

## **Tourism's Impact On Human Rights: Travel's Best Souvenir A Case Study In Ngwe Saung, Myanmar**

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*Key findings from this study indicate that individuals of all ages, occupations and ethnic groups from the Ngwe Saung community experienced a positive increase in sustainable livelihood through increased job opportunity and additional income. Livelihood improvements directly impacted human rights to education, health, hygiene, electricity, transportation, freedom of information and religious opportunity. Results show that tourism development reduced poverty significantly, elevating participants from extreme poverty to a level well above subsistence, unattainable without the jobs and income that tourism generated.*

**Key words:** tourism development, human rights, livelihood, poverty reduction

### **Introduction**

This paper was undertaken to understand the potential development opportunities through tourism, and how they can further human rights for the local people in Ngwe Saung, Myanmar. Few studies suggest a positive relationship between tourism development and human rights, yet this case study concludes with not only an affirmative association, but a noticeable reduction in poverty and improvement towards the wellbeing of the local people, despite government involvement.

Myanmar is relatively new to tourism as it did not officially open its borders to tourists until 1996. For a country that hosted only 310,688 tourists in 2010 (Info Burmanie, March 2011, p. 26), the recent travel coverage of the country by everyone in the Western press from *CNN* to *Lonely Planet* to *Travel & Leisure* as one of the world's "in" places to visit in 2012, has positioned the country to a new level of fame (Paquette, 2012). With just under 8,000 hotel rooms in the country suitable for tourists and poor infrastructure, it is questionable as to how Myanmar will keep up with an anticipated two-fold increase in tourists this year ("Burma Tourism Set to Boom," 2012).

Given the amount of anticipated tourists and necessary development to accommodate the influx in visitors, it is necessary to further understand the role that tourism development has on the basic needs, livelihoods and human rights of local communities. Thus, this research provides for a better understanding of the role tourism development plays on furthering human rights' empowerment, and results in

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isolating key factors necessary for success and identifying further areas for exploration.

## **Methodology**

The primary objectives of this research are: (1) To analyze the extent to which tourism has increased employment opportunities and income levels for the local residents of Ngwe Saung; (2) To detail the impact of emerging tourism on the local community's social and economic human rights and (3) To outline how and whether tourism impacts both development and human rights and to explore the relationship between tourism, development and human rights.

Development ingression attests to the idea that the economic benefits provided by the government to businesses and developers can seep down into benefits for the poorer members of society, improving the economy as a whole. This concept of development ingression theory is postulated to better understand the tourism industry in Ngwe Saung for the conceptual framework of this research.

For the methodology of this study and in order to understand the relationship between tourism, development and human rights, a mixed method of both quantitative and qualitative research was utilized. The site chosen for this case study was Ngwe Saung, Myanmar – which only opened to tourism in 2000 and provides a perfect sample of measuring change over a short twelve-year period. Interviews conducted include local authorities, provincial and district hotelier officers, hotel staff, restaurant owners, tour group managers, community leaders, village elders, fisherman, farmers, relevant NGO staff, and local community members living in Ngwe Saung.

Ngwe Saung Beach is located in Western Myanmar in the Ayeyarwady Division, 48 kilometers from the nearest town of Patheingyi. The sub-township of Ngwe Saung has a population of 27,091 people, amongst forty-four villages. There are twenty-one resorts in Ngwe Saung, with a current seventeen in operation as some are still in the process of being built. It is estimated that there are an additional fifteen to thirty guest houses, located closer to the center of town.

## **Literature Review**

In the past several years, there has been a remarkable surge in tourism to developing countries. Arrivals to developing countries accounted for 47 percent of the total international arrivals in 2010 (WTO, 2011). The UN WTO notes that "Tourism has become a major player in the economy of developing countries" (WTO, 2011) and by 2020, it is anticipated that East Asia will overtake the Americas as the second most popular tourist destination in the world (following Europe) (WTO, 2010).

