

Thematic Analysis 2011

Achieving the Millennium Development Goals in Myanmar



**United Nations
Country Team in
Myanmar**

Acknowledgements

This work is a collective effort of the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Myanmar, supported by the United Nations Development Group Asia Pacific (UNDG A-P) team in Bangkok.

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Foreword

Myanmar, with its dedicated and resilient human resources, favorable geographic location and rich variety of natural resources, has potential for growth. However, it remains one of the Least Developed Countries, ranked 132nd out of 169 countries in the 2010 Human Development Index. Serious concerns thus exist over poverty and equity issues.

The United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Myanmar is committed to continue to support Myanmar's equitable socio-economic development and inclusive growth, in partnership with the Government, non-Government organizations, civil society and other stakeholders. To do so most effectively, the UNCT has formulated this Thematic Analysis to analyze the development situation and trends in achievement of the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals, identifying challenges and root causes and assessing the potential for improvement.

The Thematic Analysis has guided identification and agreement on the UNCT strategic priorities for 2012-2015 and formulation of the United Nations Strategic Framework for the

same period. Under the Strategic Framework, United Nations Agencies, Funds and Programmes in Myanmar, as well as non-resident Agencies, Regional Commissions and other UN entities, will work with common goals and objectives and in partnership with development partners to meet the socio-economic and humanitarian needs of the people of Myanmar.

It is our hope that this Thematic Analysis also will contribute to an increased dialogue between national and international actors, leading to strengthened relationships based on respect, confidence and trust, to serve the people most in need of our support.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bishow Parajuli'.

Bishow Parajuli

UN Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator in Myanmar
from May 2008 to June 2011



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Map of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar



Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACEMEC	Ayeyarwaddy-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
BIMSTEC	Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical & Economic Cooperation
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CFS	Child Friendly Schools
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
ECE	Early Childhood Education
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia-Pacific
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
GMS	Greater Mekong Sub-Region
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICT	Information Communication and Technology
IHLCA	Integrated Household Living Conditions Assessment
IMR	Infant Mortality Rate
ITN	Insecticide-Treated Net
LDC	Least Developed Country
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MMR	Maternal Mortality Ratio
MNPED	Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development
MTEF	Mid-Term Expenditures Framework
NAPA	National Adaptation Programme of Action
NFE	Non-Formal Education
ODA	Official Development Assistance
ODS	Ozone Depleting Substances
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
3DF	Three Diseases Fund
TA	Thematic Analysis
TRIPS	Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
U5MR	Under-5 Mortality Rate
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
WHO	World Health Organization

Executive Summary

In this Thematic Analysis for Myanmar, the United Nations Country Team analyzes the current development situation in line with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the broader Millennium Declaration and begins to answer the question: Where and how can the United Nations have the most impact between 2012 and 2015 on accelerating and sustaining progress towards the MDGs in the country? In so doing, it points to key constraints to development while highlighting potential for improvement, particularly in areas that are off-track or making slow progress toward achievement of the MDGs by the global 2015 timeline.

The answers to the questions posed by the Thematic Analysis serve as the basis for identifying strategic priorities to inform the United Nations Strategic Framework for Myanmar for 2012-2015. Combining both national priorities and the urgency of accelerating MDG progress, four such strategic priorities will represent the focus of United Nations Country Team engagement in Myanmar during the relevant period:

- i. Encouraging inclusive growth, both rural and urban, including agricultural development and enhancement of employment opportunities
- ii. Increasing equitable access to quality social services
- iii. Reducing vulnerability to natural disasters and climate change
- iv. Promoting good governance and strengthening democratic institutions and rights

These strategic priorities emerge again and again throughout the analysis of underlying and root causes of remaining barriers to development progress in Myanmar. While they are not intended to be fully inclusive of all stakeholders' interventions, they do represent an explicit common response for MDG acceleration in which the United Nations Country Team offers important comparative advantages:

- (1) An enabling environment for implementation of international/national standards and commitments, including the setting of international norms and standards, employment of international expertise, and impartial policy advice, based on international experience and good practices;

- (2) Support to effective public administration and quality public services, particularly in emphasizing gender equality, capacity development, a participatory approach and national ownership;

- (3) Support to address inequalities and disparities, including a focus on vulnerable groups, combined with cross-sectoral technical expertise; and

- (4) Support to empowerment of civil society, based on knowledge sharing and strengthening stakeholders' capacity to engage in democratic processes.

Other key criteria for proposing these four strategic priorities are: priority national needs; potential for long-term impact on national goals; lessons learnt and good practices; and opportunities to strengthen both national capacities and international cooperation. For each of these areas, joint efforts are necessary: a network of public, private and civil society actors who can help clarify and develop norms, embark on integrated activities, and monitor performance.

Despite progress in some areas, Myanmar must accelerate its efforts if the MDGs and their targets are to be fully realized by 2015. The United Nations can do much to support a rights-based approach that underpins the development agenda, with a more concerted engagement of domestic and international partners alike – local governments and communities, international donors, the business community, the media and academia. In so doing, the United Nations can help the people of Myanmar capitalize on their potential as well as on unprecedented opportunities for sustainable human development.



Section I

Introduction

The Thematic Analysis (TA) is a strategic, evidence-based study to guide development priorities of not only the United Nations but also other development partners for the period 2012-2015. As such, it is independent of individual United Nations Agency and Member State agendas.

In preparing the Thematic Analysis, the United Nations Country Team is mindful of the need to work to accelerate the Republic of the Union of Myanmar's progress toward the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), given the 2015 global MDG deadline.

From the onset, the United Nations Country Team agreed to adopt a parallel approach to preparation of the Thematic Analysis and the United Nations Strategic Framework 2012-2015. Some assessment and analysis has already been done in the country; the TA thus draws upon national expertise on specific themes and builds upon available material, in line with the MDGs and the broader Millennium Declaration, which points to barriers to development yet highlights potential for improvement. In turn, this will inform United Nations Country Team efforts to collectively focus on off-track and slow-progress areas.

This Thematic Analysis was prepared after a number of consultations with the Government, including several meetings between the United Nations Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator and key Ministers (Planning; Foreign Affairs; Agriculture; Education; Forestry; Health) and Secretary of State 1. As a result, 12 Ministries appointed focal points, a number of them at Director General level, to engage with the United Nations in its strategic planning process. At their first meeting, these focal points were oriented to the United Nations' global strategic planning processes in general, as well as to specific goals and objectives in the context of Myanmar. Follow-up meetings were held with individual Government focal points on technical issues, particularly related to data, which enabled important access to data collected by the Ministries that can help guide strategic initiatives.

A team of national consultants, with expertise on health, education, agriculture and food security, population, monitoring and evaluation, and environment and climate change, prepared Technical Background Papers on each of the eight MDGs, with technical support from relevant United Nations Agencies and the United Nations Development Group Asia Pacific team.

Critically, analysis of the status of MDGs has led to identification of four strategic priorities for UNCT engagement in Myanmar during 2012-2015:

- i. Encouraging inclusive growth, both rural and urban, including agricultural development and enhancement of employment opportunities
- ii. Increasing equitable access to quality social services
- iii. Reducing vulnerability to natural disasters and climate change
- iv. Promoting good governance and strengthening democratic institutions and rights

These are fully consistent with the emerging analysis. For each thematic area, the Thematic Analysis offers a brief situation analysis as well as examines continued barriers to accelerating progress. In summary, development priorities and United Nations comparative advantages in supporting Myanmar to address constraints toward achieving the MDGs are delineated.



Section II

Analysis of Key Issues

2.1 Country Context

In its national strategies and vision, Myanmar aims to build an economically developed nation that exceeds the human development targets of the MDGs. The country has achieved economic growth since adopting a market-oriented system in 1988, with trade soaring by more than a factor of 20 by 2009-2010.¹ Growth rates have been moderate,² combined with a continuous trade surplus in recent years, reduced inflation,³ and relatively minor impacts from the global financial crisis.

At the same time, Myanmar retains a huge natural resource endowment and has seen recent improved performance in the agricultural sector, which remains dominant.⁴ Myanmar's strategic location between South and South East Asia – which some prominent observers deem “likely to be the most pros-

perous region in the world in the next decade”⁵ – further gives it potential growth momentum, although growth of the industrial and service sectors remains limited because of numerous constraints and will need to be encouraged for longer-term, sustainable economic development.

The population of Myanmar was estimated at 57.5 million in 2007-2008, with an annual growth rate of 1.52 percent.⁶ Ethnic minorities constitute about 15 percent of the total population, while two-thirds of people live in rural areas. Myanmar's population is in the last stages of a demographic transition, with a decline in the proportion of those younger than 15 and an increase in the proportion of working age (15-59) and elderly (60 and older). This too presents an important demographic



window of opportunity; job creation to absorb the increasing working-age population could result in economic growth and increased Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita, if taken advantage of by appropriate economic planning and investment in human capital.

Yet while economic growth is critically important for Myanmar, it is the pattern of such growth that will determine its sustainability and its promotion of stability. Human development conditions in the country remain low despite recent improvements, and sub-national inequalities remain substantial. The global Human Development Report 2010 ranks Myanmar 132nd out of 169 countries, with a Human Development Index of 0.451. This places it behind other neighbouring countries, including Thailand (92), Viet Nam (113), Lao PDR (122), Cambodia (124) and Bangladesh (129). The gap between urban and rural development is increasing. Most poor people, many of them smallholder farmers or agricultural labourers, live in rural areas and face multiple challenges,⁷ including low education and limited access to factors of production, such as land, capital, credit, technology, information and basic social services. The poor are also highly vulnerable to internal as well as external economic shocks.

The poor in rural areas cannot sustain their livelihoods in the absence of a significant change in the current local context. Lack of access to basic social and economic services and a supportive environment for boosting income level are some of the factors that will lead to inevitable migration of rural communities to urban areas, placing pressure on towns and cities. This is also evidenced regionally by the rapid urbanization of Asia's population that has taken place over the past 60 years or so.⁸

Overall, development deficits include an inadequate pattern of growth and remunerative employment opportunities; low level of agricultural, industrial and service sector productivity resulting from absence of market-oriented policies and lack of technological advancement and investment; continued prevalence of multi-dimensional poverty and pockets of food insecurity; inadequate coverage and quality of social services; and

incomplete policies, programming and participatory frameworks.

Nevertheless, in light of the country's relative international isolation and its receipt of the lowest level of Official Development Assistance (ODA) among all Least Developed Countries (LDCs), human development indicators might have been much more severely compromised in the absence of two factors. First, Buddhist monasteries – supported by the communities – provide a social security system that does not exist in most countries, ensuring minimum shelter, food and education. Second, systems of traditional medicine also help to balance gaps in public health systems. These too demonstrate Myanmar's abundant development potential.

The timing of this TA is particularly strategic, given the fact that recent stirrings of internal dynamism indicate that Myanmar is on the threshold of possible significant change. With the 2015 deadline for achievement of the MDGs on the horizon, the need for MDG acceleration in the country is critical. Myanmar faces important dilemmas in promoting progress: how to resolve tradeoffs of economic growth versus sustainable management of natural resources such as forests and oil; continued reliance on forced labour and low-paid, unpaid or child labour; and challenges of global engagement amid international sanctions. At the same time, the availability, quality and reliability of development data also remain strong concerns.

The development goals strategically prioritized by the TA are synergistic, interlinked and crosscutting. It will be critical for the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) to recognize and leverage Myanmar's advantages in human development areas that are more on track to meet MDG targets, such as gender equality and environment, while focusing on areas that remain off track or exhibiting only slow progress. Where progress is good, the aim must be to minimize the risk of reversals in current achievements, as recommended in MDG Acceleration Framework.⁹ In so doing, high-impact solutions and focused action can help Myanmar to potentially transform slower rates of progress on some MDGs to realistically reach its targets by 2015.

¹Trade data of Ministry of Commerce. Myanmar showed foreign trade values of US\$400 million in 1988-89 and \$11.8 billion in 2009-10.

²Officially reported at more than 10 percent annually since 2000, although international sources point to more moderate rates of 3 to 5 percent (Asian Development Bank, Annual Report 2010).

³From more than 20 percent to less than 10 percent. Central Statistical Organization, Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development (MNPED), Statistical Yearbooks 2000 and 2008 and UNDP, Myanmar Economic Management and Poverty Issues, 2007.

⁴Contributing more than 40 percent of GDP and 20 percent of total

exports, and employing some two-thirds of the total labour force.

⁵Joseph E. Stiglitz, "Toward a More Productive Agrarian Economy for Myanmar," paper presented at the Second Myanmar Development Forum, Nay Pyi Taw, 15 December 2009.

⁶Statistical Year Book 2009, Central Statistic Office.

⁷Noeleen Heyzer, "ESCAP-Myanmar Partnership: Regional Support for Inclusive and Sustainable Development," in ESCAP/Government of Myanmar Development Partnership Forum: Economic Policies for Growth and Poverty Reduction, December 2009.

