

# Poverty and Education in Myanmar: A Review Article

Soe Myint Than \* Naris Penpokai\*\*

## ABSTRACT

Nearly one-third of the total population live under the poverty line in Myanmar. Several scientific researchers and economic scholars identified the condition of poverty as the lack of financial resources, lack of community participation, social well-being, political, cultural and economic growth, and finally lack of education. In the current situation, national government, local and international non-government organizations develop the poverty alleviation program to achieve a better living standard. There is no doubt that the role of education plays a significant part in poverty reduction. Nowadays, to achieve a well-reputed working position, the level of education is vital. An individual must enable the basic literacy skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic to do a job. This paper reports a review of the causes of poverty in Myanmar and the role of education in poverty alleviation.

**Keywords:** Poverty, Education, Myanmar

## 1.1 : INTRODUCTION

Poverty is seen as the main issue when it comes to encouraging growth and development not only for individuals but also for the society and country as a whole. Poverty is characterized not only by lack of wealth, health and education but also by a lack of power and authority. Through receiving education, individuals may develop the knowledge and skills required to achieve empowerment opportunities and meet employment challenges. When developing an understanding of the role of education in alleviating the conditions of poverty, the first and foremost thing that is important to understanding is that schooling confers knowledge and information to individuals that would allow them to recognize their obligations towards family and society. Through gaining schooling, individuals can learn the skills and abilities that are important to complete different tasks and activities (Dhillon, 2011). Education plays a significant role in poverty eradication and socio-economic development by providing importance to well-being and independence to the individuals, promoting

social development, cultural changes, political and economic spheres and impact on the business development in several ways. In different countries (developed and developing countries), it is believed that education is a primary source of the anti-poverty program (Melin, 2001). People pay attention to educational development to achieve sustainable economic development and reducing the poverty line. Education is determined as the promoting economic changes way, well-being and poverty alleviation instrument. Myanmar is one of the developing countries in Southeast Asia. Nearly two-thirds of residents live in rural areas and the primary source of the economic sector is farming. As a developing country, the poverty rate is still high and poverty reduction is one of the main challenges for both local government and international donors (World Bank, 2013). In Myanmar, there are several different roots of poverty both in rural and urban areas. This paper mainly focused on the lack of education and poverty in Myanmar.

## 1.2 : CAUSES OF LACK OF EDUCATION IN MYANMAR

In Myanmar, the Ministry of Education is the main provider of basic education. Primary school education is compulsorily supported by the National Government. The basic education system in Myanmar consists of five years of primary education, four years of lower secondary education, and two years of upper secondary education. The current government offers basic primary education as free access for all national residents. However, according to the Ministry of

Education report done in 2012, only 84.6% enrolled in primary schools. The main reasons for the lack of primary schooling were affordability and access (UNICEF, 2012). The proportion of young people from poor households especially in rural areas are least likely to remain in schools compared with richest households (Hayden & Martin, 2013). The following are the basic cause of lack of schooling;

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\*Ph.D. Candidate, Management, School of Management, Shinawatra University. Email: [soe.myint.than@gmail.com](mailto:soe.myint.than@gmail.com)

\*\*Ph.D. Management, School of Management, Shinawatra University Email: [naris1959@hotmail.com](mailto:naris1959@hotmail.com)

### **(i) Family Economic Background**

The government provides primary and secondary education as free and compulsory in Myanmar. However, in the rural area, the school dropout rate has remained as the main problem. The reason behind that is poverty, especially in rural areas. Most of the children in villages cannot attend school regularly due to family income. In some cases, parents are not affordable to pay some amount of school equipment

and private tuition fees. Children help their parent's household works, firms, and other paid jobs to get some amount of family income. Moreover, the big family size in a poor family is an issue of lack of schooling. Children need to assist elderly people or young children in the family. The basic background of the lack of schooling in a rural area is the parental economic background.

### **(ii) Lack of Teaching Resources**

Lack of adequate learning resources is also one of the leading factors of lack of schooling in a rural area. In some rural areas, there are no school facilities such as buildings, students' chairs, and tables, learning materials, notebooks, and textbooks. Lack of adequate teaching materials can impact on early dropout of schools in rural areas. Furthermore,

the lack of an adequate number of teachers is a serious problem in villages. When there are not enough teachers, the authority of villages hires the local people who passed only high schools or middle schools. Lack of teachers' training, teaching skills and experience can lead students' dissatisfaction and unqualified education.

### **(iii) Transportation Issues**

In some areas, there is only one school for every five or more villages. In this case, community transportation and communication system are the key factors to access school in another area. Bad transportation and communication routes in

a rural area can also lead to a lack of education. Students in remote areas face several challenges during the rainy seasons because of difficult to commute to schools from their homes.

### **(iv) Government Factors**

Civil wars in the borderline area also influence the schooling rate. Low levels of government investment for education promotion in a rural area can also cause a high dropout rate. Private high schools' policy and school tuition

fees are also correlated with government control. The government has the main responsibility to supply adequate school facilities and teachers' resources both in rural and urban areas.

## **1.3 : CONSEQUENCES OF LACK OF EDUCATION IN MYANMAR**

Lack of education can cause the conditions of poverty. Developing employment opportunities, personal skills and abilities which would enable people to get well-paid working status, manage the household responsibilities in an

organization, differentiate between appropriate and inappropriate, and traits of morality and ethics are all based on an acquisition of education (Martin, 2011).

