Myanmar's Rural Transformation, Beyond GDP: The Potential Role of Hope in Rural Mon State
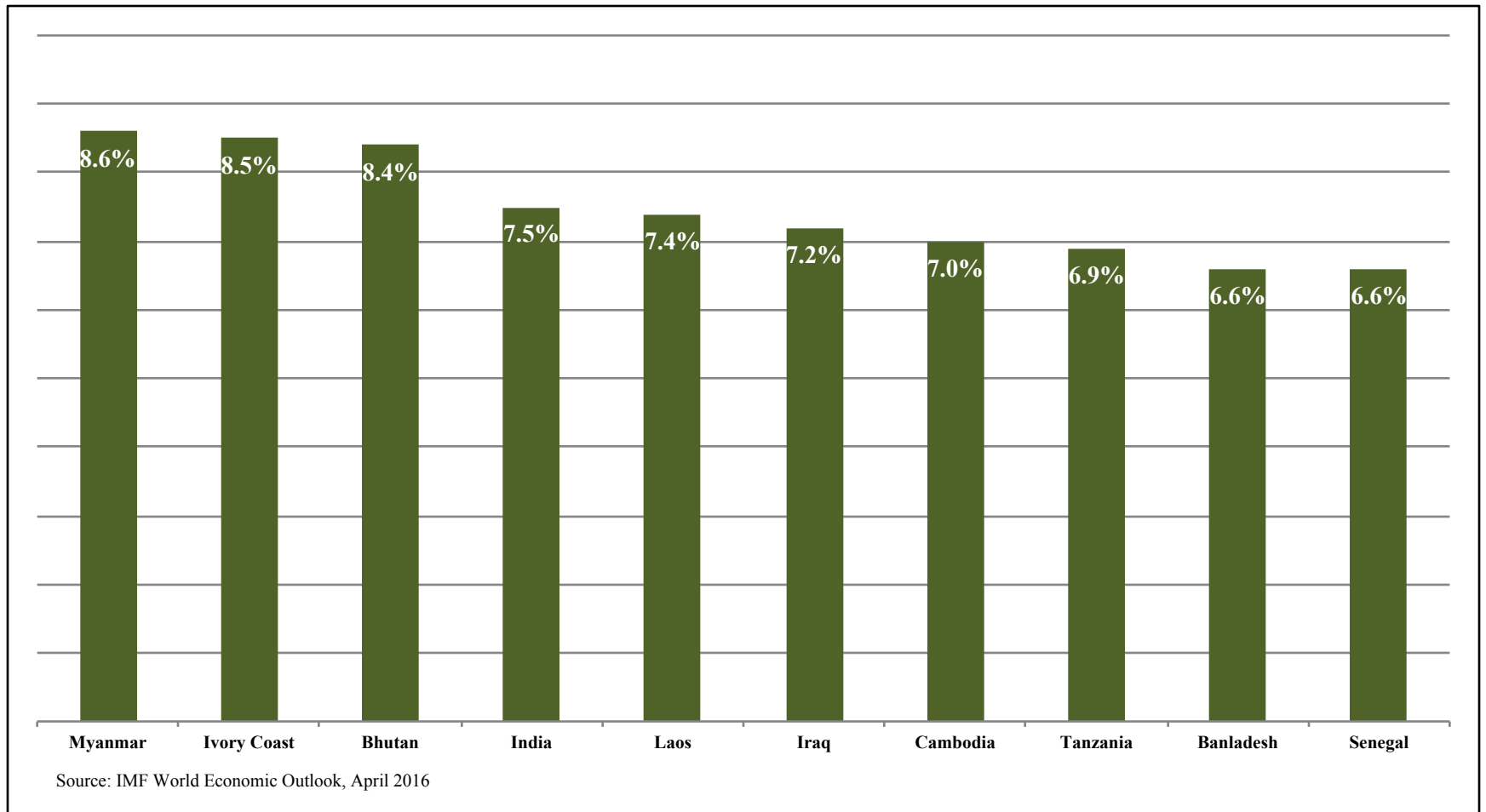
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Jeffrey Bloem
University of Minnesota
Kyan Htoo
Center for Economic and Social Development
Lu Min Lwin
Swarthmore College

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Real GDP Growth Rates, 2016

Myanmar	Ivory Coast	Bhutan	India	Laos	Iraq	Cambodia	Tanzania	Banladesh	Senegal
8.6%	8.5%	8.4%	7.5%	7.4%	7.2%	7.0%	6.9%	6.6%	6.6%

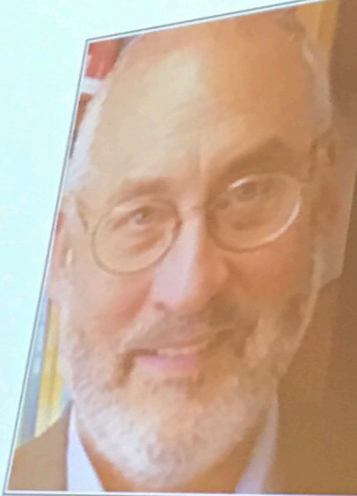Source: IMF World Economic Outlook, April 2016

GDP vs. Wellbeing

- GDP is a measure of economic performance and not wellbeing
- Rapid economic growth can have a range of effects on wellbeing
  - On one hand, can inspire powerful aspirations
  - On the other, can result in vast frustration
- We explore the dynamics of fast growth in a country with large amounts of rural poverty
- Key question: What is the state of psychological wellbeing in rural Myanmar?

