

# DOING MORE THAN JUST “BUSINESS AS USUAL”

Mapping the Market Ecosystem for Responsible Businesses, Social Enterprises and Philanthropists in Myanmar

**T**he business opportunities of an emerging economy paired with ample social development needs in Myanmar have nurtured the emergence of a new paradigm of “Doing Well by Doing Good”.

In 2019, the Charities Aid Foundation – again – ranked Myanmar within the top tier of the World Giving Index (2nd rank), an internationally recognised index measuring countries according to (1) the willingness of citizens to help strangers, (2) donations given and (3) time spent on volunteering.

It may not surprise that – within a nation built on such level of altruistic values – concepts of sustainability, inclusiveness, responsibility and genuine philanthropy have certainly become more norm than exception within Myanmar’s community of entrepreneurs.

Rather than providing one-off donations at a time of need only, businesses operating in Myanmar may consider ways towards commercially sustainable impact, strategic philanthropy as well as partnerships with development sector actors and civil society.

Benefits for responsible and committed entrepreneurs are abundant: Not only may community-company conflicts be prevented, but companies, civil society or other development actors may be constructively engaged in collaborative partnerships to the benefit of all. Development sector actors including NGOs and organisations of the United Nations system may also be able to join forces in corporate public affairs and advocacy efforts.

With the Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan (MSDP) the Government of Myanmar is undertaking an active and unprecedented effort to align national development with the Agenda 2030 of United Nations and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry (MOPFI) highlighted in the MSDP the importance for Myanmar

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to develop in a sustainable and prudent manner with development policies clustered under three pillars: (1) Peace and Stability, (2) Prosperity and Partnership as well as (3) People and Planet. A comprehensive indicator framework for the measurement of national progress toward the SDGs has been drawn up.

Likewise remarkable is the Project Bank, a mechanism of MOPFI to transparently disclose details of major public investment projects in Myanmar, which is also identifying alignment of currently listed 129 large-scale investments with the sustainable development agenda.

While the direction of Naypyidaw is clear to reach sustainable development through public and private sector cooperation, many companies face challenges in understanding the modus operandi of the development sector.

Various efforts have been made by the Government and international development partners (e.g. the European Union) to create full transparency of aid, finally also for reasons of accountability. According to the Aid Information Management Platform “Mohinga” ([mohinga.info](http://mohinga.info)) of the Foreign Economic Relations Department of Ministry of Investment and Foreign Economic Relations, the considerable scale of international aid to Myanmar becomes apparent. Between 2013 and 2019, international development partners have committed a total amount of US\$ 13.53 billion for supporting Myanmar’s development. Such commitments comprise grant financing, concessional loans, debt relief and various other modes of financing. Data from Mohinga reveal the multifaceted aid accessed by Myanmar in areas from health to education, from private sector development to tax reform (see Figures 1 and 2).

Platforms including the Myanmar Information Management Unit (MIMU), the INGO Forum as well as civil society networks provide extensive information on the operations of NGOs and function as a valuable knowledge repository.

**Not only the private sector, but also NGOs, UN organisations and the diplomatic community welcome innovative partnerships for development in Myanmar and continuously experiment with new solutions.**

An example are match-funding facilities for private businesses, in which a company may receive additional financing from the development sector for enhancing its social or environmental impact of a scalable commercial solution: The Responsible Business Fund with US\$ 13 million in funding commitment by the Government of Denmark has aimed at supporting more than 600 Myanmar enterprises. The COVID-19 Challenge Fund of the DaNa Facility of the United Kingdom has allocated £500,000 for innovative

private sector projects helping in the fight against COVID-19.

Growing interest of philanthropic donors and impact investors has been to strengthen the social enterprise ecosystem of Myanmar comprised of usually businesses with commercial operations which pursue a developmental purpose (e.g. Koe Koe Tech, Plan Bee of Tag International Development and Kasante).

Start-up ecosystem builders

including Impact Hub or Phandeeayr, One To Watch or MicroEmpire often play an important role in connecting people with ideas with necessary funding and capacity.

Platforms such as the UN Global Compact or the Asian Venture Philanthropy Network offer companies the opportunity to commit visibly for employees, other stakeholders and shareholders to doing more than business and to networking. •

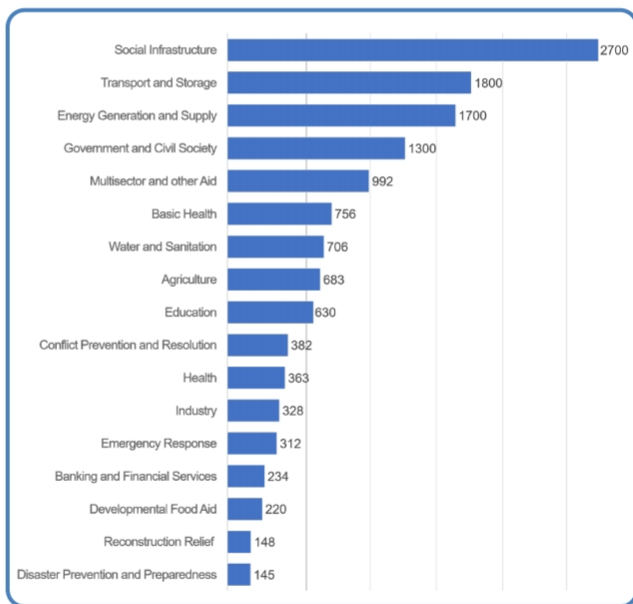
**FIGURE 1: AID COMMITMENTS TO MYANMAR BY STATE/REGION FROM 2013 TO 2019**

(Source: MoHinga Aid Information Management Platform)



**FIGURE 2: AID COMMITMENTS TO MYANMAR BY SECTOR FROM JANUARY 2013 TO DECEMBER 2019 (IN USD MILLION)**

(Source: MoHinga Aid Information Management Platform)



FIGURES IN BILLION MMK