World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim's Remarks at a Press Conference in Myanmar

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World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim
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North Dagon Township Hospital, Yangon, Myanmar

Transcript

DR KIM: I'd like to thank the people of Myanmar for the very warm welcome I've received today on my arrival. I'm a doctor by professional training so I was particularly pleased to have the opportunity to visit the township hospital in Hlaing Thar Yar with the minister of health, Dr Pe Thet Khin and to learn more about Myanmar's challenges on its path to universal health coverage.

I believe that everyone should have access to affordable quality health care service and I'm very happy to learn that the government of Myanmar believes exactly the same thing.

With less than two years to go until the Millennium Development Goals deadline we need to focus on extending access to vital services especially for poor women and children.

No one should be forced into poverty or be forced to remain in poverty in order to pay for the health care they need.

Today I'm happy to announce that the World Bank Group plans to invest US$2 billion to support key development priorities in Myanmar including dramatically improving access to health care and energy for all.

This includes funding of around US$200 million from the International Development Association which is the Bank's fund for the poorest countries to help Myanmar make
progress toward Millennium (Development) Goals four, five and six on child mortality, maternal health and diseases such as HIV, AIDS and malaria.

It also includes US$1 billion in financial support to expand electricity generation, transmission and distribution to help everyone in the country gain access to electricity by 2030 which will have broad developmental benefits for health, education and will also expand opportunities for business in urban as well as rural areas.

The energy investment will support development of a national electrification plan.

It will also enhance institutional capacity and promote regulatory reforms that are needed to promote private sector participation which is critical to meet Myanmar's vast development needs. Thank you very much and I'm happy to take a few questions.

QUESTION: My question is you mentioned that US$1 billion is [unclear] energy and … Rest of 1 million for education … health centre.

DR KIM: There are several different - it's 1 billion for energy, 200 for health and there are other programs that beyond both health and energy. Today I'm just stressing two of the major efforts which are health and energy.

QUESTION: [Unclear]. According to your US$ 2 billion development … Let me know how do you monitor and … [Unclear] government sector?

DR KIM: Over the 70 year history of the existence of the World Bank Group we have developed very rigorous ways of ensuring that money is spent effectively. So both in the government, through procurement contracts, even in the private sector we have a very stringent set of safeguards and we also audit every single project. So we're very confident that this $2 billion will be spent well but at the same time we will also be monitoring and verifying very carefully exactly where the money goes.

QUESTION: [Unclear] 75% of the real … of the quality health … before 2030 your project. How do you support or reduce the quality health care for … or the 75% of the people?

DR KIM: I've been extremely impressed. I had a chance to talk extensively with the minister of health. Very impressed with him as a person and also his understanding of the needs of the health care system, here in Myanmar. As a medical doctor also I have a special interest
in ensuring that people have access to health care. I think that expanding access to health care will be one of the ways of really making very firm the social contract between the government and the people. The government believes that and I think that people are demanding access to hire quality care. I just came from Davos.

At Davos, the meeting, we did a session that focusses specifically on the value of investing in health care. As much as 25% of the economic growth of many countries over the last few decades had been a result of improving health outcomes and so we believe that investing in health is one of the best investments that can be made here in Myanmar. The key is to make sure that everyone is aligned and moving in the same direction. That there's one single plan for the improvement of health care in this country. We are going to do at the World Bank Group everything we can to ensure that that plan is in place at that all the different donors are moving in the same direction.

QUESTION: Yeah, the last question [unclear]. How did it … and … the feedback … the prime minister of … We … discussion …

DR KIM: We discussed everything from very specific aspects of tuberculosis treatment. I spent much of my life being a tuberculosis physician so everything from the very specifics of treatment regimens to the structuring of the entire health care system. As I said before health is one of the best investments that developing countries can make. Not only because it's the right thing to do for the people because it supports economic growth in the medium and the long term. So we have great hopes and great aspirations for the health care system here. After meeting the minister I am even more excited about the possibilities.

He's an extremely wise and visionary person who, I think, under his leadership if we can get all the different donors together we can have tremendous improvements and outcomes. Thank you very much.