2015-2018
Strategic Plan

Strategic Plan Goal

"Build a strong network of effective member organizations which collaborates, shares information, knowledge and resources and contributes to active dialogue on environmental issues and policies".

July 2015

1.   LIST OF ACRONYMS

MERN	Myanmar Environment Rehabilitation-Conservation Network
PCM	Project Cycle Management
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
NGOs	Non-governmental Organizations
NA	Needs Assessment
SP	Strategic Plan
V & M	Vision & Mission
M & E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NRM	Natural Resources Management
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CBOs	Community based Organizations

Myanmar Environment Rehabilitation-conservation Network (MERN) Strategic Plan, 2015-2018

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The three-year strategic plan for the Myanmar Environment Rehabilitation-conservation Network (MERN) for the period 2015-2018, marks a significant change for the network and its members with a new direction and focus which is set out in the SP goal, *"Build a strong network of effective member organizations which collaborates, shares information, knowledge and resources and contributes to active dialogue on environmental issues and policies"*.

The strategic plan recognizes that MERN is member based, demonstrated by the consultation and dialogue during its development and approval, as well as the direction of its objectives and activities.

The focus of the SP considers three important factors;

1. After many years of being closed to the rest of the world under military rule, change in Myanmar has, and is, occurring rapidly.
2. Because of Myanmar's unique history there is a young and weak CSO sector with limited experience in international standards of governance and management, international development practices and standards, and generally low technical knowledge on the environment and its management, which is affecting program effectiveness and efficiency and organization sustainability.
3. The importance to Myanmar and its people of a strong and functioning environmental network.

In 2014 a MERN Members' Needs Assessment was carried out which highlighted a range of factors that were not only limiting MERN, but also that of its members. The MERN NA was similar to a range of assessments on CSOs across Myanmar, indicating that many of the problems are widespread and linked to Myanmar's history rather than solely a MERN problem.

Two critical areas have been highlighted in recent reports; the low effectiveness and efficiency in carrying out programs and projects, and the sustainability of CSOs.

For Myanmar's people, especially those living in rural areas (some 70% of Myanmar's 60 million population) who depend on their immediate environment for food, fuel, and livelihoods, local CSOs will be the critical link and facilitator between various stakeholders and groups, as well as a key resource in educating, empowering and supporting local communities. A strong and dynamic network will be central for this to happen.

In the NA MERN members clearly felt strongly that they needed support and capacity building in a range of key areas and that MERN, as the network, should focus more on its members and facilitate that support. MERN has responded by consulting widely in the formation of this SP as well as agreeing on a number of member focused principles contained in it.

MERN and its members have formulated five objectives to achieve the strategic goal;

SP OBJECTIVE 1: Capacity of MERN & its members in governance, management & sustainability raised and maintained to meet international standards.
SP OBJECTIVE 2: Networking and information sharing between MERN, its members and other key partners developed and maintained.
SP OBJECTIVE 3: Policy development, engagement, advocacy and media enhanced.
SP Objective 4: Develop the MERN network as a leader and strong voice on environment issues by promoting awareness and information and fostering collaboration and coordination.
SP Objective 5: Institutional capacity and sustainability of MERN strengthened.

Monitoring and Evaluation as well as reporting to its members will be a core function of carrying out the SP and the organization will design and implement a user friendly system to track progress and document experiences that can be used as a guide for future support.

Detailed activities, a work plan and an indicative budget will be developed by the MERN executive.

Three important factors will be needed for the full and effective implementation of this strategic plan;

- Recognition by donors and stakeholders that long term funding, as well as mentoring and guidance will be needed to build a strong and vibrant environmental network.
- Active participation by members in all areas of the network.
- Commitment by the MERN governance board (who represent all the members) to ensure that the SP and its principles are followed.

3.   OVERVIEW

A strategic plan is a document that outlines an organization's purpose and direction, examines its current status, sets long-term objectives and sets out the ways to reach them.

