



PRESS RELEASE

Myanmar Moves Toward Connectivity for All

February 6, 2014

World Bank Group Supporting Telecommunications Sector Reforms

WASHINGTON, D.C., February 6, 2014 –The World Bank Group’s Board of Executive Directors today approved a \$31.5 million credit from the International Development Association (IDA) for a **Telecommunications Sector Reform Project** in Myanmar.

“The reform of Myanmar’s telecommunications sector is an integral part of lifting millions of people out of poverty. Today, Myanmar has one of the lowest rates of telecommunications and internet access in the world. The vast majority of people face high costs, poor service or a complete lack of access. This affects poor people and remote communities the most,” said Ulrich Zachau, World Bank Country Director for Myanmar.

The project takes an integrated approach to the development of the Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) sector by creating the enabling policy, and the regulatory and legal environment for a competitive telecommunications market. The goal is to expand quality mobile phone access and affordable communications in Myanmar. At the same time it will reform the government-owned Myanmar Post and Telecommunications (MPT) to separate the policy and operational functions of the government to create a more level playing field. It will also help develop and pilot a universal service strategy to ensure the expansion of service to remote communities.

The project will also begin to put in place the foundation for ‘eGovernment’ by developing the Myanmar National Portal which aims to provide citizens, businesses and visitors (including foreign workers, investors and tourists) with a single on-line window for government information and services. Over time the national portal will become a mobile friendly tool for users to find information in Myanmar language and in English, provide suggestions and feedback about poor service delivery or incidents of corruption, and transact services in a safe and convenient electronic environment.

The Government of Myanmar has already taken concrete steps to reform the telecommunications sector. In October 2013, the Telecommunications Law was approved and in January 2014, two new operators were licensed – Telenor from Norway and Ooredoo from Qatar – to provide service in Myanmar. The project will also provide technical assistance to conduct a due diligence review of laws covering privacy, data protection, cyber-crime, and access to and freedom of information. It will identify gaps in these laws and recommend a legal and regulatory framework consistent with international good practice.

Once the sites for piloting the universal service strategy in rural areas are identified, the project implementing agency, the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, (MCIT) will organize public consultations. These sessions are expected to begin in late 2014 and input from participants will inform the pilot design. Two public consultations meetings, organized by the

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MCIT, were held in Yangon in November.

“We support the government-led public consultations and we believe that future consultations will provide civil society organizations, local communities, and ethnic groups with opportunities to engage meaningfully in project development and implementation,” said **Kanthan Shankar**, **World Bank Country Manager for Myanmar**.

The US\$31.5 million IDA credit in support of Myanmar's telecommunications reform is part of the World Bank Group's rapidly growing program support for the country. During his visit to Myanmar at the end of January 2014, President Jim Yong Kim announced the World Bank Group's plans for a \$2 billion multi-year development package for Myanmar. This will include projects to help improve agriculture, access to energy and health services, and to provide support for other key development priorities.

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