Tourism development in developing countries has been traditionally viewed as a means of promoting economic growth (WTO, 1998) and is extremely important to the economic development of many Third World countries. For example, tourism is a significant economic sector in 11 of the 12 countries that contain 80 percent of the world's poor (Lea, 1988, p. 1) and is the primary source of foreign earnings for the world's 48 least developed countries (WTO, 1998). Tourism accounts for more than twice as much cash moving from rich to poor countries than governments give in aid (WTO, 2010).

In 2010, international tourism arrivals to emerging markets and developing countries amounted to 443 million (Ashley & Mitchell, 2005). In that same year, tourism generated 45 percent of the total exports in services in developing countries.

Tourism is a principal export in over 80 percent of developing countries and the main export of one third of them (WTO, 2010). In some developing countries, notably small island states, tourism can account for over 25 percent of GDP (WTO, 2010).

There is limited substantial research regarding the potential enrichment for tourism in developing countries on the livelihoods of the poor. As stated by the WTO, “Tourism in many developing and least developed countries is the most viable and sustainable economic development option, and in some countries, the main source of foreign exchange earnings” (WTO, 2010). The WTO contests that income generated from tourism seeps down to different groups of society and, as stated by the WTO, “if tourism is managed with a strong focus on poverty alleviation, it can directly benefit the poorer groups through employment of local people in tourism enterprises, goods and services provided to tourists, or the running of small and community-based enterprises having positive impacts on reducing poverty levels” (2010).

The United Nations General Assembly notes the relationship between tourism and poverty alleviation in its 2001 *Global Code of Ethics for Tourism*;

“Recognizing the important dimension and role of tourism as a positive instrument towards the alleviation of poverty and the improvement of the quality of life for all people, the potential to make a contribution to economic and social development, especially of the developing countries, and the emergence as a vital force for the promotion of international understanding, peace and prosperity...” (United Nations General Assembly, 2001).

Tourism development is credited with stimulating employment and investment, modifying land use and economic structure, improving infrastructure, and making a positive contribution to the balance of payments (Cater, 1987). With the creation of infrastructure, accommodation, and tourism-related businesses many employment and entrepreneurial opportunities arise – ones that often do not require high skill levels or training (WTO, 2010). Tourism is an unusual activity in that it brings the consumers to the producers, providing new customers and markets for producers (WTO, 2010). These increases in employment opportunities and income, infrastructure, markets and investment are understood to “trickle-down” and multiply to all citizens in the region where tourism development has taken place. Tourism development can therefore be viewed as an instigator for improving the basic human rights of citizens.

## **Tourism in Myanmar**

Currently more than half of Myanmar, the largest state in mainland Southeast Asia with a population of over 60 million (CIA, 2012), is closed to tourism due to limitations enacted by the military regime because of ongoing conflicts with various ethnic minorities. Within the Ayeyarwady Division, only three cities are accessible to tourists [Patheingyi, Chaungtha (beach), and Ngazun (beach)] out of twenty-nine (CIA, 2012).

Myanmar, although rich in natural resources, is a country plagued by poverty. It has been estimated in past years that generals running the country spend approximately 40 percent of the country’s budget on the military, while most of the people live in poverty and disease (Info Burmanic, March 2011, p. 15). In 2011, Myanmar ranked 149<sup>th</sup> out of 187 countries and territories in the United Nation’s Human Development Index (HDI), which measures achievements in health, education

and living standards (UNDP, 2011b). Myanmar ranked nearly 20 points below the rest of East Asia and the Pacific's regional HDI average.

Myanmar has been accused of horrific human rights violations, and as a result has suffered from economic sanctions from both the European Union and the United States. Yet, after years of deadlock and stagnation in the country, change is coming at a rapid pace (though still on military terms), as many of these sanctions have been lifted. Since taking office in March 2011 after deeply flawed elections, the new president, U Thein Sein, a former general, has shown 'leanings toward democratization, breaking sharply from the highly centralized and erratic policies of the past' (UNDP, 2011a).

On April 2, 2012, after the National League for Democracy announced that it had won 43 of the 45 parliamentary seats, Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi was enthusiastic and spoke of the "beginning of a new era" in a brief address to a tightly packed crowd outside her party's headquarters (New York Times, 2012).