Making clear plans for the future and monitoring them helps keep an organization focused, and is important in the assessment of whether it is making the difference it desires as set out in its vision and mission.

The MERN vision and mission, which was upgraded and approved by the members in 2014 is;

Vision

To ensure Myanmar people are well-informed and empowered to address environmental & related issues.

Mission

- Be a leader and a strong voice on environment issues
- Share knowledge and information
- Promote public awareness on environment & related issues
- Improve coordination and collaboration on environmental matters
- Influence national and regional government policy and practice on the environment for the benefit of communities
- Support its Members to become strong, effective, and sustainable organization

4.   PROCESS

This is MERN's first Strategic Plan so the process has been slow and careful as new concepts and ideas were introduced and considered. At all times there was a commitment to following an inclusive and collaborative process which regularly included training and capacity building. The strategic plan recognizes the young and undeveloped nature of CSOs in Myanmar, and strives to be practical and achievable in what it aims for.

The values that have driven the strategic planning process were;

- Transparency of communication
- Honesty
- Inclusion and valuing of diverse voices
- Enabling opportunities for member participation at all times
- Reflection

The steps taken in developing the strategic plan were;

- Recruitment of an International Advisor.
- Development and distribution of background papers for the governance board, CEO and members.
- Survey of relevant documents and reports.
- Briefing and training to governance board members, CEO and staff.
- Researching and drafting of presentations by CEO and Advisor.
- A member's workshop to discuss and develop objectives.
- Consultation with various stakeholders.
- An internal staff workshop.
- Development of objectives and activities.
- A member's workshop to review the draft SP.
- External review.
- Final draft sent to all members for comment.
- Final draft sent to governance board for ratification.
- Ratification.

5.   INTRODUCTION

This is the Myanmar Environment Rehabilitation-conservation Network (MERN) three-year strategic plan (2015-2018) which sets out the focus of MERN, and a plan for programming and operations.

The strategic plan recognizes that MERN is a member based organization and therefore has had input and agreement on the direction and objectives on a regular basis from its members.

The benefits of a network to its members include;

- Increased access to information
- Increased access to expertise and financial resources
- Increased effectiveness & efficiency for members
- A multiplier effect, which increases the reach and impact available to member organizations
- Solidarity and support of like members
- Increased visibility of issues, best practices, and underrepresented groups.

- Less risk / safety in numbers (e.g. in areas of advocacy)
- Reduced isolation for members out of a main city
- Increased credibility, particularly for developing NGOs.

The course and direction that MERN is embarking on with this Strategic Plan is a significant change from its past that recognizes the many changes occurring in Myanmar, and addresses what is needed now and for the future. The direction is represented in the Strategic Plan Goal which was formulated in the members' workshops.

"Build a strong network of effective member organizations which collaborates, shares information, knowledge and resources and contributes to active dialogue on environmental issues and policies".

The strategic plan takes into consideration current national and relevant international development frameworks and policies.

MERN History

In May 2008 Cyclone Nargis tore through the Irrawaddy Delta killing an estimated 130,000 people and leaving millions homeless. Relief and rehabilitation efforts by local communities were the catalyst for the formation of new community based service organizations.

Subsequent changes in Myanmar, and relaxation of some restrictions, led these organizations to take on decision making and development that had not been possible before the disaster.

The idea of networking for rehabilitation and conservation of mangrove resources including livelihood activities among the local environmental NGOs and establishment of a mangrove recovery fund or trust fund was initiated at a meeting held for "Promoting Community-led Natural Resource Management in the Delta" organized by Pyoe Pin Program in December 2008. A series of follow up meetings were made during a 6-7 months period with the launching of the official formation of MERN and election of a Central Executive Committee and Fund Board made in August 2009.