### **(i) Lack of educational skills and abilities**

Lack of high school education can lead to a lack of educational skills and abilities to alleviate the conditions of poverty. Low levels of education can cause achieve a low-level working position with low payment which can force a high level of poverty rate in the region. To sustain one's living condition appropriately, the person must be educated to be

aware and possess the essential skills and knowledge. Therefore, due to a lack of education, there is a prevalence of the conditions of poverty. Lack of education is directly linked with a lack of employment opportunities, low financial income, low level of healthcare status, and other socio-economic conditions.

## **(ii) Lack of employment opportunities**

Lack of employment opportunities is also a consequence of a lack of education. Getting a good job is a big challenge for an individual who has a low level of education. To possess a good working opportunity, the individual must be able to satisfy all needs and requirements like the high level of education, good physical and mental health conditions, and others. Macrotrends analysis is done from 1991 to 2020, there was 1.56% of unemployment rate in 2018. International Labour Organization called ILO also reported in 2019 that nearly half of the total population (49.9%) are working in agricultural sectors, 33.5% in service sectors, and

16.6% in industries. These proportions approved that most of the unskillful and uneducated workers are served in low-level working sectors. When a person will acquire good and well-paid employment opportunities, he/she will be able to generate a source of income. Reversely, when an individual is unable to acquire employment opportunity, he/she experiences problems and challenges within the course of sustenance of living conditions and faces with conditions of poverty. It can be identified that lack of employment opportunity is based on a lack of education and also one of the main leading factors of poverty.

## **(iii) Negative impacts on health care**

Moreover, the lack of education negatively impacts on health care and medical support. Health care and medical facilities are defined as indispensable for the individuals, belonging to all age groups, categories, and backgrounds. An individual who has a limited payment from a low level of employment status cannot afford to acquire healthcare and medical facilities. Lack of healthcare knowledge and

information are also leading causes of early death in rural areas. Most of the qualified medical centers are allocated in cities, not in rural areas. To get qualified and satisfied healthcare, the individual must need to spend a lot of income. Lack of medical practice and access to qualified healthcare are the consequences of lack of income which was come from lack of job opportunity as a result of lack of education.

## **1.4 : ROLE OF EDUCATION IN POVERTY ALLEVIATING IN MYANMAR**

The national government and international donors support to improve education systems in Myanmar due to its high impact on the poverty alleviation conditions. According to

Roberts (2003), the role of education in alleviating the conditions of poverty have been identified in the factors, which have been stated as follows:

### **(i) Employment Opportunities**

Through accessing education, people may improve their knowledge and understanding in different ways. They can identify the fields where they are involved in seeking opportunities for jobs. Developing basic literacy skills (reading, writing, and arithmetic) will enable them to carry out their tasks and functions. By gaining higher educational certificates,

individuals can obtain well-paid work opportunities even in reputed institutions. There is a strong connection between work opportunities receiving and education level. Acquiring job opportunities is one of the main factors in rising poverty conditions

### **(ii) Financial Management**

The individuals can generate understanding in terms of financial management by gaining an education. Financial resource management allows persons to obtain data from

various aspects. These involve making investments, conducting banking transactions and making effective use of financial capital to support one's living conditions suitably.

### **(iii) Management of Household Responsibilities**

The administration of domestic duties is considered to make a major contribution to raising one's standard of living. Individuals can create knowledge in terms of handling household duties through education acquisition. They will use

their skills and abilities to make strategic choices, create information about receiving services from others, manage financial capital and so on.

#### (iv) Promoting Good Health and Well-being

Individuals can obtain knowledge in terms of promoting good health and well-being through the acquisition of education. Individuals need to take into account other factors to encourage good health and well-being. These

include food and nutrition, physical activity, positive thinking, health care and treatment, and so on. Therefore, individuals need to generate knowledge in terms of new and creative approaches to take care of one's health and well-being.

#### (v) Development of Communication Skills

To eradicate the conditions of poverty and improve an individual's life, the development of communication skills is necessary for the individuals. With the development of strong

communication skills, people can communicate and establish a relationship with different organizations and services that would allow them to minimize the conditions of poverty

### 1.5 : CONCLUSION

Poverty is seen as one of the big challenges not just of the individuals and societies but also of the country in the process of development. It is well recognized that education is the tool that lays the foundation for the growth of individuals, communities and the nation. The main causes of poverty in Myanmar are lack of schooling and lack of job opportunities. Gaining education contributes significantly to

reducing the causes of poverty. By schooling, people can carry out different tasks and activities, such as raising awareness, making informed decisions, improving communication skills, acquiring job opportunities, financial planning, handling domestic duties, and maintaining good health and well-being.

### 1.6 : RECOMMENDATION

To reduce the early dropout schooling rate and promote poverty in a rural area, the following things should follow:

- The government should provide more investment in agriculture and provide working opportunities for residents. By creating working opportunities, and promoting family income, the schooling rate will be increased.

- Government and local authorities should support and provide school materials and an adequate number of qualified teachers in rural schools.
- The government and donor should also focus on transportation and communication route improvement.
- Both government and all residents in Myanmar have the responsibility to promote the education system in rural areas and decrease the poverty rate throughout the nation.

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