Psychological Wellbeing… A Constraint?

- Mainstream theories of development have traditionally focused on *external* rather than *internal* constraints

- More recently, researchers have theorized about the potential role of psychological factors (i.e. hope) as a meaningful constraint on development (Duflo 2012; Lybbert & Wydick 2016)

- Since the 1950s psychologists, mainly in the US and Europe, have studied how 'hope' relates to various outcomes
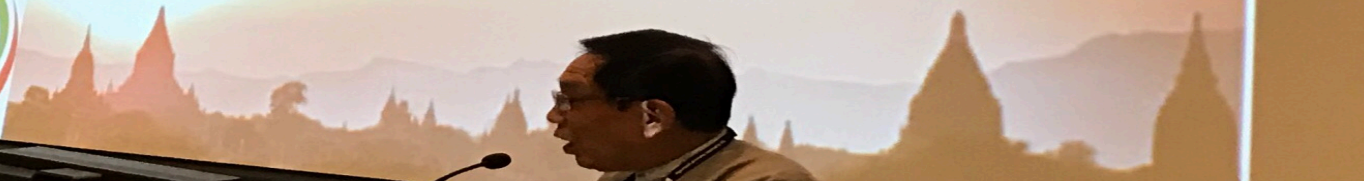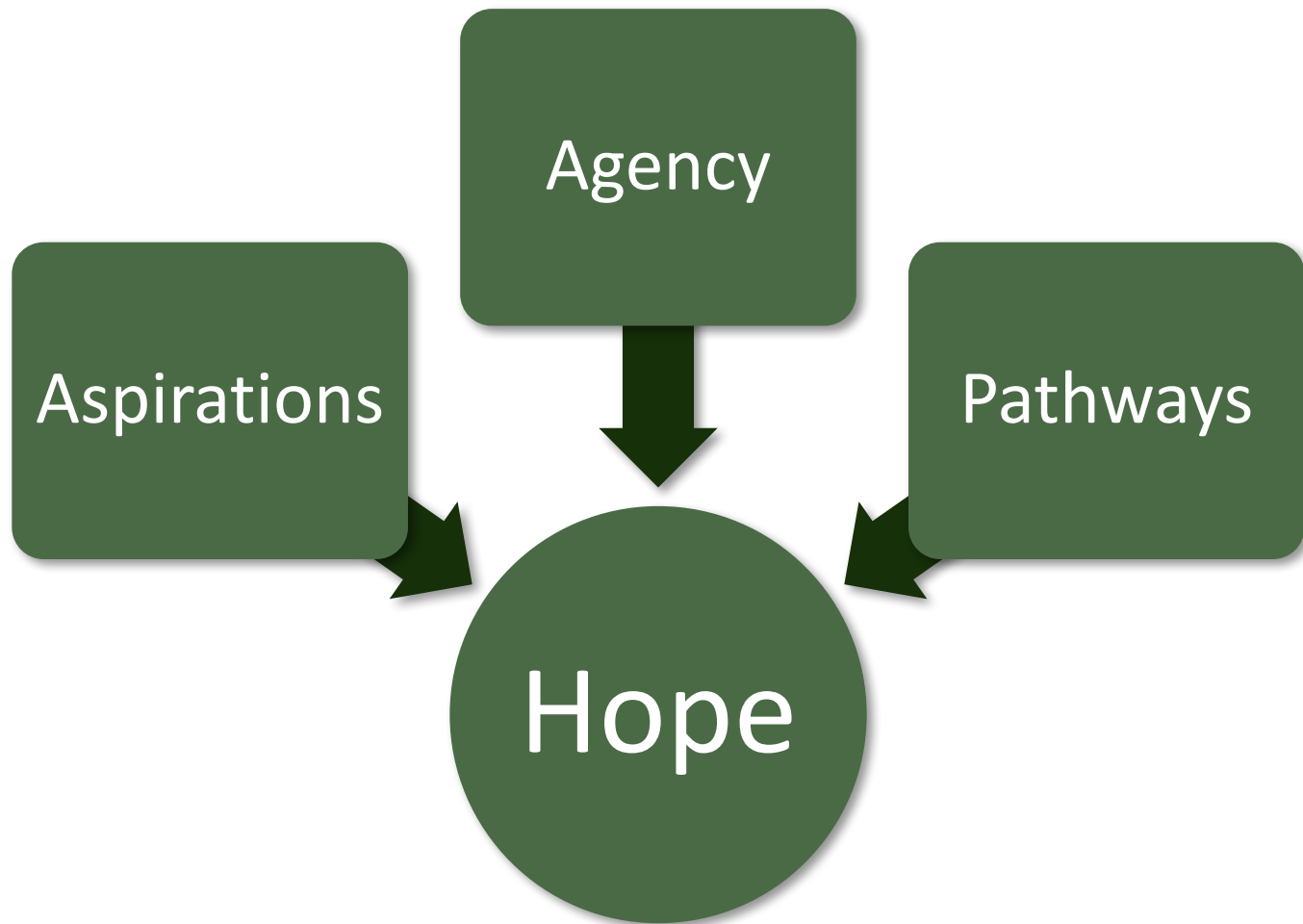
The Study Site:
Mon State, Myanmar

A Psychological Theory of Hope

The Hope Survey

- Representative of rural Mon State, 503 households in 43 enumeration areas, conducted in early 2016.

