

SURVEY FINDS MIXED PICTURE ON DISCLOSURE OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business has published a survey which examines how many Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) and Initial Environmental Examinations (IEE) have been published. The survey focusses on oil and gas companies in Myanmar who were awarded blocks after 2013. It finds that 11 out of 19 offshore blocks (58%) and 4 out of 15 onshore blocks (26%) have published their IEEs or EIAs on the internet. Although this is less than 50%, the overall level of disclosure in the oil and gas sector is higher than in other sectors in Myanmar such as mining and construction where very few EIA and IEE have been published.

The survey also analyses the challenges faced by companies in complying with the new requirement for IEE/EIA and disclosure, and makes recommendations for how these can be addressed. The question of pre-existing projects is also highlighted. Under Article 8 of the new EIA Procedures, these need to take steps to submit Environmental Management Plans to obtain an Environmental Compliance Certificate from MOECF.

Vicky Bowman, Director of MCRB said *‘The reason we undertook this study is because we wanted to raise awareness of the new EIA process. We believe that it is essential that stakeholders can access to these assessments via the internet. The Environmental Management Plan contains legally-binding commitments which companies have made to reduce their impacts. Unless stakeholders such as local government officials and parliamentarians, civil society organisations, local communities and the media know what those commitments are, it will be difficult to hold companies to account for their environmental and social performance’.*

‘However this all requires stakeholders to ‘do their homework’ and read the reports. That’s why we hope this survey will raise awareness that some of these EIAs are available, and encourage stakeholders to read them’.

Background

1. Since the Ministry of Environment Conservation and Forests (MOECF) adopted the EIA Procedures on 29 December 2015, companies have been required to publish their IEEs or EIAs on their websites within 15 days of submitting them to MOECF. However many assessments conducted between 2013 and 2015 before the Procedures were adopted have not been published and their status is unclear.

2. Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business (MCRB) is a Yangon-based initiative funded by the UK, Denmark, Norway, Switzerland, Netherlands and Ireland, based on collaboration between the UK-based Institute of Human Rights and Business, and the Danish Institute for Human Rights. The Centre was established to provide an effective and legitimate platform for the creation of knowledge, capacity and dialogue concerning responsible business in Myanmar, based on local needs and international standards, which results in more responsible business practices. It is a neutral platform working with businesses, civil society and government.

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