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Rural Development Programme – Myanmar

Better access through rural roads

In Myanmar both passenger travel and goods traffic is conducted mostly via the road network. However, besides of few major highways many roads are neither asphalted nor in good condition and especially in rural areas infrastructure is very poor. Therefore, people living in remote areas have very limited access to the regional and national road network and are unable to reach schools, healthcare facilities or markets. Roads which are passable all year round can provide the rural population access to all these institutions and are, therefore, a prerequisite for the development of rural regions.

On behalf of the German Government, KfW Development Bank supports the repair of rural roads in the Southern Shan State to provide the rural population with an all year access to economic centres and the national road network.

Context

Shan State is one of the 14 administrative areas in Myanmar. It is home to 5.8 million people, mostly minority groups like the Shan, Pa-O, Intha or the Danu. Three out of four inhabitants in the Southern Shan State grow rice, maize, mangos, beans, cabbage or sugar cane in the valleys; some are also involved in breeding poultry, sheep or cattle. The conditions for agriculture are very good as the region has fertile soil and the climate suits the purpose of agriculture.

However, as a consequence of the bad infrastructure many families, especially during the rainy season, can-

not reach the markets and still depend on subsistence farming.

In Taunggyi, one of three districts in Southern Shan State, the road network comprises 5,020 kilometres, of which 3,280 kilometres are mostly dirt and gravel roads which do not provide consistent access. Additionally, the bad condition of the roads results in high transport costs and long journey times.

Being home of one of the major tourist attractions in Myanmar - the Inle Lake – the region has high potential for tourism. However, this industry can only be developed if the surrounding region is accessible all year round.

Project name	Rural Development Programme (RDP)
Commissioned by	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Country/Region	Myanmar/ Southern Shan State
Lead executing agency	Ministry of Construction





In Southern Shan State, roads in remote areas are built. Source: Mr. Drockur

Project approach

The Department of Rural Roads Development (DRRD) within the Ministry of Construction (MoC) is responsible for road construction and maintenance in rural areas in Myanmar. Hence, the DRRD is the partner of KfW Development Bank for the Rural Development Programme.

KfW finances the upgrading and the maintenance of selected rural roads so that they are passable all year-round. Many of the existing roads were built without the required drainage infrastructure or have not been maintained during the last years. Others have to be raised on a higher level and strengthened so they cannot be eroded and washed away by rain or floods during the rainy season.

DRRD plans the rehabilitation of the selected roads, issues tenders for the various construction projects, reviews the bids and awards the contracts.

The programme is designed as a “learning-by-doing” project. Experts accompany the staff of the DRRD so that they can learn how to implement international projects. This experience helps DRRD staff to plan, award and supervise construction projects autonomously in the future.

Furthermore, with the support of KfW, DRRD will develop and implement a preventive maintenance system. So far, DRRD only reacts once the roads have been damaged, already. By implementing a cyclical and preventive maintenance approach, possible risks can be identified much earlier and, therefore, greater damage

can be prevented. This reduces the costs for repairs and prevents the necessity to close roads while they are repaired.

Impact

The upgrade and maintenance of the rural roads results in an all year accessible road network in the Southern Shan State so that the rural population has access to public institutions and regional markets all year long. Additionally travel costs and times are reduced. Therefore, the people from remote areas can grow rice, vegetables and fruits, sell them and generate income. By ensuring access to the regional economic centres often also the access to the national highway system is ensured. This provides the opportunity for farmers to grow and sell their products even on national markets. Overall trade in the region will increase and the entire population will profit from higher incomes.

Additionally, the population gets access to public institutions, more children can attend schools and sick or injured people have faster and better access to health care stations.

KfW Development Bank has already launched similar programmes in the neighbouring countries Cambodia and Laos. This has not only resulted in higher average incomes for the people, but also led to an improvement in healthcare and the enrolment rate of students has risen sharply.



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