- Mon Household Survey, 1620 households in 135 enumeration areas, conducted in early 2015.

- Aimed to measure each of the three 'essential' elements of hope

- Aspirations
  - Directly about specific aspirations (Beaman et al. 2012; Bernard et al. 2014)

- Agency and Pathways
  - Using the 'hope scale' (Snyder 1994, 2002)

Aspirations

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Obs.
Education[1]			
Own Current Level	4.60	3.43	503
Own Aspired Level	5.41	5.72	503
Oldest Son Current Level	5.24	3.60	357
Oldest Son Aspired Level	11.40	2.94	366
Oldest Daughter Current Level	5.57	3.70	369
Oldest Daughter Aspired Level	11.64	2.72	378
Land[2]			
Agricultural Land Currently Owned	3.16	5.72	503
Agricultural Land Aspired to Own	9.51	14.99	503
Remittances[3]			
Current Remittances (per month)	55,926	114,384	503
Aspired Remittances (per month)	154,930	285,483	503
Donations[4]			
Current Donations (per month)	5,145	9,484	503
Aspired Donations (per month)	27,463	97,433	503
Income[5]			
Current Income (per month)	257,302	398,353	503
Aspired Income (per month)	686,349	1,269,162	502

Notes: [1]Represents indicate years of schooling, with kindergarten=1, grade 1=2, etc. [2]Land area presented in acres. [3,4,5]All monetary figures presented in Myanmar Kyat. At the time of this analysis 1 Myanmar Kyat = 0.00085 USD.

Self-efficacy

Question (1)	My Future is driven by my destiny	71.77%
	My Future is Driven by my own effort.	28.23%
Question (2)	My Future is Driven by powerful others.	13.72 %
	My Future is Driven by my own effort.	86.28 %

Agency and Pathways

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Obs.
COMPONENTS OF HOPE SCALE			
Q_1: If I were to find myself in a jam, I could think of many ways to get out of it.	6.21	2.89	503
Q_2: At the present time, I am energetically pursuing my goals.	8.04	2.32	503
Q_3: There are lots of ways around any problem I am facing right now.	6.42	2.93	503
Q_4: Right now, I see myself as being pretty successful.	4.48	2.69	503
Q_5: I can think of many ways to reach my current goals.	6.62	2.76	502
Q_6: At this time, I am meeting the goals that I have set for myself.	6.89	2.75	503
AGGREGATED HOPE SCORES			
Agency sub-score $[(Q_2+Q_4+Q_6) / 3]$	6.47	1.74	503
Pathways sub-score $[(Q_1+Q_3+Q_5) / 3]$	6.42	2.18	502
Hope total-score $[(Q_1+Q_2+Q_3+Q_4+Q_5+Q_6) / 6]$	6.45	1.69	502

Notes: Each question, and each aggregated score, has a minimum of 0 and a maximum of 10.

Integrated Classifications

	Agency		
	Low	High	
High	*"Low-will High Aspiration"* **5.76%**	*"Aspirational Hope"* **33.00%**	High
	"Wishful Hope" **5.76%**	*"Low-ways High Aspiration"* **6.36%**	Low
Low	*"Low-will Low Aspiration"* **4.17%**	*"Low Aspiration Hope"* **28.03%**	High
	"Hopeless" **7.35%**	*"Low-ways Low Aspiration"* **10.13%**	Low

Aspirations (left axis) · Pathways (right axis)

Implications (1 of 3)

- Key principle: We argue that hope has value both *intrinsically* and *instrumentally*
  - It is both good to be hopeful and being hopeful allows for more good to be achieved

Implications (2 of 3)

- Importance of enhanced rural educational systems
  - Additional analysis of this data find that educational attainment is a meaningful correlate with both aspirations and the hope scale (Bloem and Boughton 2017)
  - There is potential for a positive feedback-loop between hope and education

Implications (3 of 3)

- As stated by the psychologist Albert Bandura:
  - "Failure to address the psychological determinants of human behavior is often the weakest link in social policy initiatives. Simply providing ready access to resources does not mean that people will take advantage of them" (The Psychologist, 2009).

Conclusions

- Further investigation into the impact of hope on development is needed, as there is no other comparable data on this area in Myanmar.

- Education is necessary to ensure that people have capacity to aspire and believe in the power of their own efforts for the success of their future, in addition to/ rather than their destiny.

Thank you