### **Measuring Human Rights**

Human rights can generally be understood as the fundamental necessities and freedoms that all human beings should have. The specific rights being analyzed, as paraphrased from the three international works that together comprise an international bill of rights, are:

1. Right to an adequate standard of living, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and the "continuous improvement of living conditions" (Article 11 of the ICESCR United Nations, 1966).
2. Right to health (Article 12 of the ICESCR United Nations, 1966).
3. Right to education (Article 13 of the ICESCR United Nations, 1966).
4. Right to work, with free choice of employment and favorable conditions while at work (Article 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights United Nations, 1948).

These four main areas of economic and social rights were chosen for substantial research given that they hold the largest opportunity for change given the reach of tourism development.

Due to the abundance of different jobs, occupations and skills, the participants were separated into three distinct tiers based on occupational proximity to tourism. The first tier, Tier 1, pertains to individuals employed by hotels and resorts in Ngwe Saung. Tier 2 contains jobs that relate to tourism and are considered to be within the tourism industry, but are outside of direct hotel employment. Lastly, Tier 3 contains the remaining jobs that do not directly relate to the tourism industry. This division of tiers can be seen in the table on the right-hand side. Please note that this division between tiers is utilized throughout the entire data analysis, as the effects of tourism on the lives of the local people are best exhibited through these different groups.

### **Employment Opportunities and Income Levels**

From the data collected it is evident that there was clear job creation and job opportunity for the local people resulting from the establishment of tourism. In this research, occupations within Tiers 1 and 2 comprised of hotel staff, small entrepreneurs and restaurant and guest house workers were created directly for tourism. The total number of new jobs created is estimated at over 2,000 positions. Wages and earnings soared above pre-tourism reported income levels, with average

monthly income levels 71,000 to 194,615 kyat higher than pre-tourism for local fishing and farming occupations. By introducing this new sector, tourism diversified occupations and Ngwe Saung no longer relied solely on agricultural production for income.

Table 1: Occupational Division by Tier

<b>Tier 1</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cook</li> <li>• Hotel Driver</li> <li>• Housekeeper</li> <li>• Hotel Manager</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hotel Receptionist</li> <li>• Hotel Waitress</li> <li>• Hotel Human Resources</li> <li>• Hotel Technician</li> </ul>
<b>Tier 2</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shopkeeper</li> <li>• Handicraftsman</li> <li>• Restaurant Owner</li> <li>• Grocery Store Owner</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Souvenir Shop Owner</li> <li>• Taxi/Motorbike Driver</li> <li>• Tour Guide</li> <li>• Guest House Owner</li> </ul>
<b>Tier 3</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shrimp factory owner</li> <li>• Housewife</li> <li>• Student</li> <li>• Fisherman</li> <li>• Engineer</li> <li>• Merchant</li> <li>• Health Assistant*</li> <li>• Police Officer*</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Head Monk of Monastery</li> <li>• Pawn Shop Owner</li> <li>• Palm Tree Farmer</li> <li>• Rice Farmer</li> <li>• Animal Breeder</li> <li>• Headmaster of Schools*</li> <li>• Middle School Teacher*</li> <li>• High School Teacher*</li> </ul>

\*Denotes a government appointed position and is sometimes separated from Tier 3 in analysis

In addition to creating jobs that provided substantial increases in income and furthered opportunities for those who previously could not gain employment, newly created tourism jobs provided opportunity for mobility and upward movement. Each hotel reportedly promoted between 10 and 20 staff per year, with increases in salaries anywhere from 10,000 to 50,000 kyat. Some hotels had monetary incentives and rewarded those employees who stayed with the industry longer, whereas other hotels provided saving schemes and rewards for their employees. Hotel staff noted a 5,000 to 10,000 increase in their wages since tourism first came in 2000, indicating that the industry is growing and paying its employees higher wages than it did just a few years prior.

Data collection revealed that tourism increased wages within the entire village – regardless of industry. Tier 2 shopkeepers reported on average, more than doublings of profit since tourism first arrived. Even more astounding however, were Tier 3 fishermen, who reported a ten-fold increase in the price of prawns due to tourism. These fishermen indicated that their highest sales price for prawns comes from the hotels, to which they happily sell their catch.

