

2nd Myanmar Development Cooperation Forum

Parallel Session Summary

Parallel Session1: Improving the Capacity of Myanmar's Human Resources

There was a ready and broad consensus that education was central to sustaining Myanmar's transformation process and achieving inclusive and rapid economic development. The on-going CESR was seen as the key process that should lead to a sound strategy for education sector reform that is widely owned through extensive consultations. It was noted, however, that much of mental development happens before age 2, and hence more attention should be paid to the issues of malnutrition among the young.

Looking ahead to its implementation, several broad challenges were identified: (1) effective formulation and implementation of necessary policies and legislation; (2) financial and human resource capacity to carry out the reforms; (3) addressing the possible complications arising from decentralization; and (4) the complexity of coordination when 17 ministries, various levels of government, and the private sector are all involved. Allowing more private sector expansion in education can be part of the solution, but there needs to be more discussion on this to accelerate it. More attention should be paid to the issue of raising the quality of teachers, for that is the key to quality education.

In TVET (technical and vocational education and training), it is important to make the designs of the programs demand-driven, rather than supply-driven. Effective consultations with the private sector employers are essential in this regard. A possible role of the private sector in providing TVET services themselves was also highlighted, but some felt that public resources may be needed to assure high quality of the programs and equitable access to them. A participant pointed out that the government has a body that is charged with the responsibility of setting standards for all types of vocational training. A more effective use of this body should contribute to raising the quality and relevance of the training.

One discussant pointed out the importance of looking beyond the curriculum and minding the way of teaching. Both general education and TVET should be delivered in such a way to help students in their school to work transition, i.e., they need to learn the skills to be able to apply their knowledge in a workplace.

Parallel Session 2: Enhancing Public Administration Reform and Development

Panel Session 4, expertly chaired by UNDP and the General Administration Department within the Ministry of Home Affairs presided over a highly informative session providing a comprehensive overview of Myanmar's progress with regard to public administration reform to date.

The panel focused around what innovative ideas could support current and future reform efforts. It was duly noted that transitions such as Myanmar's are never easy. It was also noted that reform to the country's public administration must be conducted

in line with Myanmar's local capacity.

With regard to decentralization, the need to ensure the roles and responsibilities of the different levels of government, from the Union level, to the States/Regions level down to the township and village tract must be clear to all, with people placed at the center of these efforts.

With a comprehensive presentation on the role and functioning of the UCSB, the group looked at how current UCSB efforts with regard to building the capacity of Myanmar's public service could be strengthened. The UCSB noted the establishing of training institutions with some additional support, will be needed to ensure a more comprehensive curriculum could be provided to a broader segment of Myanmar's public service.

Good practices from within the region, which Myanmar would like to replicate, were also noted including those of Singapore, Cambodia and other ASEAN countries.

The Sector Working Group on Public Administration Reform provided process that has already been established should provide a solid framework through which donors should seek to support reform.

It was aptly noted by Dr. Zaw Oo that if we fail at improving the Government's ability to deliver services, at all levels, we run the real risk of facing frustrated populations who may become disillusioned with reforms efforts and that this may lead confrontation.

Challenges were noted at three levels:

1. The grass roots level – ensuring that township level people are able to develop their own plans, and that their capacity to do so is sufficiently supported.
2. At the sub-national and regional level – in the sense that establishing effective public administration systems at this level is new to Myanmar, noting the country's inheritance of a highly centralized system of control from colonial times.
3. And finally at the central level – where we are now faced with inter-Ministerial level coordination challenges and with finding ways to encourage Ministries to better work to achieve broader Government objectives, not just those of each Ministry, operating independently.

In closing, it was noted that PAR is not an easy task and that no country can import models from other countries, devoid of context. While seeking to ensure a coordinated approach to service delivery at the central level, we should avoid too many delivery units, as we may risk losing focus, and create a new level of bureaucracy with which to deal with.