⁸The State of Asian Cities 2010 report.

2.2 Achieving MDG1:

Accelerating Progress Toward Reducing Poverty and Food Insecurity

To realize the poverty target of MDG1, more comprehensive and dynamic pro-poor and inclusive development strategies will need to be formulated and implemented, with immediate effect.



2.2.1 Introduction

Poverty and food insecurity remain two of the most pressing challenges for Myanmar as it works to achieve inclusive, sustainable development by 2015 under the MDGs. Myanmar has maintained growth at around 5 percent annually despite the global financial crisis, and has reduced the incidence of income poverty and food insecurity since 2005. It is taking steps towards promoting a pro-poor and inclusive “green growth” strategy, which has proven critical to many countries in combating poverty and eliminating food insecurity.¹⁰

At the same time, to achieve these goals it will need to significantly increase public spending on quality health and education services, as well as clean water and improved sanitation. In particular, measures will be needed to make these more inclusive and equitable, so that all social groups – irrespective of income, occupation, geographical location, race, ethnic group and gender – can access and use such services. Investment in rural development and the agricultural sector also will be critical. The country likewise will need to pay attention to crafting an ecologically sustainable development path without compromising its ability to create employment opportunities, while simultaneously upgrading technology and developing human resources. Crucially, Myanmar will need to invest more resources in strengthening capacities of the institutions of governance, as well as to undertake appropriate policy reforms to accelerate its achievements. Only then can long-term sustainability of progress on reducing poverty and food insecurity be assured.

2.2.2. Development Situation and Trends

Income poverty in Myanmar, as elsewhere in the Asia Pacific region, is a multifaceted phenomenon, with acute economic and social deprivations. Even so, declining trends in all poverty-related indicators are evident. A nationwide Integrated Household Living Conditions Assessment (IHLCA), the first of its kind in the country, showed that the national poverty headcount index in 2005 was about 32 percent, with rural poverty, at 36 percent, sharply higher than urban poverty, at 22 percent. By 2010, the most recent IHLCA showed a comparatively better performance of poverty-related indicators. Nationally, poverty fell to 25.6 percent, with rural poverty declining to 29.2 percent and urban poverty down to 15.7 percent. This represents a major gain within a short period of time;¹¹ Myanmar thus had a lower incidence of poverty in 2010 than comparable Asian LDCs, including Cambodia (30.1 percent),

Bangladesh (40 percent) and Lao PDR (33.5 percent) in 2008.¹² Other poverty indicators also offer promise: The poverty gap ratio – which shows the aggregate income deficit of the poor to the poverty line – has been substantially reduced, from 7 percent in 2005 to 4 percent in 2010, as revealed by the IHLCA surveys.

Regional experience suggests that remittances sent home by migrant workers can play a significant role in reducing poverty and improving other indicators of human development, through increased consumption and investments in housing, health and education. An increasing number of Myanmar workers are sending remittances home, even as total remittances worldwide have reached unprecedented high levels, far surpassing ODA and foreign direct investment.

Myanmar’s performance in reducing poverty during the last several years has important implications for achieving MDG1 by 2015. If the MDG poverty target is set at 16 percent in 2015 – half of the IHLCA 2005¹³ – and if current trends continue, then the country needs to reduce poverty by yet another nine percentage points to reach the target in time (Figure 1). At the same time, inequality remains high, which may make growth strategies less effective in reducing poverty.¹⁴

To realize the poverty target of MDG1, more comprehensive and dynamic pro-poor and inclusive development strategies will need to be formulated and implemented, with immediate effect. In turn, these will need to give sufficient attention to reducing sub-national as well as gender inequalities and full and effective participation of all stakeholders. Additional attention also is required to revitalize the rural economy through rural development programmes and other policy initiatives to bridge the rural-urban gap. The demographic trend across all of Asia- and Myanmar is no exception- is the migration of rural populations to urban areas in search of better education opportunities, better health services and alternative skills to revitalize their livelihoods. Addressing the rural-urban poverty gap will also have to take into consideration the increased

⁹ UNDP, *Unlocking Progress: MDG Acceleration on the Road to 2015*, September 2010. The MDG Acceleration Framework assists countries to develop their own action plans by systematically identifying and addressing bottlenecks to MDG progress. <http://www.undp.org/mdg/reports/shtml>

¹⁰ See the proceedings of the ESCAP/Government of Myanmar, Development Partnership Forum: Economic Policies for Growth and Poverty Reduction, December 2009 for a discussion on some of these issues in the context of Myanmar.

¹¹ MNPED and UNDP, *IHLCA 2010*.

¹² UNDP, *Human Development Report 2010*.

pressure placed on Myanmar towns and cities and in anticipation, develop adequate strategies and programmes that enhance urban-rural linkages through provision of environmentally sound basic infrastructure, expansion of safer settlements with sufficient emphasis on ensuring adequate housing, water sanitization facilities and other utilities. Enhancing local capacities for sustainable urban planning will negate the possibilities of such economic migrants living in slums and contribute to the achievement of MDG 7.

At the same time, remaining urban development challenges include inadequate urban planning, poor service and utilities delivery, and expanding informal settlements. Settlements planning done today is likely to lock cities and towns in development consumption patterns for the next 20 or 30 years. How cities invest and manage income generating opportunities, education and health services for the rapidly increasing urban population will determine levels of poverty and inequality and influence cities' livability and stability.¹⁵ Because poverty and food insecurity generally have a disproportionate impact on women and children, this implies that gender concerns and children's issues must be incorporated in formulating such initiatives. Significant strengthening of readily and adequately available employment-related data – based on which pro-employment policies and programmes can be drawn – also is urgent.

Trends in food poverty somewhat reflect the broad trends in income poverty in Myanmar. The IHLCA surveys 2005 and 2010 also showed that national food poverty fell sharply, from 10 to 4.8 percent, with rural food poverty declining from 11 to 5.6 percent and urban food poverty down from 6 to 2.5 percent.¹⁶ Myanmar thus managed to halve food poverty within five years, even as urban food poverty declined at a higher rate – again indicating the need for additional pro-poor and pro-rural policy initiatives.

Myanmar has identified protein energy malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies (including iron deficiency anaemia, iodine deficiency disorders, and Vitamin A deficiency) as its major nutritional problems. With successive improvement in the prevalence of underweight children under age five years, the country is potentially on track to reduce such prevalence to a target of 19.3 percent by 2015, but further intensive interventions are required. In addition, many people in Myanmar are undernourished because they do not consume enough calories; moreover, satisfactory national averages hide significant variations by region and income group. To achieve this target by 2015, more targeted interventions for narrowing regional

disparities and developing of additional safety nets will be necessary.

In attaining food security, agriculture and production of food crops have featured in Myanmar's strategy. The Government abolished the state procurement system, has taken steps toward commercialization of agriculture, and has overseen transformative changes from monocropping to production of multiple crops. As a result, sown area, crop production and exports more than doubled in 20 years,¹⁷ and food insecurity has been declining.

However, although the agricultural sector possesses immense potential to develop as an epicentre for poverty reduction and elimination of food insecurity, major constraints continue to hold back its development. These include low investment; insufficient rural physical and social infrastructure; inadequate agricultural loans; lack of microcredit; low utilization of improved seeds and fertilizers; high wastage; inefficient land policy, including low levels of security with regard to land use rights, tenure and ownership; and limited access to market and information networks.¹⁸

2.2.3 Key Barriers to Accelerating Poverty Reduction and Food Security

Lack of a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy

Although the Government has implemented several rural development programmes in the last two decades, none had poverty reduction as an explicit goal. This has led to a proliferation of sporadic and fragmented projects. The country also lacks public safety net programmes, even though targeted programmes like school feeding, food for work, and feeding for vulnerable groups are delivered by humanitarian organizations. As the experience of neighbouring countries such as Bangladesh, Cambodia, Lao PDR and Viet Nam shows, these types of Government programmes are essential components for any poverty reduction strategy to succeed.

Inadequate access to food

Access to food, determined by food prices, purchasing power of households, production, functioning markets and physical access, is a critical factor determining poverty and hunger outcomes in Myanmar. Although a food surplus exists and the growth trend in most of the main food items is satisfactory, access to food remains a huge challenge for some parts

of Myanmar, especially in remote, hilly regions and drought-prone areas.

The IHLCA surveys 2005 and 2010 indicated that Chin, Shan (East and North), Kachin, Kayah and Rakhine suffered from a relatively high incidence of food poverty, with limited access to productive assets. Most are considered food-deficit regions, despite traditional and widely practiced safety nets such as provision of food and social services by monastic schools and donations. According to WFP studies in 2009 and 2010, access to food was the main factor behind food insecurity in Chin, Kachin, Shan (North), Northern Rakhine and Magwe regions.¹⁹ In turn, major causes of food insecurity in these regions arise from low agricultural productivity; limited access to productive assets; limited diversification of household economies; low wages and income; high food prices, partly due to high transportation costs; and high prevalence of shocks including natural disasters.

Disparities at sub-national level and cumulative effects of poverty and social deprivations

Despite Myanmar's poverty reduction at national level, disparities remain wide between different states and regions. In the poorest state in the country, Chin, poverty stood at 72 percent and food poverty at 40 percent in 2005, as opposed to 12 percent and 2 percent respectively in Kayin, where international remittances appear to be a factor in relatively lower poverty.

At the same time, inequalities between areas with the lowest and highest incidence of poverty have widened even further since 2005. For example, in 2005 the average number of poor people was 2.75 times higher in the four states and regions with the highest incidence of poverty than those with the lowest incidence; by 2010, this had grown to 3.69 times higher. Disparities in food poverty are similar.

All this implies that poverty and food insecurity reduction efforts are still limited in the worse-off states and regions of Myanmar, which often are remote and have limited access to cultivable land, microcredit, capital, technology, information and basic social services. Again, more inclusive growth strategies could help address the issue.

Many of the residents of these areas are members of ethnic minorities, and as such, disproportionately suffer not only deprivations related to physical remoteness, but also low levels of education and poor health. Lack of these basic services make poverty and social deprivations mutually reinforcing,

with disparities in poverty and hunger between better-off and worse-off areas accelerated by existing vulnerability factors and meagre coping mechanisms of vulnerable households.

Inadequate data and information

Until recently, Myanmar had very limited data on poverty and food insecurity. During the last few years, four independent household surveys on income, expenditure and livelihoods have been carried out by the Government in cooperation with the UN; likewise, several food security assessments, including the first Crop and Food Assessment, have been conducted. However, more in-depth surveys are needed to understand the true nature of income- and non-income poverty in the country.

2.2.4. Development Priorities for Accelerating Poverty Reduction and Food Security

Promoting inclusive growth, inclusive finance and agriculture-based development

Despite Myanmar's economic growth, poverty and hunger still exist in the country. These issues cannot be tackled without more broad-based, pro-poor economic growth, with a special focus on agriculture – still the main economic sector – and transformation of the rural economy. Thus, inclusive growth²⁰ – based on growth that not only creates new economic opportunities but also ensures equal access for all, including the poor and vulnerable, to the opportunities created by the growth process – needs to be at the centre of Myanmar's development strategy to steadily increase the share of consumption of the poor and accelerate achievement of MDG1.

Severe poverty and food insecurity in remote and hilly regions particularly must be addressed, including through inclusive finance opportunities, essential for purchase of high-quality agricultural inputs. A well-functioning microcredit market, for example, can enable poor communities living in remote areas to use innovative information technologies such as mobile phones to overcome some of the disadvantages associated with remoteness. Other strategies to galvanize agriculture-led

¹³ Ordinarily a 1990 baseline is used, however in Myanmar's case 2005 is used as a baseline due to data availability.

¹⁴ According to the ILHCA 2005, the share of the poorest quintile of the population in national consumption stood at only about 12.2 percent of total consumption expenditure.

¹⁵ 'Cities of Opportunity: Partnerships for an inclusive and sustainable future' –Fifthe Asia-Pacific Urban Forum

¹⁶ MNPED and UNDP, IHLCA 2005 and 2010.

pro-poor growth may include:²¹

- i. Invest in physical infrastructure and connectivity, particularly connecting rural areas to cities/townships (roads, irrigation, electricity), enhancing urban-rural linkages as part of a comprehensive and inclusive urban development strategy
- ii. Institute legal structures that provide security of property rights, particularly to the poor and vulnerable, and promote land reform
- iii. Encourage small-scale farming and improved agricultural marketing
- iv. Restructure rural debt and underscore social safety nets to protect vulnerable groups in lean times
- v. Promote of non-agricultural rural employment
- vi. Develop and promote tourism

With regard to inclusive finance, the Government can use regional experience in devising suitable inclusive financial mechanisms and instruments, including microcredit facilities for poor and vulnerable groups, to offset poor people's dependence on informal credit at terms and conditions that significantly contribute to their indebtedness. It also can improve the effectiveness of microcredit by investing more in infrastructure, including Information and Communication Technology (ICT), and putting in place a suitable regulatory framework. An important part of an effective inclusive finance programme is the involvement of non-government organizations (NGOs), community-based groups and the private sector in organizing the poor and delivering financial services to them.

