

### Achieving 50% Forest Cover in Myanmar by 2035:

#### Strategic Policy Actions and Priority Interventions

#### BACKGROUND

Forests play a vital role in environmental stability, biodiversity conservation and rural economy in Myanmar. However, Myanmar’s forest cover has declined significantly over recent years, accounting for 42.19% of the total land area of the country in 2020 and 42.15% in 2025 (41.51% in FAO Forest Resources Assessment Report 2025), respectively. Out of the 42.15% national forest cover in 2025, 19.08% (12.91 million ha) was found within the Permanent Forest Estate (PFE), comprising Reserved Forest (RF), Protected Public Forest (PPF) and Protected Area (PA), while the remaining 23.07 % (15.61 million ha) was located outside the PFE.

According to Global Forest Resources Assessment (2025), Myanmar is the fourth highest rate of deforestation in the world between 2015 and 2025 at an annual rate of 1.01% (290 thousand ha). Without stronger policy action and intervention, Myanmar’s forests will continue to experience deforestation and degradation. Therefore, Myanmar Forest Department (FD) has set a national goal of 50% forest cover from 2026 to 2035.

#### Key Messages

1. Myanmar must close a 7.85% forest cover gap within a decade to reach the 50% national target by 2035 amid one of the world’s highest deforestation rates.
2. Large-scale restoration and protection both within and outside the Permanent Forest Estate (PFE) provide a realistic pathway to achieve the target.
3. Strong governance, cross-sector coordination, and community participation are critical to translating restoration potential into measurable forest cover gains.

Myanmar must increase forest cover by 7.85% to reach its 50% target by 2035, addressing deforestation driven by agricultural expansion, logging, fuelwood use, infrastructure and mining, while leveraging over 21 million hectares of degraded forest land for restoration in line with national NDC targets to prevent rising emissions, biodiversity loss, and disaster vulnerability.

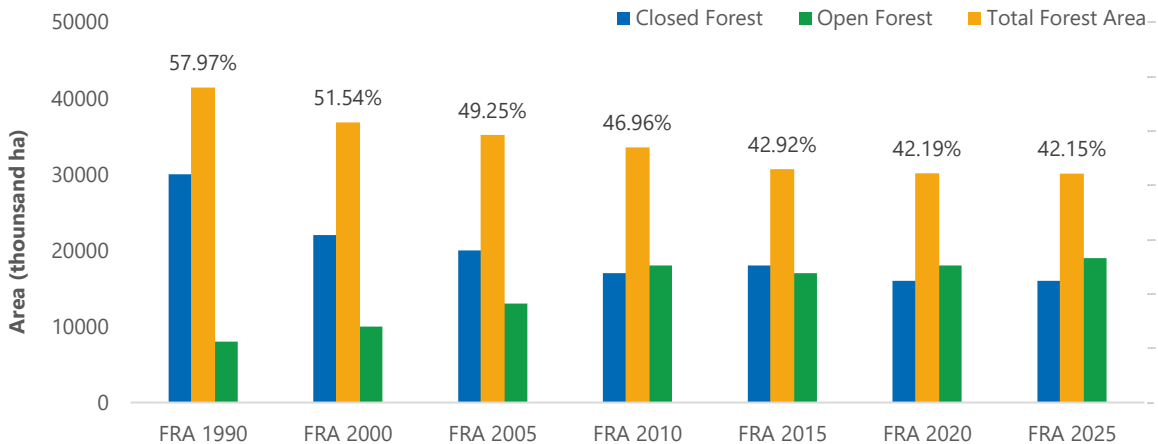


Figure 1: Forest cover changes in Myanmar between 1990 and 2025  
 Source: Forest Department of Myanmar, 2025 and Global Forest Resources Assessment Report of FAO 2025

## COUNTRY TREND HIGHLIGHT

The primary goal is to scale up 50% national forest cover from 42.15% to 50% during 10-year period (2026-2035). The following policy approaches can support achieving the national target:

