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BURMA

Food Security and Economic Growth

2017



Melon farmers separate and grade their harvest in Shan State. Credit: Tim Mav/Winrock

OVERVIEW

The world is closer than ever before to ending global hunger, undernutrition, and extreme poverty, but significant challenges and opportunities remain, including urbanization, gender inequality, instability and conflict, the effects of a changing climate, and environmental degradation. Food security is not just an economic and humanitarian issue; it is also a matter of U.S. national security, as growing concentrations of poverty and hunger leave countries and communities vulnerable to increased instability, conflict, and violence.

Nearly six decades of military rule and civil war have left Burma as one of the poorest countries in Southeast Asia. More than one-third of child deaths are due to undernutrition and 29 percent of children under age 5 are stunted. Until 2015, the country was effectively cut off from the global economy and off limits to U.S. businesses and products.

Burma's dramatic first steps toward democracy and a market economy provide the best chance in decades for the country to achieve lasting peace and prosperity. Despite many significant and longstanding challenges, Burma's initial political reforms have generated broad-based economic growth and a strong desire for partnership with the U.S. This creates opportunities for foreign assistance to have more impact than in transitional development settings. Public opinion surveys show that for Burma's reforms to continue, however, its majority rural population will have to experience tangible economic improvements in their day-to-day lives.

PROGRAMS

TAKING A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO FOOD SECURITY & ECONOMIC GROWTH

USAID supports Burma's reforms by empowering the next generation to become more resilient, self-reliant, and successful. In alignment with the Global Food Security Strategy, USAID/Burma's food security program:

- Promotes inclusive and sustainable agricultural-led economic growth by expanding access to finance, helping small farmers and businesses link to new markets, and promoting economic reforms that enable new economic actors in Burma and new opportunities for U.S. products and businesses.
- Strengthens resilience among people and systems, as increasingly frequent and intense shocks and stresses threaten the ability of men, women, and families to emerge from poverty.
- Improves nutritional outcomes among women and children, as undernutrition, particularly during the 1,000 days from pregnancy



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FACT SHEET CONTINUED

to a child's second birthday, leads to lower levels of educational attainment, productivity, lifetime earnings, and economic growth rates.

To achieve these objectives, USAID works in close collaboration and partnership with the Government of Burma, other development partners, civil society, and the private sector. Promoting gender equality and women's empowerment are key considerations in all of our programming.

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