In addition, Myanmar, along with other countries in the region, will increasingly have to focus on domestic and intra-regional demand as a source of growth; for example, China already has capitalized in this respect by forging links with the Myanmar economy. The poor, if taken out of their poverty and deprivations, provide a potentially vast domestic market for sustaining such a growth strategy. The Government likewise will need to ensure that "green growth" is further pursued, decoupling inclusive development from the potential creation of undue environmental stress.

Providing quality social services and social protection

Provision of quality basic services, at affordable prices, is vitally needed for reducing poverty and overcoming other social deprivations. Currently, many people in Myanmar must spend their own funds on such services or forgo them if their incomes are too low or access is limited. Public revenues from extractive

industries could be set aside to further finance the provision of basic social services. In designing policies and programmes for raising its contribution, the Government needs to pay careful attention to improving governance, including enhancing efficiency, ensuring policy coherence, setting standards and strengthening regulations, increasing voice and participation of poor and marginalized groups, promoting decentralized service provision wherever feasible, and investing in data and information for better targeting. Diversification of the range of services offered also is critical.

In addition, Myanmar will need to put in place social protection measures with a view to protecting poor and vulnerable groups from internal and external shocks. Myanmar can be in a better position to reduce poverty and achieve other MDGs by 2015 by offering a minimum social floor that takes care of extreme poverty and food insecurity and income insecurity. Over time, it can invest in a comprehensive social protection programme that can minimize or attenuate the risks and vulnerability arising from economic crises and natural disasters. Such a programme likewise can assist in removing the poor's precautionary motive for savings and enlarge the domestic market by stimulating their consumption. A comprehensive social protection system can also go a long way in breaking inter-generational cycles of poverty and food insecurity as well as reducing disparities at sub-national levels. Any such programme should be gender-responsive and include those working in the informal sector.

Developing small and medium enterprises

Development of agro-based small and medium enterprises (SMEs) can provide wider access to decent work for women, youth and other vulnerable groups. At the same time, development of such SMEs needs continued, predictable provision of credit facilities; information on markets; appropriately trained and skilled workers; infrastructure development, including a regular supply of electricity; and improved supply chain management. The Government will need to work with the private sector in devising a comprehensive support programme for agro-based SME development so that these enterprises can play an increasing role in promoting employment and reducing poverty.

Managing remittances to reduce poverty

Several countries in the region have emerged as top remittance earners, and Myanmar has the potential to join them, thereby helping its poor people to overcome poverty and other forms of deprivations, particularly in rural and remote

areas. The Government can take several measures to derive full advantage from this important resource, including increasing the access of poor migrant workers and their families to formal financial institutions. Allowing microcredit institutions and credit unions to transfer funds to rural households could significantly reduce high transaction costs. Given the current situations that a great many Myanmar migrant workers (2-3 million) are in an irregular situation in the region and most of their remittances seem to focus on survival needs of the families, a number of parallel measures could be helpful in looking into this eventual development potential. Investing in the skills of migrant workers, expanding government-to-government liaison (such as the existing dialogue with Thailand) with neighbouring countries to increase opportunities for regular international migration of Myanmar workers within the ASEAN region, and developing measures to assure the protection of workers during the migration process could have the overall effect of strengthening and diversifying employment opportunities for the country's workforce.

Reducing vulnerability to climate change and natural disasters

Regional experience suggests that poor and vulnerable groups bear a disproportionate cost of the consequences of climate change and natural disasters. Because the poor depend primarily on resource-based activities, including agriculture, fisheries and forestry, for their livelihoods, climate change consequences affecting these activities also adversely affect the poor more than others. Poor and marginal farmers in Myanmar's Dry Zone

are particularly vulnerable to changes in weather patterns that affect agriculture. The Government will benefit from undertaking comprehensive measures to assess the likelihood of the various climate change consequences and adopt appropriate measures, including strengthening adaption and mitigation measures and putting in place an effective natural disaster risk management system. Government also may wish to explore options for international cooperation in mitigating the climate change consequences.

Upgrading data and information systems

As the economy of Myanmar grows in complexity and its people come to expect that the Government will be a key player in the provision of social services, it is vital to strengthen data and information management systems to contribute to effective policymaking. In particular, an urgent need exists to upgrade the system of national accounts, conduct the population and agricultural censuses, and improve the MDG data set, as well as invest in improving the overall statistical capacity of the country.

¹⁷ Central Statistical Organization, MNPED, op. cit.

¹⁸ Stiglitz, op.cit.

¹⁹ WFP carried out various food security assessments and surveys in Kachin, Wa, Laishio, Magwe, Northern Rakhine, and Delta area in 2009 and Kokang in 2010.

²⁰ I. Ali and H. Hwa Jon, "Meeting Inclusive Growth," Asian Development Review, Vol. 24, No. 1, 2007.

²¹ Based on Stiglitz, op. cit.





2.3 Achieving MDG 2:

Strengthening Education for **Human Development Gains**

As in many low-income countries, the problems faced by the education sector in Myanmar reflect issues of governance, with a need for more policy openness, updated technical skills, decision making at decentralized levels, and civil society participation in school management. An urgent need exists to develop a costed medium-term action plan for the education sector, focusing on basic education, and to increase Government resources for basic education.

2.3.1. Introduction

Education is a right and is particularly crucial to Myanmar, given the country's young population and its history of placing high value on education and culture. It links closely to all other MDGs, as well as to economic growth, while promoting social cohesion and inclusion and providing Myanmar with qualified human resources. Moreover, it can contribute significantly to appropriate health-seeking behaviour and the support of environmental sustainability.

2.3.2. Development Situation and Trends

Myanmar has demonstrated key achievements in indicators for basic education targets during the decade 2000-2010.²² These include:

- i. Near-universal initial enrolment in primary school
- ii. Gender parity in enrolment in primary and secondary schools, although participation in tertiary education is significantly higher for females than males²³
- iii. Expansion of secondary education through the opening of post-primary schools
- iv. Inclusion of life skills education in the primary curriculum and pre-service teacher training
- v. Development of standards for Early Childhood Education (ECE) and Child Friendly Schools (CFS)
- vi. Expansion in the number of schools offering ECE and piloting of a Grade 1 transition curriculum in 12 townships

Basic education consists of primary (5 years), middle (4 years) and high schools (2 years) and is the responsibility not only of the Ministry of Education but also the Ministry of Development of Border Areas and National Races, in border and ceasefire areas, and the Ministry of Religious Affairs, which runs a system of monastic schools that continues to serve primarily poor children. Responsibility for higher education, in which most students study using a distance education modality, is shared among 13 Ministries.

A high priority has been given to expanding science and technology education in higher education, as well as to the use of ICTs at that level, for service delivery and skills development which are all costly endeavors. With the expanding secondary education system, the share of the education budget allocated to basic education has risen from 75 percent in 2005-06 to 88 percent in 2010-2011.²⁴ An increased number of teachers has in turn resulted in the primary school pupil-teacher ratio reducing from 30:1 to 25:1 between 2006 and 2010 alone.²⁵ These achievements provide a

basis for a level jump in quality, better alignment with employment prospects, and reduction in inequalities and gaps at sub-national levels.

Despite progress, however, deeply rooted challenges remain in the education sector. Considerable variations still exist between states and divisions in education sector performance. For example, the highest Net Enrolment Rate is reported in Kachin (94.8 percent) and the lowest in Shan (East) (61.2 percent).²⁶ Coverage rates of Early Childhood Education are low by regional standards; Ministry of Education data from 2008-2009 show a Gross Enrolment Ratio in ECE of around 20 percent.²⁷ The education sector also has been affected by years of underinvestment, isolation from international technical assistance, and poor communications in border areas. Access to education remains particularly constrained at secondary level despite expansion, with net enrolment at this level averaging only 46.4 percent during 2001-2010.

Critically, quality is an issue at all levels of education. An acute need exists to address the heavy reliance on rote memorization and low levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy skills.²⁸ Moreover, dropout rates in primary education are high, with a survival rate to grade 5 of only 77.6 percent;²⁹ although this represents an improvement, a large number of children are still dropping out, putting Myanmar at high risk of not achieving MDG2 for universal primary education. The mean years of schooling for adults stands just short of four years.³⁰ In addition, inequities are arising through the levying of user charges. While the Government has introduced a language enrichment programme for non-Myanmar-speaking children in some townships, the language policy does not permit instruction in languages of ethnic-minority children.

At the same time, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is mainly delivered post-basic education and is therefore limited in access. A key issue is the absorption of graduates by the labour market, as well as their readiness and qualifications to meet market needs; in particular, although females outnumber males in secondary education, their labour force participation remains very low, indicating a mismatch in the skills demand and supply of the economy. Moreover, the high unit costs of higher education represent a huge financial burden to the Government if graduates do not use their acquired skills in their employment.

²² At the same time, a comprehensive and fully disaggregated set of data on education is not available.

²³ The ratio of females to males in higher education was 193.96 percent in 2008-2009, according to the Ministry of Education, Education For All Country Progress Report 2010.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ The Education For All Fast Track Initiative suggests an international norm of 40:1.

A need also exists for a strong non-formal education (NFE) system to provide alternative education for the large population of school dropouts, and for programmes to support the continuing education of adults. However, current provision of NFE also is limited in coverage, provided primarily by local NGOs and international development organizations. No specific department of NFE exists in the Ministry of Education, a major limiting factor to quantitative expansion and qualitative improvement.

2.3.3. Key Barriers to Accelerating Strengthened Education

Education financing

While education has a high priority in national development, the resources allocated meet only a fraction of overall costs. The overall education budget is not shared publicly, and finances are fragmented among the 13 Ministries that run educational institutions. Even within the Ministry of Education, each department has its own functionally independent budget. Data on public expenditure for education are therefore difficult to obtain and estimates of levels need to be treated with caution. However, it is apparent that public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP is very low by international standards. It was estimated at between 0.6 and 1 percent in the previous decade, but appears to have increased to around 1.3 percent or more.

A direct consequence of the limited public allocations for education is substantial private expenditure at all levels, despite an official policy of free and compulsory primary education. An increasing amount of cash donations to the formal education sector is recorded by the Ministry of Education, from MMK 290 million (or USD xxx) in 2002-2003 to MMK 1,123 million (or USD xxx) in 2009-2010. Without such private contributions, the education system could well be imperiled. Direct costs are met by parents to purchase uniforms, textbooks, stationery and other supplies, with ostensibly voluntary contributions – including, in some cases, salaries of teachers and school maintenance – also applied.

The burden of private financing of basic education thus falls most heavily on poor households, with direct and opportunity costs to these households – including the need for children to contribute to agricultural livelihoods or care for siblings – proving a significant factor in school non-attendance and dropout. As a result, in

some areas more than 1 in 4 children are at least a year behind their expected school level, with some 13 percent behind by at least three years. Despite the high enrolment rate, nearly 30 percent of school-aged children did not attend school at all because of the cost burden.

Policy and management issues

Policy development for basic education, backed by analytical work to guide decision making and education reform, represents a key gap. Education sector planning is framed by the overarching 30-Year Long-Term Education Development Plan, but a detailed and costed action plan that can be used to develop a Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) is lacking.

In general, the system of education planning remains highly centralized and requires modernization. Attention needs to be paid to strengthening education management at all levels, particularly at school level. Civil society participation in school management remains very limited, despite high levels of parental financial support to school operations. The introduction of School Self Assessment processes and School Improvement Plans are steps in the right direction, but these will need to be strengthened and broadened in content and participation.

Learning outcomes and language policy represent two further important policy issues. Few data exist on learning outcomes, but UN assessments indicate that the performance of schools in selected townships is generally poor in delivering basic learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy. In Myanmar language, for example, most students would have failed if 50 percent had been the pass mark in standardized tests; speakers of other languages are significantly disadvantaged. In mathematics, only 21 percent of students achieved 50 percent of the competencies. Currently no standardized achievement tests can be used to help assess progress in improving learning outcomes at a systemic level. The equitable expansion of secondary education also remains a significant policy issue, given that demand for places currently exceeds supply.

Inclusive education has been given a higher priority by the Ministry of Education since 2004, although policy strengthening in this area is still required. Despite focus on the delivery of special education, a clear policy remains to be developed on the inclusion of children with disabilities.

²⁶ Ministry of Education, Education for All Mid-Decade Assessment Report 2007.

²⁷ Ministry of Education 2010, op. cit.

²⁸ As shown through the application of standardized tests in selected schools.

²⁹ 2008-2009 data.

³⁰ UNDP 2010, op. cit.

³¹ Education For All National Action Plan.

³² Ministry of Education 2010, op. cit.

³³ Tripartite Core Group, Post-Nargis Periodic Review II, 2009.