### **Improving Livelihoods through Tourism**

What was most unexpected and remarkable from collecting this research, was the extent to which local residents used their income from tourism development to improve their livelihoods.

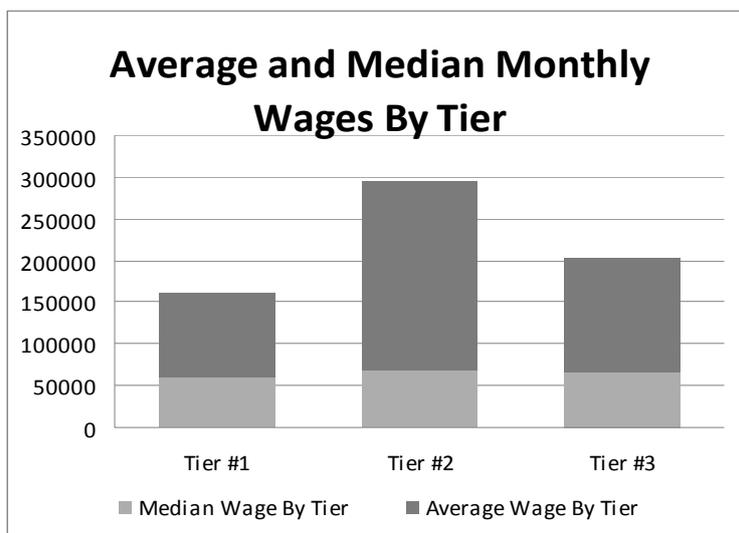


Figure 1: Average and Median Monthly Wages by Tier

Benefits received by local hotel staff, restaurant and guest house workers, and shrimp company laborers were impressive – and far above the national average of employment benefits (Chandler & Thong-Ek, 2012). Nearly all of these workers were provided housing, three meals a day, and medical care. Estimated benefits to hotel staff, restaurant workers, guest house employees and shrimp factory laborers was calculated as a minimum additional 50,000 kkyat per month. As one owner of a shrimp company in Ngwe Saung noted, “We realized we couldn’t compete for workers with the attraction of the hotels – they provided everything for their staff. So we too had to start providing these things in order to attract the higher skill levels for employment.” The tourism industry inordinately raised the standards of employee benefits for the people in Ngwe Saung that extended far beyond the realm of hotels and resorts. For the first time, as every villager interviewed noted, individuals and their families had more income than they needed to sustain themselves, and interestingly, each Tier chose a different way of spending their surplus cash. Tier 1 hotel staff practiced a combination of both saving and/or sending money home as remittance to family members. The average amount of Tier 1’s salaries that were gross savings neared 70%. These gross savings were either net savings or remittances sent back to families. Net savings averaged 20% of income while remittances averaged 48%. The remaining Tier 2 and Tier 3 occupational groups could not save nearly the same amount, because most of them incur housing, food and health care costs –which are provided by the hotels for their staff. Individuals who sent remittances on average sent back almost 83% of their entire salaries, averaging 57,143 kkyat per month. It is evident from these numbers that tourism in Ngwe Saung not only supports local villagers within the town, but affects families who live within the larger geographical sphere of Myanmar.

Tier 2 only saved 2% of their net earnings, but reinvested over one-third of their income back into their businesses. This emphasis on reinvestment was only witnessed within this occupational group and corroborates that micro-entrepreneurs and businessmen were very serious about their profits and improving their businesses. Tier 3 exhibited a combination of savings and debt, depending on the occupation within the group. Gross savings averaged just 15% of income in comparison to Tier 1’s 68% and Tier 2’s 35%. Within Tier 3, debt surpassed 102,000 kkyat, which was more than two times the villagers’ monthly salary. Most individuals in debt were farmers who had a bad harvest, or individuals who had run into trouble with their

illegal businesses (such as selling alcohol and wood), suggesting that many Tier 3 jobs confront uncontrollable risks in their occupations that place a significant strain on maintaining their livelihoods.

