

Foreword

Global energy demand and supply have been experiencing historic changes due to new and innovative ideas in the energy sector. The energy landscape has rapidly evolved over the last 10 years, most notably in the form of drastic cost reductions in renewable energy sources such as photovoltaic solar energy and the digitalisation of electricity. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations and the Paris Accord of 2015 are being implemented globally and materialising into actionable outcomes. For example, the SDGs created a strategic framework for companies to contribute to realising the goals. However, energy-related CO₂ emissions hit a record high in 2018, well above the optimal level dictated by the Paris Accord.

Our research emphasised rural electrification through renewable power generation, using mini-grids in Myanmar and the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS). Given the global energy challenges, we focused on three themes: (i) electricity connectivity in the region, (ii) barrier analysis of the mini-grid business in Myanmar, and (iii) energy for sustainable development. The Government of Myanmar is attempting to fulfil its promise of 100% electrification by 2030, although developments to date do not suggest it is on target to meet this goal. People do require energy for their daily living, however, so we have attempted to provide realistic solutions to real problems. We also realised that the issue is tied to many other important national issues – conflict and peacebuilding, national unity, poverty and well-being, democracy, equality, and gender – most of which are closely aligned to the SDGs. Therefore, we came to understand that a wider and more conceptual approach was also required, particularly in a young democracy such as Myanmar, which faces ethnic and religious conflicts, particularly in rural areas. For these reasons, we have chosen the above themes for this year's research.

We do hope that this report will contribute to energy policymaking in the GMS, particularly in Myanmar. We also hope that it will stimulate a wider discussion about renewable energy sources and energy policy in the region.

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