

# MYANMAR



Even in Myanmar's growing economy, rural women continue to be marginalized and struggle to get ahead. Working primarily within agricultural markets where women are active participants, MEDA will help 25,000 women in Shan and Kayin States grasp new opportunities offered by Myanmar's changing economic environment.



*Creating business solutions to poverty*

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QUICKFACTS

- Population: 53.4 million
- 25.6% live below poverty line
- Nearly 85% of the poor live in rural areas
- 66% live in rural areas
- GDP: \$64 billion (USD)
- Avg. time to start a business: 72 days
- 2/3 of the population works primarily in agriculture; almost 50% women

## Background

Myanmar is a country in transition. Emerging from decades of political and economic isolation, the country's economy is undergoing rapid change, with strong potential for significant growth. Resource-rich and sitting at the crossroads of Asia, Myanmar is emerging as an important actor in Southeast Asia.

Despite recent growth, Myanmar remains one of the poorest countries in the world. One in four live below the poverty line, with those in rural areas being most vulnerable.

Rural women are among the country's most marginalized groups. Though they play an active role in agricultural production and markets, and gender equality formally exists in many areas of law, women still experience barriers that prohibit them from fully participating in a growing economy. A wide wage gap between women and men also exists, and women often struggle to access financing, market information, and higher-growth markets. At a local level, few women are represented in decision-making

bodies. In some areas, rural poverty is exacerbated by conflict and historical political neglect.



## MEDA's Involvement

MEDA (Mennonite Economic Development Associates) aims to strengthen the participation and status of 25,000 women in the Myanmar economy. Focused on two ethnic regions - Shan State and Kayin (Karen) State - MEDA's IMOW (Improving Market Opportunities for Women) project will work with local partners to:

- Support rural women and women-owned businesses to grow their productivity and incomes, increase their access to financial services, and take on leadership positions in market and community systems
- Address technical, resource and capacity barriers in the private and public sector to improve demand and supply of goods and services provided to rural women

MEDA initially will focus on two value chains: market vegetables (Shan State) and rice (Kayin State). By more fully integrating women into the local economy, the project will also improve livelihoods for 125,000 others, who will directly benefit from enhanced goods and services.

## Outcome | 5 Year Project Budget

- 25,000 women become more active and empowered economically
- Women have greater access to markets and financial services
- Women are using improved farming and business practices
- More women are participating in community leadership and decision making
- Small and medium enterprises are reaching greater numbers of women
- Stronger institutions and governance structures to support rural women

