



China-Myanmar Cooperation to Combat Illegal Timber Trade and Promote Sustainable Forestry Investment

GEI Investment, Trade and Environment; [REN Peng](#), [Ji Lin](#)



Burmese forestry officials inspect sawn timber – 2015

The China-Myanmar border has served as a gateway for an illicit timber trade, which has caused 15% deforestation in Myanmar over the past 15 years. In April 1, 2014, Myanmar Ministry of Forestry (MOF) issued a ban on exporting raw wood logs but knew this would only be effective with China's support.

In 2015, GEI pioneered several critical cooperatives to stop the illegal trade and build trust between Myanmar and China. For GEI, this project provided opportunities to promote diplomatic cooperation for border timber trade regulation as well as sustainable forestry investment and trade practices.



Sino-Burmese Illegal Timber Trade Area

DIALOGUES & STUDY VISITS: GEI worked to build mutual trust between China and Myanmar by organizing **4 informal dialogues and study visits for Burmese and Chinese representatives from government departments**, namely China's Forestry Administration and Myanmar's MOF; environmental, business and industry associations; as well as research institutions and NGOs.

The groups discussed:

- Provisions of the Myanmar forestry investment;
- China-Myanmar Timber Legality Verification System; timber import-export management processes;
- Experiences from the Sino-Russia border and within the domestic turmoil in Myanmar.
- Groundwork for a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on forestry cooperation

A NEW MOU: After these exchanges, a MOU for the bilateral forestry cooperation for future timber trade management was outlined. **The first of its kind, this MOU will mutually recognize the legal terms of timber and promote sustainable forestry investment.**

BILATERAL EXCHANGE: In August 2015, GEI facilitated bilateral exchanges between the nations' forestry departments; we also successfully invited the customs departments to attend. In 2016, GEI will continue providing cooperative mechanisms and building trust between the nations.

CORPORATE CAPACITY: With Myanmar's Ministry of Forestry and Environmental Cooperation and the Chinese Academy of Forestry, GEI began preparing reference manuals and corporate trainings on conducting responsible timber investment in Myanmar; these will be expanded throughout 2016.

SUCCESS IN 2015: On September 7, 2015 the Yunnan Provincial Government issued a notice that all China-Burma border trade would be suspended until all imported timber could be confidently confirmed legal. This interim policy remained in effect until February 2016. UK Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) reported that after this policy, as of March 2016, **China-Burma illicit border trade activities had significantly de-creased.**