³⁴ Ministry of Education, That All Flowers May Bloom, 2005.

³⁵ Education For All National Action Plan.

³⁶ Church-based organizations provide a significant number of teachers and learning materials in these areas.

Issues with teacher placement and turnover

While most primary school teachers are qualified (95 percent, as reported in the Education For All National Action Plan), there is an urgent need to develop the quality of pre-service and in-service teacher education to positively affect education quality. In addition, there are serious difficulties in deploying and retaining teachers in remote school locations despite Ministry of Education incentives in the form of rice and housing. Teacher attrition and high turnover in remote areas represent important issues concerning educational quality and equity. Overall, providing education for displaced populations in conflict and post-conflict areas is one of the most challenging areas of service delivery, since children may attend ad hoc schools with few, if any, resources.

Low coverage in Early Childhood Education

ECE faces both issues of participation and equity. School-based ECE benefits mainly urban children, so that service delivery needs to be further targeted at the most disadvantaged communities and households, including remote communities. Issues of overcrowding and lack of appropriate teaching methods must be addressed, while implementation and monitoring of early childhood development standards will be critical. ECE policies require review.

Significant data and research gaps

Among the most significant challenges in education is the management of data, given that official data generally lack timeliness, reliability and comparability. Strengthening such resources, including the Education Management Information System (EMIS), would allow the Government's greater economic assessment capabilities to serve as a base for enhanced policymaking. Beyond the EMIS, very little education research and analytical work has been carried out to ensure that planning is evidence-based.

2.3.4. Development Priorities for Accelerating Strengthened Education

Improving education governance

As in many low-income countries, the problems faced by the education sector in Myanmar reflect issues of governance, with a need for more policy openness, updated technical skills, decision making at decentralized levels, and civil society participation in school management. An urgent need exists to develop a costed medium-term action plan for the education sector, focusing on basic education, and to increase Government resources for basic

education. Greater clarity is needed in the MTEF process and to ensure that key programmes are appropriately prioritized and funded. However, Myanmar may be able to learn from several Asian countries that have recently published how they implement MTEFs in education.

A comprehensive policy review will be beneficial, while strong focus must be given to improving learning outcomes in primary education, particularly in literacy and numeracy skills. The curriculum should be reviewed for content quality and gender stereotyping to support quality teaching and learning. At the same time, overall reform of pre-service and in-service teacher education and management is required to transform teaching practices, including for multi-grade teaching and special education. Likewise, shortages in teacher supply also require solutions, as does the need to build expertise in assessment practices and removal of financial barriers by way of a review of teacher remuneration and conditions of work.

Strengthening quality and equity of education

It will be crucial to reduce the high number of dropouts and narrow gaps across regions of Myanmar if quality and equity are to be attained under MDG2. Critically, practice of a child-centred approach must be strengthened and learning improved overall, with basic education linked with skills development for the world of work through curriculum reform. Community participation in school management needs to be enhanced, while strengthened NFE and continuing education services could provide alternative education for the large number of those who have already dropped out of school. Bilingual education for ethnic-minority children also could help them become literate in their mother tongue before they are required to become literate in the Myanmar language. Furthermore, secondary and higher education are accessed largely by the richest quintile of the population, which is a significant equity concern that would need to be addressed.

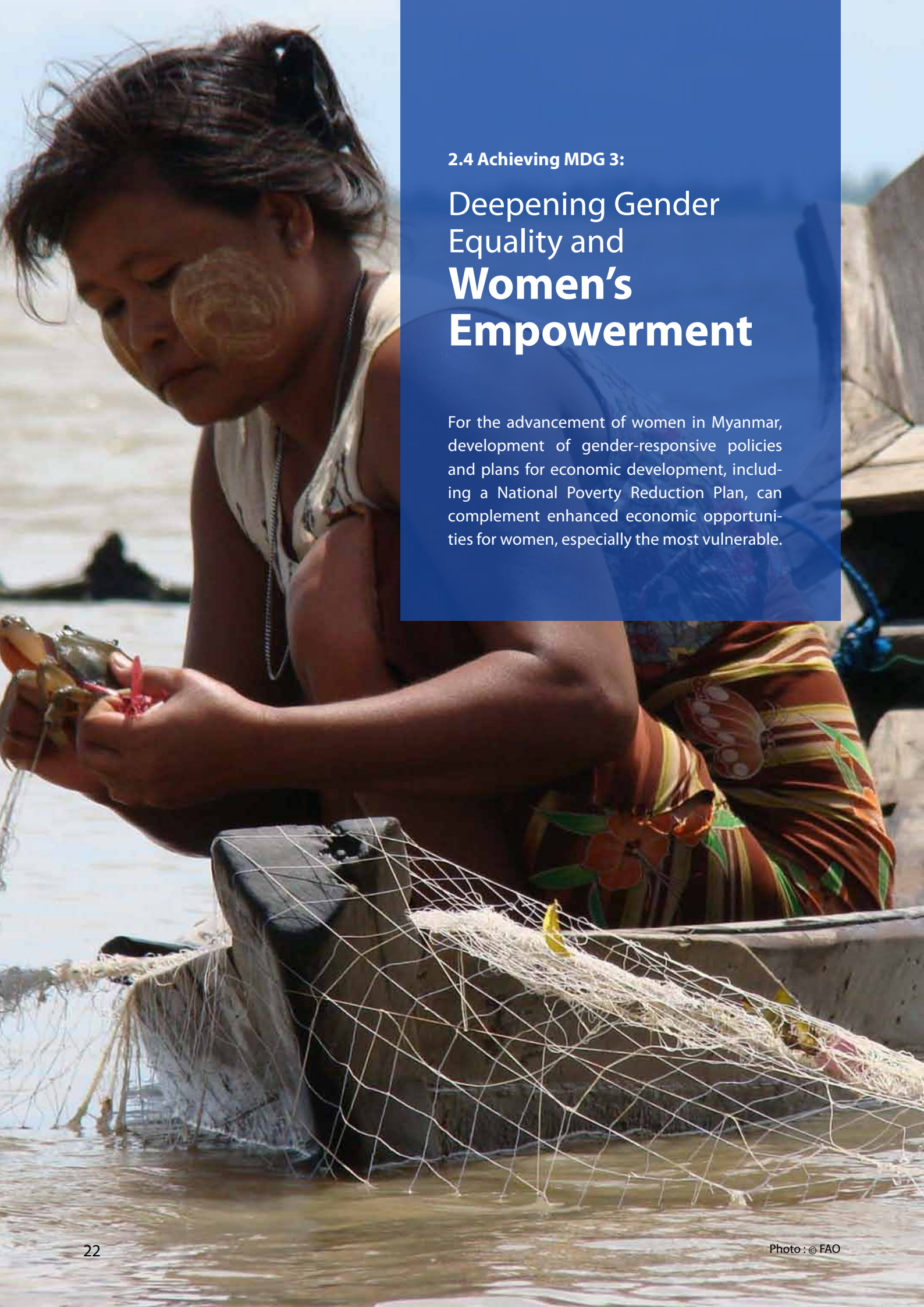
Achieving pro-poor growth

Pro-poor growth and better incomes will contribute to school retention and education attainments; quality and employment-relevant education improve market opportunities, reduce disparities, support productivity and incomes.

³⁷ UNICEF, Improving Access to Quality Basic Education in Myanmar 2006-2010. Yangon, 2006.

³⁸ Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). Development Study for the Improvement of Quality of and Access to Basic Education in the Union of Myanmar. Yangon, 2004.

³⁹ E. Redden, Myanmar Teacher Education Review, mission report. Yangon, 2007.



2.4 Achieving MDG 3:

Deepening Gender Equality and **Women's Empowerment**

For the advancement of women in Myanmar, development of gender-responsive policies and plans for economic development, including a National Poverty Reduction Plan, can complement enhanced economic opportunities for women, especially the most vulnerable.

2.4.1. Introduction

Gender equality and women's rights are fundamental to achieving all the interlinked MDGs. In Myanmar, gender equality at basic survival level exists, unlike in more high-growth economies such as China and India. In general, deprivations are linked less across gender lines than to the fact of general deprivation in the society. Myanmar thus has potential to leverage a foundation based on general deprivation, in the hope that other inequalities will not emerge, to achieve equality for women in economic, legal and political power as well.

2.4.2. Development Situation and Trends

Myanmar is committed to numerous international policy initiatives to improve the situation of women, including as a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women⁴⁰ (CEDAW). With support from the United Nations and NGOs, the Government has shown leadership by drafting⁴¹ a National Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women 2011-2015 to translate its global commitment into local action, with a goal of ensuring that all women of Myanmar are empowered and able to fully enjoy their rights.

At the same time, patriarchal cultural norms and values remain prevalent in Myanmar society and shape the hierarchical relationships within the family and community alike, while serving as a basis for conventional views on the division of labour and decision-making power at all levels. The equal participation of women and girls in education, economic, political and social life is vital in the State's endeavors to build a developed nation. Indeed, Myanmar has achieved relative equality between men and women in the area of education, as also noted under MDG2; progress on this MDG3 indicator is on track and is ahead of Cambodia, Lao PDR and Viet Nam in the region.⁴² In all, remaining inequalities in educational access of girls and boys is largely a function of whether they come from a rural or urban context, their social class, or their linguistic and ethnic group. Most women in Myanmar also enjoy equal rights in inheritance laws (land/property), equal marital property rights in case of divorce, and a nationality law with respect to marriage to foreign nationals.

However, gaps still exist in other important areas for women,

including economic, political and legal participation. For example, despite an advantage in secondary education enrollment, women's labour force participation rate is significantly below that of men, at 50 percent compared to 82 percent respectively in 2007;⁴³ nonetheless, the share of women in paid employment outside the agricultural sector has been increasing gradually, even as data for specific regions of the country may vary significantly.⁴⁴ Myanmar ranks slightly behind Lao PDR (50.2 percent in 2008) but ahead of Cambodia (43.5 percent in 2004) and Viet Nam (40.4 percent in 2004) in women's economic participation in the region.

A wide gap remains between men and women⁴⁵ in higher ranks of paid employment, with women concentrated in lower ranks and lower-skilled jobs. Similarly, while women comprise about half of all staff in state administrative organizations and Ministries,⁴⁶ they are concentrated in lower-level positions. In 2008-2009, they occupied only 31.7 percent of senior-level posts (Deputy Director and above).⁴⁷ Disparities in wages also still exist between the sexes: For comparative type of jobs, while men earned an estimated income of US\$1,043 in 2007, women earned only US\$640.⁴⁸ In all, women provide unpaid, largely "invisible" and unrecognized care work at home, in addition to their paid work in public sphere. Many women from Myanmar migrate to neighbouring countries in search of better-paid jobs. According to the global Human Development Report 2009, the volume of international migration of women from Myanmar was higher than from Viet Nam and Bangladesh, but lower than Cambodia and Lao PDR. Most Myanmar female migrant workers end up as low-skilled industrial, agricultural or domestic workers in neighbouring countries, often in exploitative workplaces (including those where they are at risk of sexual exploitation).

Critically, in terms of women's political participation, Myanmar remains off-track. No women Ministers or Deputy Ministers have been appointed since independence more than 60 years ago. Women's representation in the national legislature also has been minimal, even as the share of women in parliament globally has increased from 11 percent in 1995 to 19 percent in 2010.⁴⁹ After elections in November 2010, the proportions of women are 4.3 percent in the People's Assembly, 4.9 percent in the National Assembly and 3.8 percent as regional and state representatives.⁵⁰ Overall, only 43 women are found

⁴⁰ Myanmar became a State Party to CEDAW in 1997.

⁴¹ The draft has been submitted to the Cabinet of Ministers and is expected to be adopted soon.

⁴² ESCAP, Asian Development Bank and UNDP, Asia-Pacific MDG Report 2010-11.

⁴³ UNDP 2010, op.cit.

⁴⁴ UNDP and MNPED, IHLCA 2005.

⁴⁵ Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation, Gender Statistics in Myanmar 2006.

⁴⁶ Central Statistical Organization, MNPED, Statistical Profile of Children and Women in Myanmar 2009.

⁴⁷ Central Statistical Organization, MNPED, 2008, op. cit.

among 1,104 elected representatives.⁵¹ These figures are very low compared to the situation in Cambodia (21.1 percent in the Lower House), Lao PDR (25.2 percent), Viet Nam (25.8 percent) and Bangladesh (18.6 percent).⁵²

Maternal health remains a key issue of concern for the Government, policymakers and health planners as well as individual women, their families and communities. According to the Report on Trends and Maternal Mortality, prepared by WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA and the World Bank, the Maternal Mortality Ratio stands at 240 per 100,000 live births. This figure is higher than those of other Asian countries, including Viet Nam (56), Thailand (48), Malaysia (31) and India (230). Postpartum haemorrhage, eclampsia and complications from unsafe abortions are the leading contributing factors to maternal mortality. In addition, a high rate of adolescent births, at 16.9 percent,⁵³ arises primarily because of lack of access to sex education. Rising numbers of women also are contracting HIV,⁵⁴ in large part because of high-risk behaviour of their spouse or partner.

