

News

PRESS RELEASE

Helping Myanmar to Build Resilience, Equity and Opportunity

July 7, 2015



NAY PIY TAW, July 7, 2015— Myanmar has the opportunity to move from short-lived emergency relief to sustainable social protection policies and programs that can help lift families out of poverty, according to the inaugural report of a new series of policy papers on social protection from the World Bank.

The Myanmar Ministry of Livestock, Fisheries and Rural Development jointly with the World Bank Group has emphasized the importance of social protection in promoting rural development, reducing poverty and building resilient households and communities in Myanmar. A panel discussion marked the launch of the World Bank’s Myanmar Social Protection Notes Series, reports taking stock of Myanmar’s social protection landscape in critical times of opportunity and reform in the country.

Myanmar seeks to tackle poverty and recognizes that an effective social protection system is a core component of poverty reduction efforts, as outlined in the Government’s Rural Development Strategic Framework (RDSF) and the Social Protection Strategic Plan (SPSP).

“New social protection programs can enable the poor and vulnerable in Myanmar to better manage the opportunities and risks arising from the ongoing reforms,” said Abdoulaye Seck, World Bank Country Manager for Myanmar. “Social protection and community development programs can also help build household and community resilience to shocks and promote social cohesion.”

Among the findings of the World Bank’s Social Protection Notes:

- In recent years, the government has committed to increased spending on social assistance, in particular for the school stipends program that aims to keep students from poor and vulnerable families in school. However, government spending on social assistance remains well below global and regional averages. A coherent action plan, increased government budget, and effective mechanisms for pooling government and development partner resources are key prerequisites for expanding coverage.
- Significant social security reforms are also currently underway. While these reforms would increase coverage, there are concerns about the financial sustainability of the proposed provisions. Myanmar has the advantage of a relatively young population. This provides the space for moderated, gradual expansion of social security coverage; it is important to ensure fiscal sustainability before introducing new provisions

The World Bank is supporting the Government of Myanmar in strengthening overall social protection. The Bank has supported the government in building the evidence base to identify gaps in social protection and shape the strategic directions of social protection policies. Presently, the Bank is supporting the Ministry of Education in testing improvements to the stipends pilot program through the Decentralizing Funding to Schools Project; helping the government to consider pension reform options through the Public Financial Management Project, and working on inclusion of the poor and vulnerable through affordable and equitable health service provision and participatory local development, with the Essential Health Services Access Project and National Community Driven Development Projects.

MEDIA CONTACTS

In Yangon
Meriem Gray
Tel : +959 421128395
mgray@worldbank.org

In Yangon
Kyaw Soe Lynn
Tel : +95 9 203 1159
klynn@worldbank.org

In Washington
Carl Hanlon
chanlon@worldbank.org

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