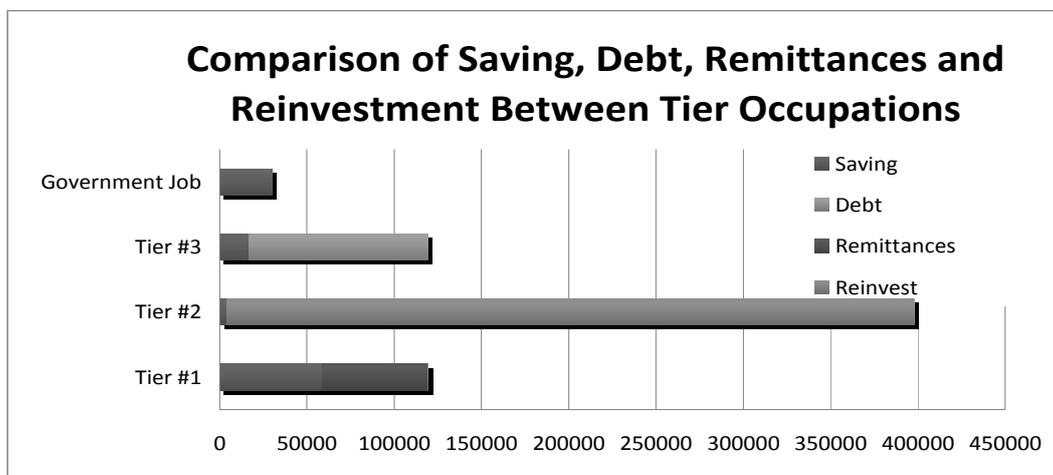


Figure 2: Savings, Debt, Remittance and Reinvestment by Tier

The increase in disposable income allowed for the purchases of motorbikes, electricity, and phones which largely improved communication and transportation channels for business. Individuals noted that through the purchase of mobile phones, they were able to contact distributors and factories to inquire about market prices, and with the purchase of motorbikes, they were able to bring large quantities of their goods to sell in neighboring Pathein and Chaungtha markets.

The access to and ability to save financial capital is often argued as one of the best ways to lift the poor out of poverty (CGAP, 2012). Families across all three tiers noticed increases in the amount of additional money that was generated from tourism. And while most participants mentioned that their money was being saved for education or reinvestment, one hotel cook noted that the *ability* to save has changed his life. “I used to rely on day to day wages and living. When I got sick, I couldn’t afford treatment or medicine. Now, I have set [dependable] wages and can care for myself and my family.” The ability to save has changed the lives and livelihoods of many villagers – who no longer have to live on day to day wages and can save for education, health care, and their next life.

### The Influence of Tourism on Local Human Rights

Tourism development provided for substantial improvement in local people’s human rights. These improvements were noted in the right to education, health and hygiene, freedom of movement, water, electricity, and religious expression.

The most compelling data proved that serious advancements had been made in the accessibility and affordability of local education in Ngwe Saung. With the increase in population in combination with financial support from the hotels, Ngwe Saung’s first high school and matriculation exam center were built – providing education through high school to local people for the first time. Prior to this structure, local people had to travel far away to Pathein for high school, which was too expensive for most families to finance. Subsequently, most children did not achieve education levels above middle school and the population was largely uneducated. Yet with the construction of Ngwe Saung’s first high school and exam center, the town is experiencing its highest number of graduates in history. Education centers and schools

were built in neighboring and more remote villages within Ngwe Saung sub-township – further improving access and affordability to those families and students.

With the appearance of tourism and the increase in education centers and opportunities for education, local people changed their mindset and value system regarding investment in education. Over thirty parents interviewed stated that they now invest in their children's education so that their children can "be educated in order to have a good job to have a good life." With tourism, it became understood that education was necessary in order to get a high-level, well-paid position. Thirteen years ago, before any of these educational improvements were instituted, children in Ngwe Saung had relatively little hope of attending high school. With these improvements, there has been a recent commitment to investing in education, which can be witnessed through the extent of tuition fees that parents pay for their children – spending upwards of 40,000 kyat per month per child, and up to 42% of their salaries to achieve better education and test grades for their children.

