

# # 5481128824: MAJOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STUDIES  
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ASHLEY ELIZABETH PRITCHARD: A RISING TIDE LIFTS ALL BOATS?: THE IMPACT OF TOURISM ON LIVELIHOODS AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN NGWE SAUNG, MYANMAR. ADVISOR: ASSISTANT PROFESSOR NITI PAWAKAPAN, PH.D., CO-ADVISOR: MICHAEL GEORGE HAYES, PH.D. 147 PP.

Myanmar, a country that only officially opened its borders to tourists in 1996, has a new level of visibility amongst international travelers with the recent political transformations and lifting of both U.S. and E.U. sanctions. The government of Myanmar has officially adopted tourism development as one of its economic priorities, recognizing it as one of its biggest potential growth areas in the near term future.

Myanmar represents an important case study in tourism development and human rights because of its historic isolation to foreigners, its poor track record on human rights, and the relatively new open door policy to tourism. This paper examines the impact of the tourism industry on the local people of Ngwe Saung, a coastal town in western Myanmar. This paper challenges the theory of modernization which attests that tourism developments produced by the rich will trickle down to benefit the poor in aspects of improving livelihoods and more importantly, ensuring social and economic human rights. The research used a qualitative design, including 100 personal interviews, expert interviews from those in the tourism industry, and a small survey of villagers from Ngwe Saung. A key priority of this research is to determine how tourism impacts the daily life of a local villager and if livelihood and rights have been advanced by the development of tourism.

Key findings from this study indicate that after the initial shock of the land seizure individuals from the Ngwe Saung community of all ages, occupations and ethnic groups experienced a positive increase in sustainable livelihoods through increased job opportunity and additional income, but to varying degrees. 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 above subsistence which was otherwise unattainable without the jobs and income that tourism generated. These benefits are mainly due to inputs from the tourism industry itself, and not government assistance.

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