Myanmar does not have specific legislation against Gender Based Violence (GBV), although it has Penal Code provisions against sexual assault/rape. Public awareness of the issue is low, and cases appear seriously underreported.⁵⁶ Trafficking in persons also is a form of GBV and has become a challenging issue with serious implications for economic and social development in Myanmar. The Government has made its work to combat trafficking in women a national cause since 1997, with an Anti-Trafficking in Persons Law enacted in 2005.

2.4.3 Key Barriers to Deepening Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Socio-cultural traditions and low awareness of issues

Traditional beliefs that reinforce attitudes and behaviours that do not favour women remain prevalent, with men still seen as the main providers of the family and women's unpaid work and contributions to the care economy undervalued. Awareness and understanding of gender equality issues is low among the public and the authorities alike, while regional disparities are exacerbated by deeply rooted gender norms and values. In particular, the issue of violence against women requires greater recognition as a serious development issue. Strengthening the involvement of men in sensitive gender-related issues, especially in reproductive and sexual health issues, also calls for further attention.

Policy and legal frameworks

To eliminate barriers to gender equality, customary laws and statutory provisions may need review, while more gender-responsive policies, plans and programmes to deliver basic services are still required in the area of sexual and reproductive health, as well as for women's economic advancement and empowerment in the services, industrial and agricultural sectors. Similarly, a need exists for more legislation to address critical issues of women's rights and gender equality; few temporary special measures and other policy measures have been adopted to strengthen women's participation in public and political life.

At the same time, gender mainstreaming is not adequately integrated as the policy of the Government as a whole, in part because of a need for strengthened conceptual clarity and operational knowledge, while budget allocations on gender equality and women's empowerment remain insufficient.

Institutional capacities and structures

With regard to mainstreaming gender in national policies, plans and programmes, institutional capacity is limited in key line Ministries and sectors. Moreover, coordination mechanisms among key Government agencies require additional support to address priority commitments for gender equality, including issues of maternal mortality, sexual and reproductive health, and poverty alleviation. In turn, improved delivery of basic services will be necessary, especially to vulnerable women, including those with disabilities; women in rural and/or remote areas; ethnic-minority women; female-headed households; survivors of gender-based violence; and women living with HIV/AIDS. Critically, development of more sex-disaggregated data, by age, locality, ethnicity and other variables, is key to stronger evidence-based policymaking.

2.4.4. Development Priorities for Deepening Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Economic benefits for women

For the advancement of women in Myanmar, development of gender-responsive policies and plans for economic development, including a National Poverty Reduction Plan, can complement enhanced economic opportunities for women,

especially the most vulnerable. Women farmers particularly will benefit from improvements in access to land and its use, as well as increased credit and loans.

Equitable access to quality services

Development of more gender-responsive services must be encouraged in the areas of education; health, especially sexual and reproductive health; water and sanitation; and HIV/AIDS. More in-depth research is required to develop a multi-sectoral approach to address the complex issue of gender-based violence.

More gender-responsive governance

Improved legal and policy frameworks can ensure that Myanmar is fully complying with its international commitments under CEDAW and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Capacity development may help to raise awareness and deepen understanding among Government agencies and other influential stakeholders on women's empowerment and the inter-linkages of women's equal rights in the political, civic, economic, social and cultural spheres, with ad-

ditional emphasis on the positive, participatory role of men. In particular, development and adoption of a national policy on gender mainstreaming, accompanied by clear guidance on implementation, is critical, while strengthened inter-agency coordination mechanisms should be introduced. At the same time, a comprehensive approach aimed at legal empowerment of women and girls should be combined with prevention of human trafficking, law enforcement and victim protection. Additional policy measures can improve women's participation in public and political life. Lastly, the system of disaggregated data collection requires strengthening, including the use of measurable indicators to assess trends in the situation of women and in progress toward gender equality, with sufficient budgetary resources allocated for this purpose.

In times of natural disasters, referrals and services for women in emergencies can help to reduce vulnerabilities of women in high-risk areas, thereby improving overall resilience of communities. Development of a gender-sensitive National Adaptation Programme of Action and Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Action, to reduce emissions by harnessing local resources such as solar or wind power, will be useful to reduce the impact of climate change on women.

⁴⁸ UNDP, Human Development Report 2009.

⁴⁹ United Nations, Millennium Development Goals Report 2010.

⁵⁰ Collected from The New Light of Myanmar newspapers, November 2010, based on the notification numbers 118/2010 to 142/2010.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² UNDP 2009, op. cit.

⁵³ UNFPA and Ministry of Immigration and Population, Fertility and Reproductive Health Survey 2007.

⁵⁴ UNAIDS, WHO and Ministry of Health, HIV Estimates and Projections, Myanmar 2008-2015.

⁵⁵ UNDP, Asia-Pacific Human Development Report 2010.

⁵⁶ UNFPA 2010, op. cit.





2.5 Achieving MDGs 4, 5 and 6:

Spurring Progress in Improved Health including Reproductive Health Outcomes

Analysis shows that Myanmar still faces considerable challenges to MDGs 4 and 5 in particular, arising from a combination of policy constraints, socioeconomic factors, insufficient investments in public health, and, most critically, deficiencies in the health system. It will be necessary to strengthen all aspects of the national health system, with active participation of all stakeholders.

2.5.1. Introduction

The importance of the right to health needs little justification: It affects not only individual physical and mental well-being, but also has implications for national productivity, in terms of person-days lost in absenteeism from school and work, and links to all other MDGs.

Myanmar has demonstrated some progress toward reaching the health-related MDGs, even as it still faces numerous challenges. Overall, most components of MDG6 (reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS, malaria and other major diseases) seem to be on track, with improved coordination and implementation with support of partners, and thus have a high probability of achievement. At the same time, obtaining more investments for health remains a critical challenge to achieve all the health MDGs. Modern systems of medicine, where numbers of doctors and nurses have more than doubled in the last two decades, are supplemented by widely used traditional health systems.

2.5.2 Development Situation and Trends

As the country endeavors to attain its health objectives, trends in key health indicators show some improvement. According to the official sources, Infant Mortality Rate (IMR), Under Five Mortality Rate (U5MR) and Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) have all declined between 1988 and 2007. Over the same period, life expectancy (in years) has increased for both men and women, from 59 (urban) and 56.2 (rural) in 1988 to 64 (urban) and 63.2 (rural) in 2007 for males, and from 63.2 (urban) and 60.4 (rural) in 1988 to 69 (urban) and 67.1 (rural) in 2007 for females.

Yet in spite of overall advances in health status, data and analyses indicate significant disparities between regions and groups in access to, and quality of, health services, particularly affecting ethnic minorities, poor people, and people living in remote areas. Maternal mortality represents a particular concern in Myanmar, and poor maternal health, including low birth weight, has profound effects on the next generation.

At the same time, the health system is constrained because of weaknesses in management and coordination of services, a need for a strengthened information and monitoring system and supply chain management. Many of these challenges arise from low investments in the health care system, both from domestic and international sources. For example, total Government health expenditures as a percentage of GDP decreased from 0.30 per-

cent in 2000-2001 to 0.21 percent in 2007-2008, and the budget share of the Ministry of Health fell from 6.1 percent in 2002-2003 to 3.7 percent in 2007-2008. Special trust funds supported by private contributions have been established at public hospitals to support needy patients. The Ministry of Health is dependent on international aid for many key components of health services. The total amount available through these trust funds was reported as MMK 5.49 million (or USD 5.4 million using average UN exchange rate of 1,026) in 2009.⁵⁷

With regard to MDG4 (Reduce child mortality), the U5MR has declined steadily, from 130 per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 77.77 in 1999 and 65.8 in 2007, according to surveys conducted jointly by the Government and United Nations Agencies. Vital statistics provided by the Central Statistical Organization indicate a reduction to 62.1 in 2007. Regardless, the overall target of 38.5 in 2015 remains challenging. Moreover, U5MR surveys indicate significant differences between urban and rural areas and among regions of the country, with rural U5MR (72.5 per 1,000 live births in 2003) almost twice that of urban rates (37.3). Strong additional attention thus must be given to rural needs. IMR, meanwhile, also indicates a decreasing trend, to 53.2 in 2007, but likewise faces challenges to meet the MDG target of 28.3 by 2015. Specific interventions will be necessary during the neonatal period to combat the leading causes of post-neonatal deaths, including premature birth, septicaemia and birth asphyxia. Meanwhile, immunization data are encouraging. According to joint Government-United Nations surveys, measles immunization has increased from 67.7 percent in 1990 to 83.6 percent in 2007. Based on these trends, the 2015 target of 90 percent is expected to be fulfilled.

Reducing maternal mortality under MDG5 (Improve maternal health) represents a major challenge in Myanmar and will require significant efforts to meet the Goal. The MMR estimate from the latest health survey in 2004-2005 stood at 316 per 100,000 live births, although 2008 UN estimates placed the figure at a still-high 240. All this appears to place Myanmar behind Malaysia, Thailand, Viet Nam and India in maternal mortality, but ahead of Pakistan, Cambodia and Lao PDR. However, since 2005 the decline of MMR in Myanmar is slower than that in Cambodia and Lao PDR. About 88 percent of deliveries take place at home, with maternal deaths overwhelmingly found in rural areas. Major causes of maternal mortality in the country include not only postpartum hemorrhage and eclampsia, but also complications arising from unsafe abortions. Delays in reaching health facilities, because of poverty, lack of knowledge, and remote location or lack of transport, also are common.

As a positive consequence of expanding reproductive health services and raising awareness on reproductive health, the proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel has increased, to 65 percent in 2009 from 51 percent as recently as 2001. Nonetheless, about 300,000 pregnancies per year are not attended by skilled attendants. The needs of unmarried women and youth require strengthened efforts to be met, since the current level of adolescent fertility rate stands at 17 percent of total births. While prevalence of modern methods of contraception has increased considerably, to 38.4 percent in 2007, male participation in contraception needs to be further encouraged. In addition, the Government's goal to secure at least one midwife per village to provide professional care remains ambitious, given that in Myanmar as a whole the average proportion of doctors, nurses and midwives per 10,000 population is significantly lower than the internationally recommended figure.

MDG6, as noted in the Introduction, offers a major opportunity for achievement by 2015. For example, Myanmar already has achieved the goal of a 50 percent reduction in malaria morbidity and mortality since 2007, with use of insecticide-treated nets (ITNs) more than doubling between 2004 and 2008 and nearly one-fourth of under-five children now sleeping under ITN, compared to only 0.11 percent in 2000. To continue this positive trend, it will be further necessary to strengthen ITN supplies with the support of all stakeholders. At the same time, tuberculosis prevalence and death rate targets also have been achieved. The challenge in this regard will be to sustain an adequate supply of tuberculosis drugs and avoid the emergency of multi-drug-resistant tuberculosis.

With regard to HIV/AIDS, the epidemic is considered to have stabilized nationally since 2000, with "hot spots" of high HIV transmission in several locations. This is reflected by prevalence among the general population (15-49 years old) of 0.61 percent. There exists a need for continued focus on most-at-risk groups – sex workers, men who have sex with men and persons who inject drugs – to maintain initial positive achievements. As a result of the promotion of targeted behavior change communication for sex workers, their clients and MSM, condom use is increasing among these groups, from 62 percent in 2007 to 90 percent in 2009.⁵⁸ Moreover, the proportion of young people aged 15 to 24 with correct knowledge of HIV has increased, from 21 percent in 2003 to 75.2 percent in 2007. Even so, major challenges exist to scale up HIV treatment, which now covers only about 1 in 3 of those in need; challenges also remain in providing prevention services to a larger proportion of men who have sex with men and persons who inject drugs, and in strengthening the enabling policy environment.

Overall, therefore, data indicate that progress on targets of MDG4 and MDG6 is relatively slow, requiring considerable additional investments and resources. But in order to meet the targets of MDG5, significant resources and concerted management efforts by all stakeholders will be required, and in their absence the target is likely to remain out of reach.

2.5.3 Key Barriers to Spurring Progress in Improved Health, Including Reproductive Health Outcomes

Generally, developing countries, including Myanmar, face three categories of barriers to progress on the health-related MDGs. These include (1) barriers within the health system; (2) barriers related to social, economic and environmental factors; and (3) barriers related to global trade and economic factors.

Barriers within the health system

Both under-five mortality and maternal mortality reflect the overall effectiveness of health systems, and developing countries such as Myanmar suffer from weak administrative, technical and logistical capacities, inadequate financial investment and lack of skilled health personnel, all of which significantly affect quality of care. The slow progress made toward achievement of MDGs 4 and 5 in Myanmar thus indicates persistent health system weaknesses that prevent the delivery of a comprehensive package of quality reproductive health services.