After many years of being closed to the rest of the world under military rule, change has occurred rapidly in Myanmar after a quasi-civilian government was put in place in 2011 allowing outside investment and greater freedoms for its people. A consequence of Myanmar's long isolation and military led rule however, is a young and weak CSO sector with limited experience in international standards of governance and management, as well as general knowledge on international development practices and standards.

In May 2014 MERN responded by upgrading its Charter as well as its Vision and Mission through a long and detailed consultation with its members. With support it instigated a MERN Members Needs Assessment in September 2014.

Currently, MERN has 20 members working on programs and projects related to livelihoods, environmental protection and sustainable development.

The members are diverse in both size and focus of activities ranging from large registered, well established organizations with permanent staff of 10-20+ people to a collection of likeminded individuals who hope to grow into an NGO sometime in the future. The geographic spread of head offices is limited with the majority centered in Yangon.

MERN and many of its members have struggled with the changing circumstances and the requirements of international development and are looking for the network to provide support to enable them to become more effective, efficient and sustainable.

MERN's mandate and scope of work

MERN is a national umbrella network for member NGOs in Myanmar. Membership is open to organizations registered, or in the process of being registered, with the Myanmar government and that are implementing or supporting on-going programs in Myanmar on issues related to the environment as per the MERN Charter, 2014.

MERN governance is only open to MERN members, elected by member organizations, but has provisions for outside advisors. As per the MERN Charter 2014, MERN's mandate and scope of work is to follow its vision and mission.

6.   ANALYSIS OF EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

Almost all of Myanmar is located inside the Indo-Burma Biodiversity Hotspot, one of the world's 34 "richest and most threatened reservoirs of plant and animal life" (Conservation International).

Most of Myanmar's past and current income has come from selling off natural resources and together with widespread deforestation, poor education, low extension services support and numerous pressures on communities leading to widespread exploitation, natural resources and the environment have declined significantly.

If the trend of the last 2-3 years continues, new areas of investment will rapidly grow which will bring different but equally challenging pressures on the environment such as tourism, large scale agricultural developments, hydropower dams, oil and gas exploitation and assorted manufacturing industries.

"Myanmar's current growth pattern is placing huge pressure on its environment and, if continued, will certainly be unsustainable given the country's continued population increase, expected rapid industrialization, increased consumption of and demand for natural resources for food production and trade, and increased energy consumption." ADB, Myanmar in Transition, 2012.

Natural resource management and the revenue from it has long been a key issue in the numerous conflicts in the country, and will need to be a significant part of any sustainable peace process in future.

The government under President Thein Sein has made reform of the natural resource management system a priority. Myanmar has a range of laws and policies related to protecting people and the environment and is also a signatory to a range of international treaties relating to the environment, including protection of biodiversity and indigenous peoples, wildlife, and countering climate change. Enacting these laws and policies fairly and consistently will be a challenge in the future as the country lacks crucial administrative and legal structures, standards, safeguards, funding, and faces widespread corruption and possibly not the unanimous political will to enact and enforce such requirements.

"Conducting social and environmental impact assessment, actively engaging local communities in mapping and planning, sharing equitably in the benefits of resource use and other best practices will demonstrate the government's sincerity, or not, in building a new Burma". Burma at a Crossroads for Peace-Building and Natural Resource Governance, Kirk Talbott, The Earth Institute, Columbia University.

There are strong links between natural resource management and food security and nutrition in countries such as Myanmar where 70% of the population of 60 million are rural and depend on their immediate environment for food, fuel, and livelihoods

Local CSOs will be the critical link and facilitator between various stakeholders as well as needing to be equipped to educate, empower and support local communities on a range of issues. A strong and dynamic local network will be central to achieving this.

For CSOs to be sustainable as well as credible, they need to be run effectively and the foundations of that are the four building blocks of institutional strength; governance, management, sound financial practices and efficient and effective program and project management (with a strong emphasis on gender equality and participatory actions).

It is not only important however for CSOs to be strong and able to manage projects effectively, they also need to research, collect data and lessons learned and communicate and share that information in a calm, factual and measured manner to empower a local voice in decision making processes.

