



Ending Poverty and Boosting Shared Prosperity in Myanmar

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A New World Bank Group report urges universal access to basic services and expanded private sector-led growth to create more jobs. Raising farm productivity and incomes, more and better basic services for all, and a better business climate are critical to ending poverty in Myanmar, according to a new World Bank report, Ending Poverty and Boosting Shared Prosperity in a Time of Transition. The report, which is the World Bank Groups first Systematic Country Diagnostic (SCD), traces Myanmar's untapped growth potential and widespread poverty to landlessness, low labor and agricultural productivity, lack of access to markets, on-going conflict and communal violence, and a legacy of weak institutions and policies. Coming off decades of military rule and international isolation, Myanmar has a GDP per capita of \$1,105 and poverty is high. Most poor people - around 76 percent of all poor - live in rural areas. Among ASEAN countries, Myanmar has the lowest life expectancy at birth (65 years) and the second-highest rate of infant (40 per 1000 live births) and under 5 child deaths (51 per 1000 live births). Myanmar has opened up and launched major reforms that hold the promise of better lives for its people," said Ulrich Zachau, Country Director for the World Bank to Southeast Asia. "How can Myanmar seize its historic opportunity and bring down poverty throughout the country? The Systematic Country Diagnostic shows its about Three "I"s: incomes for farmers; inclusion-universal access to education, health, and electricity for all; and an improved investment climate for private sector led growth and good jobs." Raising incomes in rural communities depends upon increasing agricultural productivity. According to the report, most rural poor are engaged in agriculture, either directly in farming or through seasonal labor. Myanmar's government and its development partners can help farmers increase productivity and raise their incomes through increasing rice yields, more crop diversification, value-addition for crops and products, and by granting stronger land tenure security. Increasing universal access to basic services such as health care, education, water and sanitation, and electricity, will directly help Myanmar's poorest people, who live in rural and remote areas, and in communities often isolated by ethnic division and conflict. These basic services, which government programs can deliver, help lift families out of poverty and provide for healthier and smarter children and happier families now, and for more productive and higher earning adults and businesses tomorrow. The report highlights the importance of extending access to affordable electricity to the 75 percent of Myanmar presently without electricity, and of improving the investment climate to spur job creation by the private sector. It identifies multiple priorities for creating jobs in manufacturing and services in Myanmar by welcoming foreign and domestic investors: opening access to domestic, regional, and international markets; improving the unreliable power supply; developing the financial sector; improving access to land; increasing the availability of skilled labor; and improving information and computer technology services. The World Bank report also highlights four prerequisites for success as Myanmar transforms itself to raise farmers incomes, to provide basic services, and to create a vibrant private sector generating jobs. Navigating well the transition from conflict to peace; social inclusion of all people living in Myanmar, including rights and basic services for ethnic and religious minorities; prudent macroeconomic management; and the continued opening of markets and transparent governance are all essential foundations for Myanmar's economic growth. 1 State of the Worlds Children 2015, UNICEF
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