid than Myanmar has been accustomed to. Most of the rural immigrants are too poor to afford formal housing, especially people from the Ayeyarwady delta who were displaced by Cyclone Nargis in 2008.

Accordingly, around 370,000 people in Yangon alone have created informal settlements on vacant land, in resettlement areas or by doing informal deals with landowners, constructing houses often in the style they have left behind and sometimes from makeshift materials. Slums are also growing elsewhere in the country.

The challenges therefore for Myanmar are significant – on the one hand to create a modernized formal housing sector for the middle class, on the other to house large numbers of very poor people in a way that is sustainable, safe, affordable and which meets their present and future living requirements.

In doing so, the guiding principle must be the welfare of the people of Myanmar – which the strategy, the laws, the institutions, the activities and the outcomes should serve.

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STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK MYANMAR				
MISSION: Appropriate affordable housing for all in sustainable inclusive communities				
Strategic goal 1 Strengthen capacity and legal underpinning in housing and urban policy formulation and execution	Strategic goal 2 Provide affordable land with property rights and physical services to accommodate urban expansion	Strategic goal 3 Develop effective systems of formal housing supply and finance to meet anticipated demand or need	Strategic goal 4 Build resilient inclusive communities for low income people	Strategic goal 5 Promote disaster readiness and economic and social sustainability
STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES				
Strategic Objective 1A Create an independent authority or board devoted to resolving Myanmar's housing problems	Strategic Objective 2A Establish unambiguous property rights, land titling and flexible, publicly gazetted approval processes for land development	Strategic Objective 3A Expand housing output by all actors to meet projected demand, especially for lower income households	Strategic Objective 4A Improve existing communities by organizing community development funds, physical and social services and replacing poorest-quality dwellings	Strategic Objective 5A Mandate and enforce planning and building standards on disaster resilience including informal dwellings; upgrade insurance system
Strategic Objective 1B Build capacity in urban and housing policy, using pro-poor inclusive gendered approaches. Create strong policies, laws and simple dispute resolution mechanisms	Strategic Objective 2B Ensure timely affordable land supplies through scheduled local master plans, land banking and earmarking of sites	Strategic Objective 3B Enhance competition, industry engagement and housing choices, consulting with users on design and layout	Strategic Objective 4B Provide land and services to accommodate low-income people in line with projections, paying attention to livelihoods and accessibility	Strategic Objective 5B Engage in preventative measures, improve disaster response and readiness, and support post-disaster reconstruction
Strategic Objective 1C Provide support for decentralized local planning and decision-making	Strategic Objective 2C Develop efficient systems of property taxation and value capture based on sound cadastral records	Strategic Objective 3C Expand training in construction skills, enhance the production and quality of local building materials, and introduce appropriate technologies	Strategic Objective 4C Establish national system of secure tenure rights for all citizens	Strategic Objective 5C Build Back Better" with improved construction materials and technologies – including schools and other public buildings

HOUSING POLICY & STRATEGY 2017

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK MYANMAR				
MISSION: Appropriate affordable housing for all in sustainable inclusive communities				
Strategic goal 1	Strategic goal 2	Strategic goal 3	Strategic goal 4	Strategic goal 5
Strengthen capacity and legal underpinning in housing and urban policy formulation and execution	Provide affordable land with property rights and physical services to accommodate urban expansion	Develop effective systems of formal housing supply and finance to meet anticipated demand or need	Build resilient inclusive communities for low income people	Promote disaster readiness and economic and social sustainability
STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES				
Strategic Objective 1D Streamline and reform national and local decision processes by minimizing overlap and improving integration of multiple authorities while maintaining a clear chain of accountability	Strategic Objective 2D Provide appropriate levels of physical service provision to existing and new developments of all kinds	Strategic Objective 3D Establish clear transparent, flexible building standards and regulations	Strategic Objective 4D Encourage vibrant inclusive communities in which low-income people can live securely and sustainably and participate in decisions that affect them	Strategic Objective 5D Publicize cultural events, protect heritage buildings, and publicize settlement upgrading successes, with a view to promoting eco-tourism
Strategic Objective 1E Collect the range of data necessary for policy formulation and review, including demand, market, situational and aspirational data		Strategic Objective 3E Develop a viable formal rental sector protecting tenant rights		Strategic Objective 5E Encourage low-impact low-energy building solutions; mandate insulation in apartments
		Strategic Objective 3F Develop an active and stable financial system providing affordable credit to consumers and small builders		

Strategic goal 1: HOUSING AND URBAN POLICY AND LEGISLATION

During five decades of socialist and military rule in Myanmar, many of the institutions, laws and processes that underpin a modern housing sector were neglected. Myanmar faces major problems in modernizing its housing stock and dealing with squatter incursions, but there is no single body or authority taking responsibility for housing construction or housing issues, and a policy focus is lacking.

Outside of the major cities, Myanmar is governed through policy that is largely determined centrally and haphazardly, and where government services have been provided by local arms of central government agencies, acting independently or in committees chaired locally. There have been some moves towards decentralization. After 1990 Development Committees were established as the de-facto local governments in the two largest cities Yangon and Mandalay. The States and Provinces were given elected assemblies in the new Constitution of 2008. Township committees with participatory elements have been recently established. However, different Acts regulating these levels of government sometimes result in overlapping responsibilities without clear guidance as to whom is in charge of specific procedures and outcomes.

Some of the laws that regulate planning and housing in Myanmar are over 100 years old, and are applied unevenly and informally so that there is a general lack of confidence in their operation. Dispute resolution is cumbersome and sometimes ineffective so that issues frequently remain unresolved or arbitrary.

Capacity for policy is limited at all levels. While Myanmar has retained a strong engineering sector, the nation is underequipped with other planning disciplines including economics, law, social science and welfare professionals. Also, data collection and analysis for policy purposes is not always sufficient to enable a full understanding of the existing situation or provide accurate forecasts of need or demand.

- **Strategic Objective 1A:** Create an independent authority or board devoted to resolving Myanmar's housing problems

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