

## SUMMARY

Indawgyi Lake in Kachin State, located in the northern part of Myanmar, is the largest inland freshwater lake of the country with a rich aquatic flora and fauna, rich biodiversity and is still a largely intact ecosystem. Since 1999, the area has been declared as the “Indawgyi Wetland Bird Sanctuary”. Around the lake area eleven village tracts with 38 villages consists with a little more than 50,000 population. However, the socio-economic development of the area is hampered by the protracted unstable political situation and by factors caused by its peripheral location. These factors resulted in poor administrative structures and infrastructure deficits. At the same time the local population, depending heavily on the natural resources, is facing mounting challenges, some of which are internal, others also externally influenced, such as an increasing population (partly due to in-migration) and the rising exploitation of natural resources. Deficits in handling environmental issues are evident. In general, research on the potentials of the area is absent.

These facts and the growing importance of a sustainable development in today’s globalized world have led to apply the concept of endogenous development as intellectual base for this study. The research aim – finding out the potentials of the area and discussing possible development paths – can be subdivided into three objectives: 1) investigating the present socio-economic conditions (demographic, social, infrastructure, economic, governance and conservation aspects) of the Indawgyi Lake Area; 2) investigating how the local people evaluate the current situation and the future development; 3) based on the results, identifying and discussing the potentials of the region for future development in detail. Especially solutions for current critical aspects and future threats are discussed, as well as ideas for ways and means to develop eco-tourism in the area.

The empirical work was conducted in two phases in 2014 and 2015 using a mixed method approach. The quantitative primary data were collected applying a questionnaire for a total of 216 households in ten villages around the Indawgyi Lake. These data were analysed using SPSS. To get qualitative data altogether 54 experts were interviewed and field observation and participant observation methods were applied. The interview data were analysed using MAXQDA. The results of the quantitative and qualitative analyses were combined by triangulation and interpreted based on the SWOT concept.

Main economic activities are agriculture, fishery and gold mining. One of the current challenges of the agricultural sector is a sub-optimal land use management (e.g. monoculture cropping systems). Challenges of the fishery sector are overfishing, ignoring the closed season and practicing illegal fishing methods. In the gold mining sector visible and invisible impacts can be mentioned as current and future threats. For instance, sedimentation can be observed in the lake. Other visible threats like drug use and health problems are predominant in the mining area. As an invisible and a future threat mercury contamination can be pointed out, because mercury is used in gold extraction.

Imbalances in the migration patterns, which have negative impacts on development, can be found in the area. The area offers unskilled labour opportunities in the mining and fishery sectors. Simultaneously people, who are educated, have to leave the area and look for qualified jobs in other parts of Myanmar resulting in a brain drain for the region. Currently, a big threat for the area is the unstable political situation including ethnic armed conflicts. Peace negotiations between ethnic armed groups and central government are underway since 2012.

The identified challenges are discussed sector by sector and possible solutions are described. For example, how adverse effects of the monoculture cropping system can be

mitigated, how overfishing can be prevented or how the brain drain process can be reduced. The economic development potentials are identified and discussed as for instance added value processes for farming, fishery and mining products, which are still underdeveloped due to lacks in infrastructure. Since 2013 upgrading of the main road has started and in 2015 electricity supply was established already for several villages. These are positive signs for future development. In particular, a focus is put on eco-tourism, which has not developed until now, as a fourth basic economic sector for the area.

However, also possible negative impacts of development need to be kept in mind. For instance, a better accessibility includes the threat, that the carrying capacity of the ecosystem of the area will be overstrained. Therefore, development of eco-tourism should be environmentally sound. However, the most important factor is to achieve a stable political situation, otherwise the development of the region cannot be moved forward successfully.