MERN has suffered in the past, like all local organizations, from Myanmar's history of military led top down rule and long isolation, with the consequence a young and weak CSO sector. Until recently, most local CSOs had little or no exposure to international standards of governance, operational management, participatory principles and Project Cycle Management requirements. Technical knowledge has also been limited by the run-down of the education and university sectors.

The following five areas are commonly cited as being of low capacity in the MERN network, and Myanmar CSOs in general.

I. Poor Organization Development and Management

Most CSOs in Myanmar have inadequate skills and knowledge in governance, management, organizational growth and development as well as Project Cycle Management (PCM). There have been few good models of organizational or institutional effectiveness or efficiency in Myanmar over a long period, so networks and CSOs will need to look internationally for appropriate standards, knowledge and new ideas. Financial management and reporting (that meets donors specific requirements) for the majority of CSOs is an important challenge that urgently needs addressing.

II. CSOs' networking and information sharing

Poor networking and information sharing has been one of the hindrances to gains in both the development of the MERN network, its members and the sector as a whole and is contributed by a lack of will to share, poor communication infrastructure, inadequate communication skills, inadequate financial capacity and importantly a lack of understanding by many on what a network should do for its members (MERN Needs Assessment, 2014).

III. CSOs advocacy and policy engagement

Capacity for effective advocacy and policy engagement is another challenge facing CSOs in Myanmar. Very few have the necessary training, skills and knowledge to engage in safe, constructive dialogue with government and stakeholders, which often results in poor working relationships and increased risks. There are a number of influencing opportunities at various levels starting from the village level where properly trained and knowledgeable CSOs could successfully and safely engage for better outcomes in policy and practice.

IV. Environmental knowledge and information

There is a widespread lack of knowledge on up to date environmental and natural resource management issues and practice due to a range of factors such as the poor state of the education and university sector, lack of outside knowledge and ideas and poor knowledge management and

sharing. Often government institutions in the past have dominated who may have unrepresentative views and outdated practices. Although many damaging environmental practices such as deforestation, agribusiness and hydro dam construction are done by big business and institutions, often much of the loss can be attributed to individuals or communities who simply do not know the damage they are causing, or if they do, what alternatives are available. Up to date community based natural resource management is frequently lacking.

V.   MERNS, capacity

Like its members MERN has suffered from the country's history of isolation and lacks capacity in a range of areas that are critical to its operation and function as a transparent, member based and vision focused network. Although MERN has upgraded a number of governance areas there is still much to do especially in financial systems and operation, and policies and guidelines. Training and capacity building of staff and officeholders in governance and management is urgently needed. MERN also has little experience and practical knowledge in functioning as a true network and will need to look at examples in other countries on what it can do to build a strong and vibrant member centered organization (MERN Needs Assessment, 2014).

This strategic plan focuses on addressing the above points.

7.   ANALYSIS OF INTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

Past and present program achievements

MERN has registered a number of achievements in program implementation and management in sometimes a difficult and restrictive environment. A large focus of MERN's time and energy has been spent managing several livelihood and environment projects throughout the country using a limited number of MERN members as implementing partners. Most notable of these has been the recently completed LIFT funded, CLEARR Project in Southern Rakhine.

MERN is also the regional coordinator for the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) implementing partner in Myanmar for the Forest and Farm Facility (FFF) and a member organization of National Coordinating Body (NCB) for the Mangrove for the Future (MFF) in Myanmar.

MERN has instigated and facilitated numerous workshops and seminars in a range of areas.

Strengths and areas of growth

The MERN Needs Assessment discussed in detail MERN and its member's capacity, recognising that Myanmar's history is a large contributing factor. The following is a brief SWOT analysis of MERN carried out by the MERN executive.

