

# Rural Development in Myanmar



On the occasion of World Rural Development Day 2025, it is my honor to present this comprehensive overview of Myanmar's ongoing journey toward inclusive and sustainable rural development. As a committed member of the Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP), Myanmar has continuously placed rural advancement at the heart of its national development agenda. We recognize that the well-being of rural communities is vital to the social, economic, and environmental progress of our nation as a whole.

This commitment is reflected in the various strategic initiatives led by the Ministry of Cooperatives and Rural Development, and implemented on the ground by the Department of Rural Development (DRD). These initiatives aim to bring transformative change to the lives of millions of rural people. Our national vision is guided by the Myanmar Comprehensive Sustainable Development Plan and the Rural Development Strategic Framework, both of which provide a cohesive and inclusive roadmap for rural progress. Central to this strategy are three mutually reinforcing pillars: infrastructure and basic services, economic empowerment, and participatory governance. Through a decentralized and collaborative implementation model, DRD delivers development programmes that are responsive to the specific needs of each township and village. This localized approach ensures that the solutions we provide are both effective and rooted in the realities of rural life. One of our most significant achievements has been in infrastructure development, with over 35,000 kilometers of rural roads and more than 3,000 bridges constructed or upgraded. These vital transport links are opening up access to education, healthcare, markets, and social services—connecting people to opportunity and improving the quality of daily life in rural areas.

In parallel, our efforts to provide clean water and sanitation have had a profound impact on public health outcomes across the country. A total of 36,345 clean water and

sanitation activities have been completed, significantly reducing the prevalence of waterborne diseases and contributing to a safer, healthier environment. These interventions are particularly crucial in vulnerable and remote communities where access to safe water and hygiene infrastructure has traditionally been limited.

To further build resilience and self-reliance, we have prioritized the economic empowerment of rural populations. Programmes such as the Village Revolving Fund and the Rural Business Development Fund offer access to credit and enterprise development training for rural communities. These initiatives have supported more than 13,000 villages, positively affecting the lives of millions of rural citizens—particularly women, smallholder farmers, and the poor. By fostering inclusive financial systems and entrepreneurial capacity, we are helping communities unlock their economic potential and reduce poverty.

Human capital development is another key focus area in our rural development strategy. We are expanding access to vocational training in agriculture, trades, digital services, and other livelihood skills that prepare rural youth and women for meaningful participation in the modern economy. These investments not only strengthen local labor markets but also contribute to social inclusion and long-term sustainability. Empowering individuals through education and training enables them to become active agents of change in their communities.

Community participation forms the backbone of our approach. The Village Development Planning (VDP) process, which is implemented annually in over 2,000 villages, empowers local communities to take part in identifying their development priorities, allocating resources, and monitoring results. This participatory model fosters accountability, transparency, and ownership—ensuring that development efforts align with community needs and aspirations.

Looking toward the future, we have embraced innovation

as a driver of rural transformation. The introduction of the SMART Village model, currently being implemented in 128 villages, reflects our ambition to build climate-resilient, future-ready communities. These SMART Villages integrate infrastructure, education, clean energy, technology, and sustainable agriculture into a single, holistic framework for rural advancement. By promoting innovation and sustainability, this model aligns closely with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and positions Myanmar as a leader in next-generation rural development.

Of course, we acknowledge that challenges remain. Geographic remoteness, climate vulnerability, and limited fiscal resources continue to pose obstacles to our efforts. However, these challenges also reinforce the need for adaptive strategies and strong partnerships. We remain committed to strengthening collaboration—both within Myanmar and with international partners such as CIRDAP—to share knowledge, build institutional capacity, and find context-specific solutions that can be scaled across the region.

As we commemorate World Rural Development Day 2025, Myanmar proudly reaffirms its unwavering commitment to inclusive, equitable, and sustainable rural development. We celebrate the resilience, strength, and contributions of our rural communities and pledge to continue working hand in hand with them. Let this occasion serve not only as a reflection of how far we have come but also as a renewed call to action—to ensure that no village, and no one, is left behind in our pursuit of a better future.



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