### Expansion of Reserved Forest (RF) and Protected Public Forest (PPF)

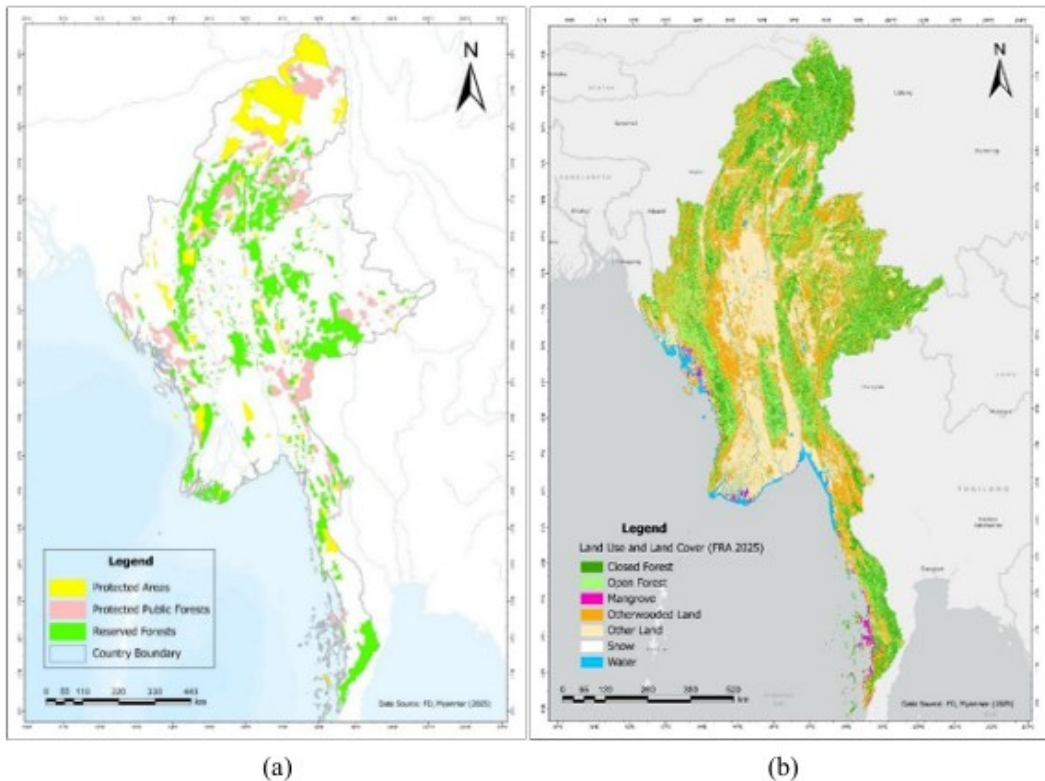
In accordance with Myanmar Forest Policy and 30-year National Forestry Master Plan (2001-2031), Forest Department of Myanmar (FD) has been trying to conserve and protect forest ecosystems for sustainable forest management by establishing RF, PPF and PA. According to the data of FD, a total number of 826 RFs with 12,014,135.1 ha (17.76% of the total land area), 498 PPFs with 5,533,716.1 ha (8.18 %), and 62 PAs with 4,350,641.74 (6.43%) have been successfully established on 30 April 2025. According to FRA 2025 conducted by Myanmar Forest Department, there is a total approximately 15.23 million ha of Closed Forest (CF) and Open Forest (OF) outside PFE. Therefore, large contiguous natural forest areas (Approximately over 6.07 million ha) outside PFE will establish as RF, PPF and PA during the period of 2026-2030. Collectively, these efforts aim to increase national forest area from approximately 13.7 million hectares to 14.5 million hectares by 2030.