Current investments in the health sector remain low, and efficient, appropriate use of funds must be ensured. All this is compounded by inadequate human resources with the requisite skills, particularly midwives and other basic health staff. Imbalanced distribution among the regions remains an issue. In a resource-poor setting, it will be important to find integrated health delivery models, such as packaging of interventions from field level to first referral facility and above, or across the life cycle. Even to sustain achievements with regard to MDG6, additional technical support and resources will have to be required for continued and expanded service delivery, including multi-sectoral collaboration and coordination.

Barriers related to social and environmental factors

Poor access to health care in Myanmar as a result of poverty and socio-cultural issues remains significant and exercises a profound influence on achievement of the MDGs. A generally low level of education and health literacy represents a particular barrier. Em-

powerment of individuals, particularly women, ethnic minorities and those living in remote, hilly areas, will be critical to promote stronger health-seeking behavior and healthy lifestyles. Similarly, the addressing of environmental issues, including the availability of safe water and improved sanitation, will be needed. Punitive laws pose obstacles for effective HIV interventions to reach key populations such as men who have sex with men, sex workers and persons who inject drugs.

Barriers related to economic factors

At the same time, inadequate income and economic assets of households in the country, exacerbated by limited external assistance, remains at the heart of all poverty issues, including those related to health and nutrition. Trade agreements such as the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) can have an impact on the cost of essential drugs and access to affordable medicines for the poor. Increased cross-border trade in health services, migration of health care personnel and the movements of patients across borders also adds a service load and may create additional burdens for the health system. A further issue to be addressed is related to control of the proliferation of counterfeit and unregistered drugs that are readily available on the market.

2.5.4. Development Priorities for Spurring Progress in Improved Health Outcomes, Including Reproductive Health Outcomes

Strengthen the national health system

Analysis shows that Myanmar still faces considerable challenges to MDGs 4 and 5 in particular, arising from a combination of policy constraints, socioeconomic factors, insufficient investments in public health, and, most critically, deficiencies in the health system. It will be necessary to strengthen all aspects of the national health system, with active participation of all stakeholders. This should include addressing human resource constraints, building or upgrading health infrastructure, deepening decentralized health system governance, improving supply systems and logistics, and strengthening of the health management information system. It will be necessary to increase equitable access to quality health services and to encourage the promotion of rural health services, ensuring universal coverage, and backed by adequately staffed, equipped and managed basic and referral facilities. Leveraging engagement of the Government, national and international development partners, private sector, including private health service providers, and civil society alike in an active partnership for national

health development and delivery of quality social services will be beneficial to achievement of the MDGs by the 2015 deadline. In turn, this can exercise positive impacts on governance issues as a whole and make growth more inclusive.

Address policy constraints

Encouragement of policy and legal frameworks to protect people from health risks, malnutrition and financial burdens related to health care will be essential. A particular need exists for a clear policy and legal framework to encourage private sector involvement as well as partnerships between the public and private sectors to promote equity.

Scale up health sector financing

Investment in and financing for the health sector requires urgent support, including not only strengthened Government investments but also from donors, the private sector and voluntary contributions. Health insurance mechanisms, social protection schemes and conditional cash transfers should be further considered in this regard.

Promote strategic partnerships and coordination

Many of Myanmar's health care challenges may be best addressed through partnerships, particularly using the comparative advantages of the United Nations, such as its technical expertise, convening power, neutrality, high level of accountability, and linkages to regional and global networks and best practices. This can be achieved, for example, through joint programming on maternal, newborn and child health; the National Reproductive Health Working Committee, led by the Ministry of Health, provides a viable forum for cooperation and coordination among partners. The national Reproductive Health Strategic Plan 2009-2013 provides an excellent framework to address reproductive health in a coordinated fashion. Similarly, to upscale coverage of effective interventions in preventing HIV infection, maximize the coverage of life saving AIDS treatment, mitigate the negative impact of HIV on people in order to fully implement the National Strategic Plan on AIDS (2011-2015), an inter-sectoral national-level response that is sensitive to specific local needs and supported by communities will be required.

⁵⁷ Ministry of Health, Health in Myanmar 2010.

⁵⁸ NAP National Strategic Plan for HIV/AIDS in Myanmar Progress Report in 2007 and 2009

2.6 Achieving MDG7:

Ensuring Environmental Sustainability

Myanmar is an “early achiever” of several MDG7 indicators, including those related to protected areas, ozone-depleting potential consumption, and improved sanitation, while slower progress is being made with regard to safe drinking water. The country is, however, regressing in indicators for forest cover and carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions.

2.6.1. Introduction

Myanmar is renowned for its wealth of biodiversity, including diverse tropical forests, abundant water resources, complex coastal habitats for mangroves and coral reefs, and alpine and grassland ecosystems beneath snow-capped peaks. In the north, the country is known as a biodiversity “hot spot” because of its location in the transitional zone in the eastern Himalayas. The country also is endowed with abundant and varied sources of energy, including hydropower, natural gas, crude oil, biomass and coal. Overall, Myanmar is assessed as on track to achieve MDG7,⁵⁹ or potentially on track if changes are made according to United Nations statistics.⁶⁰ It is an “early achiever” of several MDG7 indicators, including those related to protected areas, ozone-depleting potential consumption, and improved sanitation, while slower progress is being made with regard to safe drinking water. The country is, however, regressing in indicators for forest cover and carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions.⁶¹

At the same time, Myanmar’s wide range of topography, combined with still-low economic strength and low levels of social development, inadequate infrastructure and lack of institutional capacity, and high dependency on the natural resource base, appears to make the country highly vulnerable to climate change and extreme weather events. All this places additional stress on natural systems and the human society at large. The Global Climate Risk Index 2010 ranked Myanmar among the countries most severely affected by such extreme events between 1990 and 2008.

More recent disasters have included the devastating 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, Cyclone Nargis in 2008 and Cyclone Giri in 2010; severe flooding and landslides associated with intense rainfall are evident in many parts of the country,⁶² while droughts are common in the rain-shadowed central area. Although Myanmar is “ahead of the curve” with regard to some aspects of climate change, with laudable carbon sinks through green cover and still-low emission levels, this is in part due to the lack of domestic economic dynamism and limited integration in the global economy.

Either slow or sudden-onset disasters can very quickly reverse progress, including on the MDGs, and deeply affect future gen-

erations. In particular, catastrophic events can intensify the vulnerability of already marginalized members of the community, who are normally less likely to have access to services, control resources or have the capacity to anticipate and recover from the effects of the disaster.⁶³ Women and children are at greater risk of abuse, violence and exploitation after disasters, and children may face difficulties such as being unable to continue their education as families struggle to rebuild livelihoods. The elderly and people with disabilities also may be dependent on support from families or the community. Climate change also may initiate a vicious circle where infectious disease, including water-borne diseases, cause or compound hunger, which, in turn, makes the affected population more susceptible to those diseases. Results may include declines in labour productivity and an increase in poverty, morbidity and mortality.⁶⁴

2.6.2 Development Situation and Trends

The National Environment Policy calls for balance between environment and development through integration of environmental considerations into all aspects of the development process. It is, however, critical to recognize the tensions between economic growth and environmental management. For example, Myanmar has very significant potential for greenhouse gas (GHG) sequestering, but the pursuit of economic growth may be at odds with this global public good. Addressing this issue in a positive fashion may provide a vital entry point for the country to build stronger global partnerships for development under MDG8 (see also Section 2.7).

Conventional energy consumption is still low, with nearly two-thirds from charcoal, fuelwood and biomass. Hydropower is the most highly developed renewal energy source, but the country also has the potential to generate 51,000 terra watt hours per year from solar power and 365 terra watt hours per year from wind power, according to the Ministry of Energy. US Energy Information Agency data indicate that crude oil production is falling rapidly, to 6.9 million tonnes in 2009 compared with 8.1 million tonnes in 2008.

Forests cover nearly half of Myanmar’s land area, providing critical products and environmental services that contribute to both

⁵⁹ Simon Feeney and Matthew Clarke, “Achieving the Millennium Development Goals in the Asia-Pacific Region.” Asia-Pacific Viewpoint, Vol. 49, No. 2, 2008.

⁶⁰ http://www.mdgmonitor.org/country_progress.cfm?c=MMR&cd=104

⁶¹ ESCAP, Asian Development Bank and UNDP, op. cit.

⁶² In 2010, for example, Launglon, in Bago Division, broke its highest

24-hour rainfall record, with 17.09 inches of rainfall in a single day; a landslide in the Kachin State town of Hpakant, caused by more than 10 inches of rain in a day, resulted in the deaths of at least 24 jade miners.

⁶³ ESCAP, Asian Development Bank and UNDP, op. cit.

⁶⁴ J. Schmidhuber and F.N. Tubiello, “Global Food Security Under Climate Change” Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, Vol. 104, No. 50, 2007.

national economic development⁶⁵ and poverty reduction. A total of 70 percent of the population in poorer rural areas are heavily reliant on wood and non-wood forest products for shelter and food.⁶⁶ Although Myanmar is one of only 23 countries that have set country-specific targets to address the increase or maintenance of forest cover, progress in this MDG indicator is regressing. According to data from the Ministry of Forestry, forest cover in 1990, at 55.97 percent, had fallen to 47.01 percent by 2010. Illegal logging remains an issue, although progress has been made in reducing the trade in illegal logs between Myanmar and China. An urgent need exists to address illegal logging, given the link between armed conflict and control of illegal logging routes in Myanmar.⁶⁷

The country also is endowed with abundant water resources, with per-capita water resource availability of more than 18,000 cubic metres annually.⁶⁸ However, use of the nation's water resources is quite low, at only about 5 percent of the potential,⁶⁹ with very substantial scope for further development of these resources. With the increase in population and enhanced need for water for economic activities, pressure is increasing on the use of surface water and extraction of groundwater. Control and management of surface water and groundwater are therefore critical for sustainable development of the country. Licensing systems for groundwater extraction are in use, but enforcement poses serious challenges.

With regard to the ratio of protected area to land area, Myanmar has been an early achiever of this MDG indicator. By 2010 there were 42 existing and proposed protected areas, covering 7.3 percent of total area of the country, up from 3.77 percent as recently at 2005. In addition, Myanmar has six marine protected areas. Biodiversity is very rich: Recorded fauna include 256 species of mammals, 1,050 species of birds, 100 species of reptiles, 119 species of amphibians, 409 species of marine fishes and 100 species of insects,⁷⁰ with more than 10,000 plant species.⁷¹ Myanmar thus is particularly at risk from the illegal wildlife trade, although it has acceded to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and ratified the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The first National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, prepared in 2006, has identified a three-tier institutional structure to address issues of biodiversity, but this structure has yet to be formed.

A primary source of air pollution stems from the transport sector, with the number of vehicles on the road doubling since 2004, to close to 2 million.⁷² In response, the Government has initiated plans for the use of compressed natural gas in place of petrol and diesel in the short term and bio-fuel in the long term,

providing loans to vehicle owners for the purchase of conversion kits.⁷³ In addition, transboundary smoke haze remains a recurring challenge, especially during dry El Niño periods, when the number of fires spikes.

Emissions of CO₂ per capita appear to remain among the lowest in Asia, although emission data require updating. According to Government sources, emissions per capita have fallen from 1.8 metric tonnes in 1990⁷⁴ to 0.725 in 1997,⁷⁵ indicating a downward trend, while United Nations statistics show CO₂ emissions increasing from 0.10 metric tonnes per capita in 1990 to 0.27 in 2007.⁷⁶ Meanwhile, Myanmar's heavily forested land area has great emissions mitigation potential, with similar potential to access significant international funding and technologies. While promoting sustainable forest management and energy efficiency, the Government already has conducted a GHG inventory and is preparing a National Communication on emissions, with a designated national authority set up for implementation of the Clean Development Mechanism.

The Government also has acceded to the Vienna Convention for the protection of the ozone layer, as well as the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer and its London and Copenhagen Amendments. Myanmar neither produces nor exports Ozone Depleting Substances (ODS) and has stop importing chlorofluorocarbons since 2006. It has been an early achiever of the MDG indicator with regard to ODS, with per-capita consumption declining from 1.2 metric tonnes in 1995 to 0.4 tonnes in 2005.⁷⁷

Meanwhile, Myanmar's considerable diversity of coastal habitats includes coral reefs, mangroves, sandy beaches and mudflats, with the fourth-largest expanse of mangrove areas in Southeast Asia. Mangrove coverage has decreased, from 555,500 hectares in 1980 to 507,000 hectares in 2005.⁷⁸ About 56 percent of Myanmar's reefs also are threatened, according to a Reefs at Risk analysis, which suggests that overfishing, coastal development and sedimentation represent primary threats.