Lastly, and perhaps most gripping, are the opportunities in education that have already been taken advantage of by the local people and the returns on investment parents are already experiencing. The amount of children who are in school now, seeking high levels of education is much higher than the level of children seeking those same levels in education just twelve years ago. The best indicator of a change in education and a transformation in understanding the importance of education can be witnessed through comparing the education levels of children today versus their parents. It was observed, especially for Tier 3 that over 50% of parents achieved education levels lower than middle school, but were supporting their children through graduating at a high school or university level. While it has only been twelve years since improvements in education have helped change Ngwe Saung, parents have already witnessed "returns" on their children's education investments, through the form of remittances. A few parents noted that they are now reliant on their children's remittances from their jobs in the hotel industry for financial support. The furthering of opportunity, access and affordability in education was felt by the entire local Ngwe Saung community in a large way.

Similar to education, health and hygiene were dramatically impacted with the insertion of tourism. Ngwe Saung received its first hospital in 2005-2006 providing affordable and accessible health treatment to local people for the first time. Tourists and local people attend the same hospital and receive the same treatment which is an immeasurable improvement from traditional medicines previously provided by traditional healers. The government donated medicine and treatments to help the local villagers control malaria and dengue so that tourists would not fear traveling to Ngwe Saung due to disease. With tourism, hotels and migrant workers introduced local people to proper sanitation measures such as toilets, food preparation, and proper personal hygiene. With the benefits that most hotel staff, guest house employees and restaurant workers receive, villagers are entitled to ongoing treatment and vaccination free-of-charge. Through tourism, improvements to the right to health and hygiene were implemented, and local people were, for the first time, able to access and afford these treatments.

In addition to education and health and hygiene, there were many other improvements in social human rights that were a product of tourism development. These rights include infrastructure improvements, which prompted an increase to the right to the freedom of movement and affordable transportation, the introduction of electricity and clean water, and the building of pagodas which provided further religious freedom and access. However, there were also several negative influences of

tourism recorded – mainly in that with tourism, alcoholism, prostitution and karaoke were introduced to the local community and with increases in disposable income, people had different mindsets and value systems than previously.

In concluding the objective of disclosing and discovering the relationship of tourism on local social and economic human rights, it is evident that there were many positive increases in possibility, access, and affordability to education, health and hygiene, transportation, communication, access to information, electricity and clean water, and religious practice. While there were a few negative indicators mentioned, these were relatively small in terms of mention and prominence, and as noted by most participants, certainly do not outweigh the positives.

### **Defining the Relationship between Tourism, Development, and Human Rights**

It is evident from this research that tourism influences both development and human rights, and that there is a relationship between the three. It is evident that this research substantiates that tourism development benefits trickle down into human rights opportunities for the local community in Ngwe Saung and its sub-township and the extent of this seepage is quite impactful.

In the case of Ngwe Saung, the increased income benefits of tourism trickled down from the original hotel developers, to the hotel owners, to the hotel staff, entrepreneurs, store owners and fishermen. Job creation allowed many to seek employment for the first time – especially younger generations such as recent high school and university graduates. Noticeable increases in income have been felt at every level of the village, although those whose business is within the tourism industry certainly see higher levels of this increase in wages. Increases in wages allow for more purchasing power, and local people have purchased electricity, televisions, mobile phones, motorbikes and reinvested in their businesses. Surplus wages also allow families the prospect to save – something that has not been experienced in Ngwe Saung before, and can help prevent serious poverty.

The improvements towards human rights as a result of tourism have been largely witnessed by the local people. Most strongly felt through the erection of the sub-township's first high school, examination center and hospital, due to the growing population of migrant workers employed with the hotels and need for a treatment center for tourists. These developments provided access and affordability to education – which was previously not attainable. Furthermore, these newly built education centers with increased accessibility and affordability were able to educate more students – providing for a more-educated local population.