Strengths

- Forestry Related fields such as Mangrove, CF, Nursery and Plantations
- Fishery &Aquaculture
- Awareness raising
- Good coordination with FD & MOECAF
- Agriculture and peacebuilding

Weakness

- Reporting

- M&E
- Financial management & accounting
- Understanding on development concepts
- Following on commitments
- Information sharing / lesson learned
- Networking
- Building on existing achievements (sporadic projects).

Opportunities

- Changing government policies which are more inclusive
- Increased international support
- Rising awareness from government and community on environmental issues
- Increased learning opportunities
- Development of CSOs and cooperation and collaboration in communities
- Lessons learned from experience
- A new start for the country

Threats

- Changing (negative) government policies
- Competition
- Conflict and lack of peace
- Lack of donor support due to poor standards & effectiveness
- Competition in Human Resources vs INGOs
- Low core funding and resources compared to INGOs
- Government structure
- Low technical knowledge
- Low development knowledge

8.   PRINCIPLES AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The MERN, 2015-2018 Strategic Plan goal is to "Build a strong network of effective member organizations which collaborates, shares information, knowledge and resources and contributes to active dialogue on environmental issues and policies".

It will do this through five Strategic Objectives;

SP OBJECTIVE 1: Capacity of MERN & its members in governance, management & sustainability raised and maintained to meet international standards.

SP OBJECTIVE 2: Networking and information sharing between MERN, its members and other key partners developed and maintained.

SP OBJECTIVE 3: Policy development, engagement, advocacy and media enhanced.

SP Objective 4: Develop the MERN network as a leader and strong voice on environment issues by promoting awareness and information and fostering collaboration and coordination.

SP Objective 5: Institutional capacity and sustainability of MERN strengthened

To successfully accomplish these five strategic objectives MERN will, for the benefit of all members;

- Actively establish and maintain good working relations with relevant ministries, departments and authorities.
- Establish and maintain good relationships between donors and other stakeholders for all its members.
- Establish and maintain strategic relations with research and knowledge institutions.
- Broaden and secure long term funding for its sustainability.
- Establish and maintain good working relationships with the media and other like groups.
- Actively research and share information on best practice from around the world.

MERN will commit to the following principles which will be monitored by the MERN governance board to ensure it meets and maintains the highest standards;

- Follow the MERN Vision and Mission.
- Adhere to the MERN Charter and follow democratic and transparent processes at all times.
- Ensure that its own governance, management, transparency and decision making is in accordance with its member's expectations and international standards.
- Develop and follow guidelines on supporting all its members equally and transparently.
- Monitor and evaluate its own actions and regularly and transparently report to all its members.
- Regularly seek input and guidance from its members and make decisions based on all its members.
- Promote and maintain gender equality.
- Include and value diverse voices
- Share knowledge and information with all its members on a regular basis.
- Commit to a plan of continual self-improvement.

Beneficiaries

The main beneficiaries will include *all* MERN member organizations and the communities they serve.

9.   STRATEGIC PLAN OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES.

SP OBJECTIVE 1: Capacity of MERN & its members in governance, management & sustainability raised and maintained to meet international standards.

Governance and management of MERN and its members will be raised and maintained to build effective and sustainable organizations.

Governance

1.1. Conduct a detailed needs assessment on governance & management of MERN members to assess what is needed to strengthen and build capacity in governance, management, and financial knowledge and practices required to meet international standards and compliance. Areas covered will include good governance practices, the charter, roles and responsibilities of the governance board and financial systems and management.

1.2. Facilitate training and capacity building on governance for members based on the needs assessment which will include an accreditation or measurement element to monitor standards and inform future needs.

1.3. Facilitate & organize research, study visits, guest speakers and information sharing between members on NGO governance best practice.

1.4. Conduct a yearly review / needs assessment of MERN and its members on governance and its adoption

Management

1.5. Facilitate training to members on gender, community participatory inclusion, and cultural, historical and ethnic values to meet organizational and program local and international standards.