Myanmar has achieved progress on the proportion of people with sustainable access to an improved water source, with United Nations statistics showing an increase from 57 percent in 1990 to 71 percent in 2008.⁷⁹ The proportion of people using an improved drinking water source stood at 69.5 percent in 2010;⁸⁰ with the 2015 target set at 66 percent, this already has been fulfilled, but current momentum still requires acceleration. The country also is an early achiever of the MDG indicator on access to improved sanitation, with access soaring from 49 percent in 2005 to 81 percent in 2008, according to United Nations

statistics. Use of improved sanitation facilities has risen from 39 percent in rural areas and 77 percent in urban areas in 1995 to 79 percent and 86 percent respectively in 2008.⁸¹ A major factor in the dramatic increase has been the initiation in 1998 of the National Sanitation Week movement, in line with the National Health Plan and Health for All Programme.

Approximately 23.5% of the Myanmar population was living in urban areas in 1973 and this figure has risen to 31.6% by 2007, with urbanization patterns concentrated in about 27 urban centers in the middle of Myanmar.⁸² Estimates for the proportion of urban population living in slums or marginalized settlements in 1990 and 2005 were 31.1 percent and 45.6 percent respectively,⁸³ showing an upward trend; however, by 2010 this had fallen significantly again, to 27.5 percent.⁸⁴ Mitigating factors include implementation of low-cost housing and other projects by the Government and private entrepreneurs to address slum dwelling.

Turning to climate change and natural disasters, the Government has adopted a number of important policy instruments. It has signed and ratified the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and Kyoto Protocol and is in the process of formulating a National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA); even so, national response to obligations under the UNFCCC and the Protocol remain limited because of a lack of relevant human and institutional capacities. At the same time, the Government has progressively recognized the importance of disaster management, through being a signatory to the Hyogo Framework for Action and formulation of a National Strategy and Action Plan for Disaster Management 2009-2015. The Ministry of Education has been mainstreaming disaster risk reduction in the education system. While there has been progress, access to disaster risk reduction information remains limited and an established multi-hazard early warning system requires numerous improvements.⁸⁵

Recent analysis of data by the Department of Meteorology and Hydrology provides ample evidence of climate change in Myanmar,

revealing a decreasing trend in the length of monsoon as a result of late onset and early recession, decreasing average rainfall and wide variations between regions, and increasing temperatures. Between 2005 and 2009 alone, the length of the monsoon shrank by about 10 days, to an average of 144 days. The country's coastal regions are considered the most vulnerable to climate change and natural disasters, with increased frequency of floods and cyclones.

All these changes may bring about changes in natural resources and ecosystems that can seriously affect the livelihoods, employment and income of millions of people living in affected areas of Myanmar. For example, the destruction of mangrove forests and ecosystems by Cyclone Nargis in 2008 resulted in the loss of habitats of aquatic species and decreases in fishery and agricultural products, severely affecting not only people's livelihoods but also food security.⁸⁶

At the other end of the spectrum, field reports from Pakokku Township indicate that for the last three years the township has experienced severe drought conditions, damaging local livelihoods as well as reducing access of the most vulnerable to food and basic services. Yields have plummeted by 80 percent, and livestock has increased considerably due to the scarcity of water and fodder.⁸⁷ Similarly, a study by Harvard University and International Development Enterprises during early 2010 found that households in the Dry Zone in central Myanmar reported a fall in productivity of the land, with five to 10 acres now needed to cultivate crops for a family, compared to two or three acres a decade ago. Alarming, the Dry Zone, comprising much of Magway, Mandalay and lower Sagaing Divisions, already is one of the most food-insecure regions of the country, with inadequate levels of food consumption and high indebtedness among the rural poor. Diversification of agriculture has been recognized as an important means to reduce risk. To boost productivity, the Government is encouraging farmers to expand new agricultural land and to diversify by introducing on-farm activities that generate multiple incomes, such as fruit trees, forestry and livestock; it also is promoting crop rotation.

⁸⁵ 10 percent of Myanmar's exports are based on forest products.

⁸⁶ National Commission for Environmental Affairs and UNEP, National Sustainable Development Strategy. Yangon, 2009.

⁸⁷ P. Durst, T. Waggener, T. Enters and T. Cheng. Forests Out of Bounds: Impacts and Effectiveness of Logging Ban in Natural Forests in Asia-Pacific. Bangkok, 2001.

⁸⁸ ASEAN, Hanns Seidel Foundation, ASEAN State of the Environment Report 2009.

⁸⁹ Government of Japan, Water Environment Partnership, Myanmar Country Brief 2010, <http://www.wepa-db.net/policies/state/Myanmar/Myanmar.html>

⁹⁰ Convention on Biodiversity Country Profile, <http://www.cbd.int/countries/profile.shtml?country=mm#status>

⁷¹ ASEAN, Hanns Seidel Foundation, op. cit.

⁷² Ministry of Transport, Ministerial Statement, "Pollution Control and Air Quality Management in Myanmar," October 2008.

⁷³ ASEAN, Hanns Seidel Foundation, op.cit.

⁷⁴ MNPED, National Millennium Development Goals Report 2006.

⁷⁵ Ministry of Forestry, 2010.

⁷⁶ ESCAP, Asian Development Bank and UNDP, op. cit.

⁷⁷ ESCAP, Annual Reports 1995, 2000 and 2005.

⁷⁸ ASEAN, Hanns Seidel Foundation, op. cit.

⁷⁹ ESCAP, Asian Development Bank and UNDP, op. cit.

⁸⁰ IHLCA 2010

⁸¹ Asian Development Bank, Key Indicators for Asia and the Pacific 2010.

2.6.3 Key Barriers to Ensuring Environmental Sustainability

Human and social pressures

Widespread poverty and lack of environmental awareness in Myanmar leads to overexploitation of natural resources, including illegal activities. In turn, this results in a lack of compliance with normative and legislative frameworks. There are eight cultural and natural heritage sites in Myanmar on UNESCO's tentative list of World Heritage Sites, and the natural sites are suffering from the environmental effects of increased population and exploitation of resources. Economic development and industrialization also are significant factors, with available technologies for economic development increasing vulnerability and directly affecting food security and the agriculture sector. A need exists to ensure that local communities participate in and benefit from economic planning and growth. Similarly, a need exists to ensure that revenues from natural resources are managed equitably and sustainably for long-term development gains that are pro-poor, based on global experience in addressing what has been called the "resource curse."⁸⁸ Overall, the adaptive capacity of Myanmar society is limited because of the high dependence on the natural resource base.

Governance and management issues

Many of the barriers to ensuring environmental sustainability in Myanmar result from governance issues. For example, limited climate change adaptation and mitigation capacity exists, in part arising from incomplete strategy and policy systems, such as a relatively weak regulatory framework and enforcement for protected areas and for pollution monitoring. Limited financial resources are allocated to management of the natural resource and environment sector. Transparency and accountability in environmental governance require strengthening, with clarification of responsibilities among relevant agencies and more planning mechanisms and systems to ensure participatory planning. Use of indigenous knowledge systems in Government environmental planning activities also remains limited. A shortage of qualified environmental practitioners must be urgently addressed to improve understanding of environmental, climate change and disaster risk management issues as well as potential for coordination and resource mobilization.

In particular, Myanmar will need to undertake numerous initiatives to mainstream environment, climate change and disaster risk management into national development planning as a whole. It has not yet prepared a national climate change policy, strategies and action plan for adaptation and mitigation, while relative cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness analyses of adaptation and disaster risk reduction options and technologies need to be identified and assessed. Climate- and disaster-resilient infrastructure for early warning, emergency response and social safety networks require strengthening, as does regional and international cooperation on environmental issues.

Significant data gaps

Critically, integrated vulnerability assessments, reliable data and information for scientific planning and informed decision making are highly insufficient. This inhibits not only policy formulation but also monitoring of initiatives on the environment, climate change and disaster risk management.

2.6.4 Development Priorities for Ensuring Environmental Sustainability

Enhance livelihood options and increase awareness

Overall awareness related to issues of environment, climate change and disaster risk management must be strongly raised, and could be well addressed by NGOs. With regard to inclusive growth, enhancement of livelihood options could reduce pressures on natural resources, as could ensuring that local communities participate in and benefit from local natural resource-based businesses and industries. Government should be supported to set priorities for investment and establish financial and regulatory frameworks to promote pro-poor "green growth."

Encourage innovative governance

Turning to the significant issues of governance raised in Section 2.6.3, systematic technical and institutional capacity building, including in linkages between poverty and environment, will be required to mainstream environment, climate change and disaster risk management issues into overall development policies and plans. Compliance with international conventions and

⁸² UN-Habitat via Department of Housing and Human Settlements, Ministry of Construction, Myanmar

⁸³ United Nations Statistics Division, Millennium Indicators Database 2010.

⁸⁴ IHLCA 2010.

⁸⁵ First Myanmar Hyogo Framework for Action Progress Review and Reporting Workshop, 21-22 June 2010, Nay Pyi Taw.

⁸⁶ Tripartite Core Group, op. cit. More than half of households living in the most affected townships were reported to have lost all food stocks during the cyclone.

⁸⁷ Personal confirmation with staff of Save the Children in Pakokku Township.

standards should be heightened. The Environmental Impact Assessment regulatory regime and enforcement capacity require strengthening, as do similar regimes related to illegal use of natural resources and wildlife. Including environmental costs in national accounts will be beneficial. Strengthening decentralized planning and management likewise should be encouraged, while demonstration of pilot initiatives should play an important role in engagement of numerous stakeholders at different levels; for example, use of regional best practices in community-based disaster and adaptation activities offer excellent potential. Stronger coordination among Government agencies will enhance effectiveness of planning and implementation, while in the private sector, Corporate Social Responsibility programmes in support of the environment must be encouraged. Lastly, the

international community should support Myanmar in accessing international funding and building regional and international cooperation, particularly for climate change adaptation.

Improve data and information apacities

Strengthening capacities in information systems, statistics and research will be essential for achievement of MDG7 as well as progress on climate change adaptation and mitigation and disaster risk management. Data systems will need to be built to track and monitor important indicators, underpinning strengthened science and technology development. Environmental education activities should be increased.

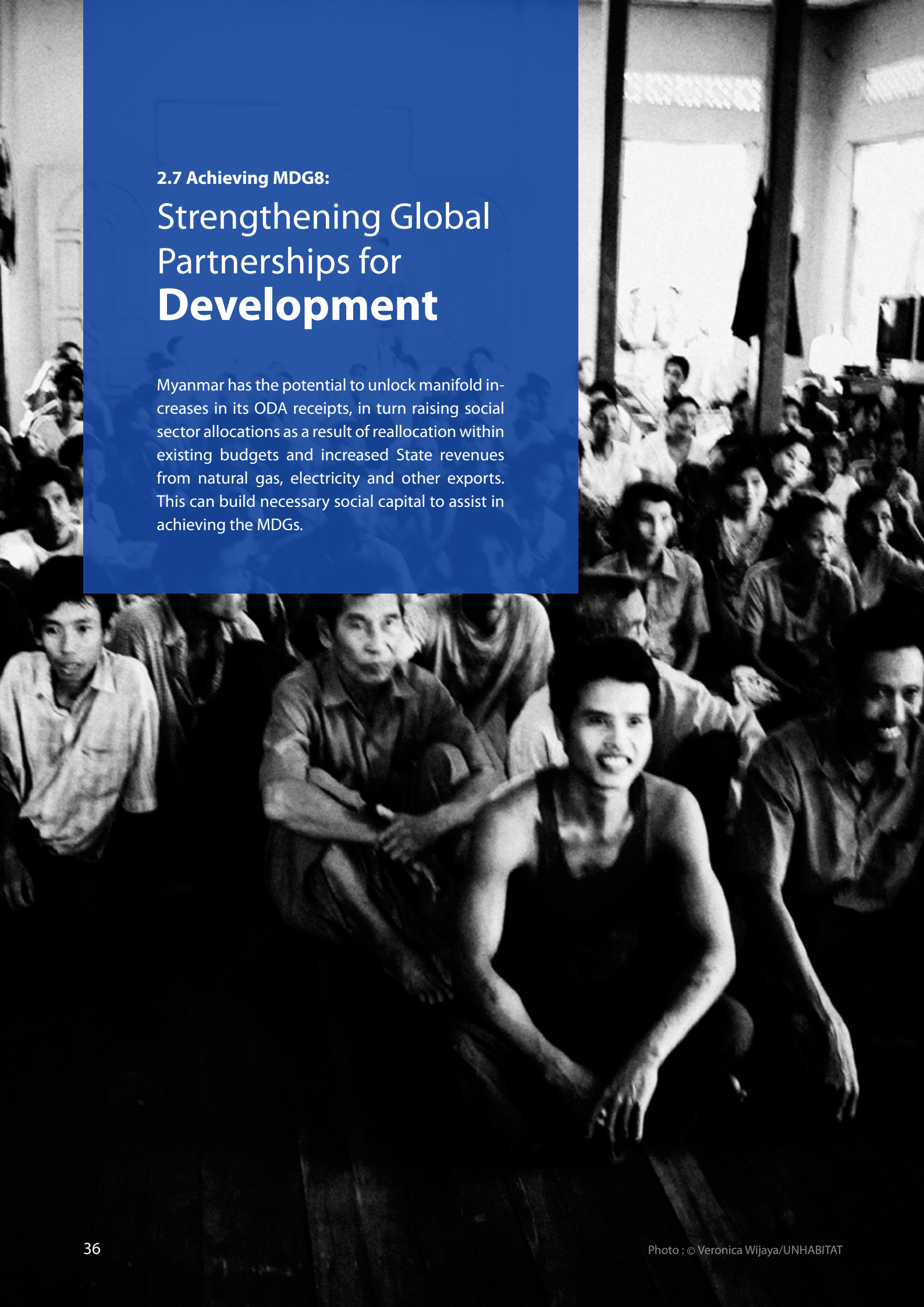
⁸⁸ The paradox that countries and regions with an abundance of natural resources tend to have less economic growth and worse development outcomes than countries with fewer natural resources. This is hypothesized to happen for many different reasons, including a decline in the competitiveness of other economic sectors, volatility of revenues from the natural resource sector due to exposure to global commodity market swings, government mismanagement of resources, or weak, unstable or corrupt institutions.