Infrastructure improvements due to tourism were witnessed even in the remote villages, where rope pulley boats and bridges built to connect local people to the main center of town were constructed, and regularly scheduled buses began running between Yangon, Pathein and Ngwe Saung for the first time. Tourism improved the local villagers' freedom of movement, by improving infrastructure and transportation routes. Villages saw electricity and clean drinking water for the first time, undoubtedly due to the need to bring electricity and safe drinking water into the hotels suitable for foreign tourists, and donations from hotels helped build pagodas for furthering religious freedoms of the local people.

In the case of Ngwe Saung, tourism development trickled down to benefit the local people, and can thus be seen as both an effective tool in development improvements and promulgating human rights for local people.

## **Poverty Reduction from Tourism Development**

In a mere twelve-year time period, drastic changes in poverty reduction due to tourism were witnessed, which indicate a strong relationship between tourism and development.

Currently in Myanmar, it is estimated that 32.7% of the population is below the poverty line (Central Intelligence Agency, 2012). In 2012, the WHO estimates that Myanmar has a national average income of \$1020 USD per capita per year (World Health Organization, 2012), which averages to approximately \$2.80 USD per day. Taking data collected for each occupational Tier in Ngwe Saung, we can see the change that tourism has made, where previously nearly all farmers and fishermen fell directly at or below the \$1.25 USD per day WHO extreme poverty line. Tourism has increased individual income in Ngwe Saung between \$2.60 and \$7.31 USD per day *more* than what they were making before tourism, which is well above the extreme poverty line, and also above the national average income level.

In addition to income levels, several other national estimates can be compared with those recorded in Ngwe Saung. It is estimated that over 78% of Myanmar's rural population is without access to clean and safe drinking water, with more than 88% of the villages in the Ayeyarwady Delta (where Ngwe Saung is located) relying on unprotected, open ponds for their drinking water (Human Development Initiative Extension, 2008). Yet, as this research confirms, villagers in Ngwe Saung, because of tourism, now have safe access to clean and safe drinking water, as provided through wells funded by both the hotels and the government. Ngwe Saung villagers are now amongst the 22% of rural populations that have access to clean and safe drinking water. Likewise, 58% of Myanmar's population does not have adequate sanitation and before 2000, Ngwe Saung was part of the country's 20% rural population that still practiced open defecation (WHO & UNICEF, 2012). But with the entrée of tourism, migrant workers and hotels brought toilets and proper sanitation methods that largely improved the area. Similarly, electricity was introduced to local villagers in Ngwe Saung with the coming of tourism, and local people became part of the less than 20% of the households in Myanmar that have electricity (Johnson, 2012).

Myanmar's national education average is 9 years (UNDP, 2011), which equates to completing a middle school education level. Due to costly school fees, most parents in rural areas cannot afford to send their children to school beyond the primary level. While 85% of children attend primary school in Myanmar, over 40% of those children do not continue on to middle school (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2012). While sub-township educational breakdowns were not available, there is strong indication that with Ngwe Saung's recent building of both a high school and matriculation exam center, more and more students are attending high school and continuing on to university for further studies.

## **Reflections on Tourism in Ngwe Saung**

From this research, a few general suggestions have been made to contribute to further research. While it is impossible to apply the case study of Ngwe Saung to every tourism development project and location, there are several observations worth noting that contributed to ensure the positive results in livelihoods and human rights experienced by the local people. While this list of observations is not exhaustive, it serves to show some of the reasons why Ngwe Saung has been a relative success in tourism development and promulgating livelihoods and human rights of local people.