1.6. Facilitate Human Resources (HR) policies and standards training & development.

1.7. Facilitate training on best practice management including management structures and operation, critical thinking and decision making.

1.8. Facilitate & organize research, study visits, guest speakers and information sharing between members and others on NGO management best practice.

Sustainability

1.9. Develop and maintain for all members a data base of donors and their potential priority funding and requirements.

1.10. Facilitate meetings, information sharing and training on donors and partners requirements for all members.

1.11. Facilitate training and information sharing between members on fundraising.

1.12. Develop dialogue and communication between MERN, its members and development partners.

1.13. Facilitate training and information sharing on all aspects of Project Cycle Management (PCM) including situation analysis, proposal writing, project management, project budgets, monitoring and evaluation and reports.

1.14. Facilitate & organize research, study visits, guest speakers and information sharing between members and others on NGO management best practice.

SP OBJECTIVE 2: Networking and information sharing between MERN, its members and other key partners developed and maintained.

MERN will develop into a central hub for information & knowledge collection and share that information regularly through newsletters, a regularly updated website, media, workshops and events**.**

2.1 Improve knowledge and understanding of networking and information sharing to members and staff by discussion and training.

2.2 Develop IT systems for storing and sharing knowledge and information that all members and stakeholders can easily access and use.

2.3 Develop and maintain a library of relevant books (including e books) for access by members.

2.4 Develop and maintain structures and procedures such as regular scheduled information updates (website & newsletters), regular scheduled meetings, and information sharing events.

2.5 Share information and links from a variety of sources such as worldwide networks, international NGOs, international news and knowledge portals and key environmental organizations.

2.6 Collect and share information on relevant major events, conferences and workshops.

2.7 Produce and maintain an up to date web site and newsletter and share information and ideas with all members, key groups and people.

2.8 Schedule regular meeting/ visits to members & stakeholders and share relevant information

2.9 Gather member profiles, activities, projects and share best practice and lessons learned.

2.10 Coordinate with universities, research institutes, and other key bodies and distribute and share information.

SP OBJECTIVE 3: Policy development, engagement, advocacy and media enhanced.

The MERN mission states *"…Influence national and regional government policy and practice on the environment for the benefit of communities"*. This objective will aim to develop MERN and its members into a respected and key participant in environmental policy and engagement.

3.1 Develop and facilitate training and capacity building on strategic communications, message development and tools for engaging productively in policy dialogue, advocacy and planning.

3.2 Establish and maintain strategic relations with government, local authorities, international and local organizations on behalf of all members and contribute to environment policy and advocacy.

3.3 Establish and maintain good working relations with media and journalists with the aim of educating and promoting environmental knowledge and understanding for improved environmental policies and practices throughout Myanmar.

3.4 Research, develop and distribute with member participation, MERN network policies and procedures on advocacy, media and knowledge sharing and storing (e.g. tourism policy, climate change policy, hydro dam policy, media and advocacy policy and guidelines, as well as internal network policies).

SP Objective 4: Develop the MERN network as a leader and strong voice on environment issues by promoting awareness and information and fostering collaboration and coordination.

The MERN vision states *"… to ensure Myanmar people are well informed and empowered to address environmental and related issues"*. Objective 4. aims to develop MERN into a key environmental voice for its members and beneficiaries by promoting awareness, collecting and distributing environmental best practice and developing and facilitating information distribution through collaboration and coordination.

4.1. Research and investigate worldwide environmental networks to gain knowledge and understanding on best practice (study visits, commission reports, consultation, meetings, etc.)

4.2. Facilitate training and capacity building on key environmental issues to members by organizing workshops, meetings, guest speakers etc.

4.3. Facilitate and maintain links to increase member's environmental technical ability.

4.4. Collaborate with media and other groups on promoting environment issues and awareness campaigns

4.5. Develop and coordinate a significant environmental event such as world environment day or a school education project.

4.6. Develop and distribute information on key environmental topics such as climate change, hydro dam development, species protection and management and natural resource management.