Parallel Session 3: Environmental Conservation & Food Security

H.E. Dr. Daw Thet Thet Zin, Dy. Minister, MOECF, welcomed all delegates and participants for the Parallel Session 3. Mr. Bijay Karmacharya, highlighted the complexities associated with food security (production) and environment which

requires delicate balance and timely policy interventions while also addressing long term issues associated with Climate Change. He stressed the importance of laying long-term strategy for establishing comprehensive regulatory framework and effective institutions with “people” and environment as the core. While the country is undergoing policy and economic reforms, the agricultural and rural development sector is going through major transformations; however the change is yet to be realized by the common people. He stressed for the need for both accelerating ongoing development initiatives and improving the quality of development initiatives.

Summary of Panel Discussants:

A total of 9 Discussants (7 GoM , 1 DP, 2 CSO) shared ongoing and planned initiatives, priority areas through project proposals (short term), challenges and the needs covering Environment, Forestry, Food Security, Agriculture Development, Livestock, Fisheries and research.

1. Need for balanced economic growth and environmental conservation.
2. Key environmental legal frameworks and strategy are in place, need for environmental regulatory frameworks, enforcement, capacity building and institutional strengthening, mainstreaming environment in sector planning and monitoring and Implementation.
3. 11 Priority area for agricultural development and to address food security, food security and income generation of rural area in Myanmar, needs the support of Technical and Financial Assistance by DPs in the area of Seed Industry Development, Land reforming and Post harvesting.
4. Improve importation and exportation of livestock and added value products, establish medium scale dairy products and processing plant, veterinary diagnostic and assay labs for food safety and security.
5. Need to scale up community forestry (CF) and link with REDD+ instruments to address Climate Change, while it integrate forests, agriculture and other land uses can enhance productivity and the provision of forest goods and ecosystem services.
6. Development of energy, infrastructure, transport, construction and tourism sectors pose threat to environment and climate. Agricultural development key to economic development/food security, while important driver of pollution and deforestation. While recognize the opportunities: New technology, energy-efficient solutions, innovative private sector to maximize the benefits.
7. Need for enhanced coordination and cooperation between Government agencies, NGOs/CSOs, DPs while enabling private sector involvement. Case of Inle Lake, presents the need for above system in place.
8. Need for coordinated and regular research in seed development, soil degradation and fisheries (including marine systems) are important to address food security in Myanmar.
9. Need to address land issues (including land grabbing) and protecting the rights of farmers while addressing food security, coordination not limited at National level while also at Sub-national level including Township level.
10. Disaster risk reduction needs to be addressed as an integral part of Food Security and Environment (long term climate change).
11. Need to have better understanding of food security (not just production) but also access and stability.

Co- Chair Summary:

1. Put in place environmental regulation and enforcement to address environment conservation and food security
2. Agriculture development need to address land grabbing while also addressing those needs of poor farmers
3. In addition horizontal coordination (SWGs), strengthen and enhance vertical coordination
4. Needs broader understanding on food security not just limited to food production.

Parallel Session 4: Strengthening Private Sector Participation and Tourism Development

There is a progress in formulating a tourism development policy based on a master plan supported by ADB, which identifies 38 priority projects and an innovative approach of community involvement.

Tourism industry is lack of an appropriate tourism information system and quality of services needs to be improved. Without these, Myanmar cannot meet the demands of tourists. GOM asked DP's assistance for information infrastructure and trainings for entrepreneurship and skilled labour.

Private sector participation needs be considered from various perspectives. The potential of tourism development is very high, but we should pay more attention to improving business environment and ensuring competitiveness. The private sector emphasized the importance of infrastructure, information, law and regulations, skills of young people, and investment in creative industries.

Tourism control is also important to cope with illegal migration and illegal trafficking. DP's technical assistance to tourism control strategy for systematic border management will be expected.

Suggestions:

- Preserving Myanmar's unique cultural heritage for the enjoyment of current and future generations through encouraging sustainable, culturally appropriate tourism
- Professionalizing those services sectors which will support Myanmar's emergent tourism sector
- Improve Myanmar's ranking on the Doing Business Survey through improving competitiveness and supporting a business-friendly enabling environment
- Ensure the private sector is engaged as the prime driver of Myanmar's economic growth by supporting increasing urban-rural, regional and global market connectivity