### Restoration within Permanent Forest Estate (PFE)

Myanmar Reforestation and Rehabilitation Programme (MRRP) (2017-18 to 2026-27) has been implementing to restore and rehabilitate degraded and deforested forests across the country. Thus, in line with MRPP, approximately over 5.96 million ha within PFE should be prioritized for rehabilitation. Restoration and rehabilitation will be conducted in terms of assisted natural regeneration, enrichment planting using native species, and intensive protection of regenerating areas.

### Establishment of Forest Plantation outside PFE

According to FRA (2025), there is a total of approximately 13.62 million ha of degraded forest land outside PFE [6]. Establishing forest plantation will be conducted in these areas by focusing on community forests, private and commercial plantations, agroforestry, Green Environment Campaigns and village-based planting initiatives.



**Figure 2:** (a) Distribution of RF, PPF and PA across the country; (b) 2025 Myanmar Forest Cover  
Source: Planning and Statistics Division, Forest Department of Myanmar, 2025

### Coordination and collaboration with related projects, programs and line departments

Priority landscape restoration will be conducted through existing national programs such as Myanmar Reforestation and Rehabilitation Programme (MRRP), Natural Habitat Restoration (RNH), Watershed conservation projects for major reservoirs and lakes, ODA projects including AFoCO projects and other projects and programs. Moreover, FD will collaborate with other line departments in order to increase forest cover. For example, establishment of forest plantation and conservation of remaining forest in the central dry zone area of Myanmar will be conducted by

collaborating with Dry Zone Greening Department (DZGD).

### Approaches to increase mangrove forest cover both within and outside PFE

Designing and implementing a specific action plan with the assistance of mangrove forest experts, integrating implementation with the Integrated Coastal Management Program, and incorporating implementation into the District Forest Management Plan will be conducted for the incensement of mangrove forest cover within and outside the mangrove conservation areas.



**Figure 3:** A Sinku Island mangrove forest 2025  
Source: The Global NEW LIGHT of MYANMAR

## CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Achieving 50% forest cover in Myanmar by 2035 is a national target that reflects the country's commitment to sustainable forest management, climate resilience, and biodiversity conservation. However, this goal must be viewed within the broader context of Myanmar's current forest landscape conditions, institutional arrangements, and financing capacity. A comprehensive understanding of both structural challenges and existing enabling factors is therefore essential.

The following table presents a consolidated overview of the key challenges Myanmar faces in expanding and safeguarding its forest estate, alongside the strategic opportunities that can be leveraged to accelerate progress. By examining degraded areas, forest categories, governance gaps, and restoration needs in parallel with emerging financing mechanisms, participatory approaches, and policy instruments, this overview provides perspective on the country's forestry trajectory toward 2035.

Challenges	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Converting 5.97 Mha of degraded OWL into productive forest requires major financing, technical capacity, and long-term monitoring.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Large-scale restoration can significantly expand carbon sinks and unlock climate finance.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protecting 7.27 Mha of Open Forest and maintaining 5.46 Mha of Closed Forest demands stronger enforcement and field presence.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reforming forest governance outside PFE can improve land-use coherence and long-term sustainability.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Managing 15.23 Mha of forest landscapes outside PFE requires cross-ministerial coordination and clearer land tenure systems.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expanding participatory forestry can enhance livelihoods while reducing degradation pressures.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Restoring 4.05 Mha (out of 13.62 Mha degraded land) requires scalable financing and community-based implementation models.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Annual work plans create measurable milestones and enable results-based financing.</li> </ul>

## CONCLUSION

Scaling up national forest cover to 50% between 2026 and 2035 is ambitious but achievable. Restoration of degraded forests, establishment of protected areas and forest plantations, and active participation of local communities are key success factors. Strong political leadership, adequate financing and cross-sectoral coordination will play an essential role in the incensement of forest cover in Myanmar.



Figure 4: Summary graphical abstract what is country challenges and how country will facing those challenges

Source: Generating AI

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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### Asian Forest Cooperation Organization

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