4.7. Participate and contribute to environment events, conferences and meetings and report and distribute information to all members.

SP Objective 5: Institutional capacity and sustainability of MERN strengthened

For MERN to support all its members and build a vibrant and strong network it will need to strengthen its own capacity.

5.1 Implement training to members on what a network can do, how they are a key to its success and the mechanisms and systems in place for members to have an effective voice in the running and operation of the network.

5.2 Implement governance training for MERN board members (including refresher course x 2 times a year)

5.3 Develop and maintain a board members manual

5.4 Secure an appropriate office with capacity for sharing space and facilities to members (especially for members based outside of Yangon) and space and facilities for training and meetings that can be used by all members.

5.5 Management training, mentoring and capacity building for senior staff (CEO, Program Manager)

5.6 Develop and implement a MERN capacity building and training program for all staff on relevant institutional and individual needs.

5.7 Broaden and diversify funding mix (core funding)

5.8 Develop and practice internal guidelines and policies such as transparency, gender, conflict of interest, procurement

5.9 Develop and maintain staff TORs and HR policies.

5.10 Upgrade IT and communication equipment and train all staff in its use.

5.11 Develop and maintain international standard financial systems including software and training.

5.12 Increase MERN membership by encouraging "environmental organizations" to join the MERN network.

10.   IMPLEMENTATION AND MANAGEMENT OF STRATEGIC PLAN

The members are the supreme body responsible for institutional and program oversight of MERN. They "own" MERN.

The members under the MERN Charter must meet at least once every year at the MERN AGM. The members are responsible for appointing members to the Governance Board, as per the Charter, to represent and make decisions for *all* MERN members.

The MERN CEO will implement the Strategic Plan and regularly report to the Governance Board and members on progress.

The Governance Board will meet or correspond regularly to ensure that the SP is on track, on time and meeting all governance and policy requirements, and will report regularly and transparently to the MERN members on its findings.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION of SP

Monitoring and Evaluation and reporting to its members will be a core function of MERN. The organization will design and implement a user friendly monitoring and evaluation system to track progress and document experiences and ensure that it reports progress and knowledge gained regularly and transparently.

11.   RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

- The country is politically stable
- MERN members actively participate in MERN.
- Policy and Legal frameworks for Civil Society activities remain favorable.
- Donors will remain committed to supporting civil society in Myanmar.
- Financial Resources will be available.
- Capacity building service providers will be available.

12.   RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS

Over the three years of the Strategic Plan, MERN requires human, material and financial resources to be able to accomplish its strategic goal of building a strong network of effective member organizations.

To implement the plan MERN will need to maintain existing staff and recruit additional members with targeted experience and knowledge in a range of new areas such as knowledge storing and sharing. To move forward quickly and to provide fresh ideas and insights it will need to hire external consultants and experts both from within and outside of Myanmar.

As part of its strategy MERN will develop and implement an annual MERN capacity building and training program for all staff and officeholders on relevant institutional and individual needs. To compete with INGOs and other well-resourced institutions in retaining and securing staff with the necessary knowledge and skills, remuneration will have to be competitive and HR policies and practices established and maintained.

To strengthen its focus as a member based network, consideration will be given to appointing a full time or part time Members Officer, tasked with coordinating and facilitating members' needs and services.

The organization will secure an office better suited to the networks importance and needs and look to share office space and resources to support its members (especially those not based in Yangon). Training and meeting areas that all members can use will be a priority. MERN's current equipment is old and outdated and will be upgraded (including relevant staff training) with the aim to meet the capacity needed especially for SP Objective 2. Network and Information sharing. Material resources urgently needed are computers, software, printers, digital camera and other miscellaneous office supplies and equipment. A reliable and fast internet connection is also important.

The MERN executive will develop a fully costed budget on each of the 5 objectives, as well as a timetable and work plan.

13.   REFERENCES & READING

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