1. The single most important reason for why livelihoods and human rights improved for the local people is because there was an offering of education that paralleled the offering of job possibilities. This is essential. Local people may not have originally had the skillsets and knowledge to work for the hotels and tourism industry, but the appropriate channels to learn these skills were offered – and clearly utilized. In order to engage local participation and empower local people within these new job prospects, chances to further education and improve skill sets must be offered.
2. It was apparent throughout this research that while there was initial government control, during the past twelve years since tourism has been introduced to Ngwe Saung, there has been little government intervention. This lack of micro-managing and government influence has allowed the town to thrive on its own with many small souvenir shops, restaurants, and grocery stores opened by locals – ensuring that money made from tourism is retained locally and not “leaked” back to the government or foreign units.
3. There was no divide between the hotels and locals, or between the migrant workers and local workers. This positive relationship allowed migrant people to teach local people improvements in sanitation and hygiene, and allowed local people to enter the tourism industry with little difficulty or resistance.
4. By providing benefits to their employees, hotels paved the way for proper employment contracts between their business and their staff. With such large benefits that provide for meals, housing, and health care hotel staff were able to save, reinvest and remit most of their earnings. This was the first time most people experienced the possibility to save – which provided for substantial improvements towards reducing poverty and promoting long-term stability for the local people. The extent to which tourism’s developments, remittances and prevalence went – traced far beyond the township borders of Ngwe Saung, and into other states and divisions in Myanmar.
5. Ngwe Saung did not experience and would not be able to sustain mass tourism. Tourists have come in small, steady and manageable increments since the opening of the town to tourism in 2000. Should there have been an explosion of tourists to the town at one time, or a drastic decrease at one point – the outcome experienced by Ngwe Saung today would not have been the same.
6. The social innovations that were promulgated by the hotel industry were outstanding. The introduction of benefits for employees initiated by the hotels was adopted by other neighboring industries and became standard for other labor occupations (not solely hotels). The welfare system which aimed to provide support for disenfranchised community members was prompted by the hotel association. The building of education centers, health facilities and the sub-township monastery provided further social, educational, health and spiritual opportunities for the local people. And finally, the hotel-provided environmental education community trainings, which raise awareness about the damage tourism can have on coastal landscapes, and engage the community in preventing further destruction of the ecosystem. The hoteliers provided huge visionary guidance on the overall society – providing enormous amounts of leadership and vision.
7. Empowerment versus enablement are two very different concepts often confused in development projects. In the case of Ngwe Saung, the population was not enabled, but empowered to better themselves, their economic situation, and the wellbeing of their family. The prospect to work in skilled labor jobs with tourism and the hotel industry was presented to the community and in addition, the

community was given the avenues necessary to achieve this success – through improved education channels and skills trainings. The community educated and trained themselves academically and vocationally for these new job opportunities.

While these observations seek to isolate some determining factors of success in Ngwe Saung's case study, it must be noted that Ngwe Saung is a unique case study in that it is an isolated region, relatively young in terms of tourism development. Much is left to be developed and determined, and these results may change with time and further development.

## **Conclusion**

The irony of this research is that the basic reason tourism was able to thrive within Ngwe Saung was predicated on the ripping away of a right by the government through the 2000 land grab. While this research highlights most events occurring after this event, it should be noted that this repossession of land created serious difficulties, strife and even death amongst the local people. Land grab can cause internal conflict, worsened and prolonged poverty, and can derail local livelihood sustenance, as witnessed in Ngwe Saung (Oxfam, 2011). The method of land confiscation utilized by the government in Ngwe Saung (where villagers were given little advance notice and no compensation for their land) is not sustainable and is a basic encroachment of human rights.

The most important concept to take away from this research is to understand that tourism can in fact improve basic need and human rights conditions of the local people, if it is utilized in the correct manner. Tourism can be more than a simple souvenir – it can lead to an opportunity for a better life. In the case of Ngwe Saung, job opportunity, transportation, electricity, health, and education infrastructures were improved by the government and surrounding businesses (namely hotels and shrimp factories), which enabled the local people to start restaurant, souvenir, and storekeeper businesses on their own. By providing the local people with the access to greater health, education, electricity, water, and job opportunities, they were able to work hard to lift themselves and their families above the poverty line and into a life with more rights and opportunity.

Lead experts Caroline Ashley and H. Goodwin measuring the extent to which tourism development affects impoverished communities remarked in their policy paper titled *Pro-Poor Tourism: What's Gone Right and What's Gone Wrong*, 'We do not know of any destination where the full range of impacts of tourism development on poverty levels has been rigorously assessed.' It is hopeful that this case study research provides a compelling and thorough analysis of the influence of tourism on the local people's livelihoods and human rights and prompts further analysis in similar fields of pro-poor tourism development.

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