2.7 Achieving MDG8:

Strengthening Global Partnerships for Development

Myanmar has the potential to unlock manifold increases in its ODA receipts, in turn raising social sector allocations as a result of reallocation within existing budgets and increased State revenues from natural gas, electricity and other exports. This can build necessary social capital to assist in achieving the MDGs.



2.7.1. Introduction

Achievement of MDGs 1 to 7 critically depends on MDG8, which is designed to strengthen development partnerships between developed countries, developing countries and the international community. This Goal calls on developed countries to provide increased Official Development Assistance (ODA), relieve debt burdens and give developing countries fair access to their markets and technology. For Myanmar, taking advantage of this enabling environment is vital to achieve overall development progress.

2.7.2 Development Situation and Trends

As illustrated in Figure 1, globally ODA has followed an upward trend over the past 50 years and has been boosted following a series of high-profile international conferences in the early 2000s. In 2002, the International Conference on Financing for Development held in Monterrey, Mexico, set firm targets for each donor and marked the upturn of ODA after a decade of decline. In 2005, donors made further commitments to increase their aid at the Gleneagles G8 and UN Millennium+5 summits. Despite the recent financial crisis, ODA flows have continued to rise to 2009 and are expected to reach USD 126 billion in 2010. This is the highest USD figure ever recorded, of which some one-third of total aid flows are committed to LDCs, including Myanmar.

ODA flows to Myanmar had decreased dramatically in conjunction with the political crisis in the late 1980s, dropping to a historic low in 1996 to approximately USD 39 million. ODA to Myanmar increased gradually between 1997 and 2007 in real terms, and 2008- the year of Cyclone Nargis- saw a 170 percent increase in ODA from the previous year at USD 534 million, with about 60 percent provided as humanitarian assistance.⁸⁹ In 2009, of the to-

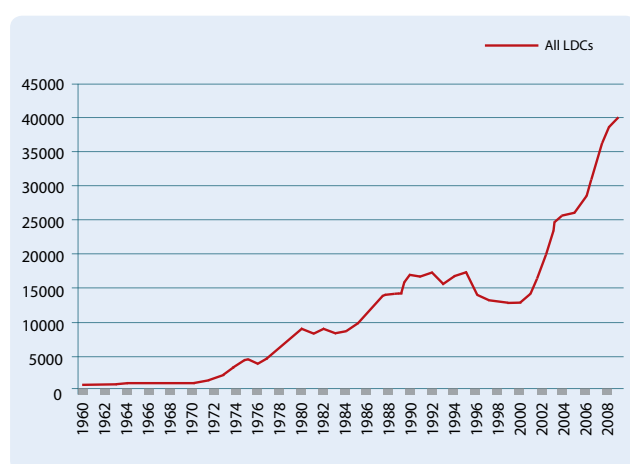


Figure 1: ODA to all LDCs USD million (1960-2010) (Source: OECD)

tal USD 364 million provided, USD 179 million were for humanitarian assistance.

In contrast to other developing countries in the region, Myanmar is lagging far behind in aid allocation, both in real terms and per capita, as can be seen in Figure 2. Between 1990 and 2007, Myanmar's ODA per capita has been less than USD 5, the lowest amongst all LDCs in the world. Even in 2008, when Myanmar was at its peak in real term allocation at USD 10.8 per capita, Cambodia received USD 51.0 and Lao PDR USD 79.8. In 2008, Myanmar's ODA per capita stands at USD 7.1 in 2009 and USD 5.6 in 2010, showing again a downward trend.

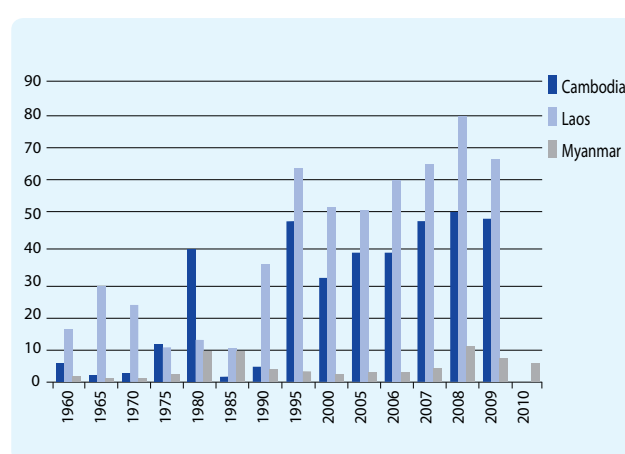


Figure 2: ODA per capita Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar (Source: OECD)

The downward trend demonstrates that serious challenges remain to establishing development partnerships in Myanmar. ODA is predominantly provided by bilateral development agencies;⁹⁰ Myanmar does not have access to loans and grants from international financial institutions such as the World Bank or Asian Development Bank.

Many development partners continue to work in Myanmar under a number of restrictions. In turn, this has restricted Government access to international technical support and funding. At the same time, several donors have expanded their presence in the country recently. While restrictions on many members of the international community have traditionally led to the focus on humanitarian assistance noted above,⁹¹ over the last five years there also has been an increased focus on longer-term development assistance.

Trade and Foreign Direct Investment by members of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), particularly Thailand,⁹² offer considerable promise for development investment; the agreement to establish an ASEAN free trade area by 2015 is likely to have an impact on Myanmar in the coming years. The Repub-

lic of Korea and Japan also are increasing their presence in the Myanmar economy. Some observers have estimated that the potential exists to upscale ODA by at least a factor of 10 and should be considered a priority in Myanmar's development.

Further commitments from development partners and Government alike will be necessary to deepen such positive experiences. As in any country context, public sector investments in health and education will be paramount to achieve progress against the MDGs, with the Government holding primary responsibility to develop its capacities and prioritize its investments; ODA, whether at current levels or upscaled, will always constitute only a catalytic contribution. The evidence suggests that these catalytic investments are possible in Myanmar, however, and that with appropriate action from the public sector, progress on the MDGs can be accelerated. Meanwhile, other lessons from successful partnerships also indicate that there needs to be adequate space for evidence-based policy dialogue, which include strong programme monitoring and evaluation using reliable data. Engagement with local-level actors, including local authorities and Civil Society Organizations, will prove crucial.

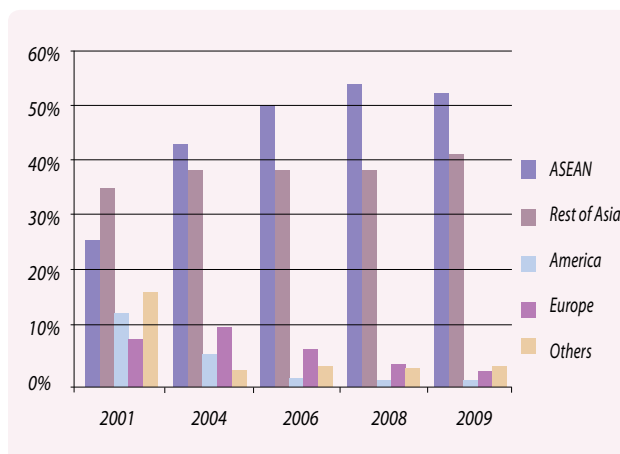
Box 1: Three Diseases Fund in Myanmar

In three full years of implementation, the Three Diseases Fund (3DF) has proven that aid can effectively be delivered within Myanmar, with US\$91 million in ODA used between 2006 and 2009 alone. Tens of thousands of lives have been affected: For those living with HIV, resources are more widespread and easily accessed for supportive care and treatment; for people living in malaria-endemic regions and migrant workers, there exists improved access to treated bed nets, diagnosis and care; and free provision of directly observed treatment and availability of drugs has relieved the lives of people with tuberculosis across the country and led to an 85 percent treatment success rate for more than 41,000 cases detected in 2009. By the end of June 2010, 3DF was supporting 27 HIV projects, eight tuberculosis projects, nine malaria projects and four integrated projects. The Ministry of Health and local administrations are involved in the 3DF effort, through dialogue at central level and support for services provided at township level. Donors include Australia, Denmark, the United Kingdom, Economic Commission, Netherlands, Norway and Sweden, while the United Nations and NGOs work as implementing partners.

As an LDC, Myanmar has the potential to use internationally agreed support measures for open, rule-based, predictable and non-discriminating market access under MDG8, including tariff- and quota-free access for LDC exports,⁹³ enhanced programmes of debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC), and more generous ODA for countries committed to poverty reduction. Explicit recognition also exists for domestic capacity development initiatives to assist LDCs to better manage trading opportunities, and for Aid for Trade, the global monitoring of which takes place at the World Trade Organization and through the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD.

There exist significant trade and investment opportunities in the region that can be exploited by Myanmar through greater regional, sub-regional and South-South cooperation, for example, with ASEAN, China and India becoming major trading partners (see Figure 4 and Section 2.7.4).

Figure 4. Myanmar Exports by Regional Bloc (2000-2009)



Sources: Central Statistical Organization, MNPED, Statistical Yearbook 2008, Economic Indicators 2010.

In terms of other MDG8 targets, Myanmar exhibits progress but still has some way to go. Unemployment of young people is a major determinant of poverty in the country, with IHLCA surveys indicating that youth unemployment stood at 4.1 percent in 2005 and 3.8 percent in 2010. About 1 million youth become active in the labour force each year. Lack of employment opportunities overall is exacerbated by slow growth of the manufacturing sector; strengthening a business-friendly environment, supporting a legal system for SME development and developing an efficient banking system all represent key elements in reaching the target in time. Meanwhile, access to essential drugs has improved considerably, according to official statistics, from 17.5 percent in 1997 to 74 percent in 2005. Essential drugs are available free to the poor and on a community cost-sharing basis for the non-poor; a Revolving Drug Fund has been established in every township. Lastly, the telecommunications sector has shown

notable growth in recent years,⁹⁴ but ICT usage remains low compared to neighbouring countries.⁹⁵ Internet users increased from 0.02 percent in 2003 to only 0.22 percent in 2009, showing that the benefits of new technologies are still out of reach for the vast majority of the population and that supportive measures are needed to accelerate ICT growth in Myanmar.

2.7.3 Key Barriers to Strengthening Global Partnerships

External barriers

As indicated in Section 2.7.2, political considerations remain a barrier to global partnership with Myanmar. Removal of the Generalized System of Preference on Myanmar's exports has further hampered trade and foreign exchange revenues. At the same time, the composition of Myanmar's exports clearly shows its dependence on a limited range of primary products and commodities, particularly natural gas, agriculture, forest products, garments and fisheries. In another challenge, recent foreign direct investment (FDI) flow to the country has been largely focused on resource-based industries such as power, natural gas exploration and mining rather than the labour-intensive manufacturing industry. Thus, there has been no substantial impact from FDI on employment creation and technology transfer to Myanmar.

Internal barriers

Internal barriers, as with progress toward other MDGs, are primarily focused on limited capacities and incomplete policy frameworks, exacerbated by limitations on private sector opportunities that can stimulate pro-poor growth. Particular attention needs to be given to creating an enabling business environment and strengthening efficiencies in the FDI law, as well as in promoting good governance and strengthening democratic institutions and respect for human rights.

2.7.4 Developing Priorities for Strengthening Global Partnerships

Unlock the ODA potential

The international community has many good experiences upon which to build stronger partnerships in Myanmar, such as through the successful post-Cyclone Nargis partnership between ASEAN, Government and the United Nations. A recent agreement among the United Nations Secretary-General's Group of Friends for Myanmar that the three pillars of United Nations engagement – political, humanitarian and development – are of equal importance also may lead to the review of key restrictions on United Nations programmes in the country. Public sector reform likewise will be critical to encourage such partnerships; sufficient attention must be given to management of ODA and public debt. Through appropriate fiscal management and policy reform, Myanmar has the potential to unlock manifold increases in its ODA receipts, in turn raising social sector allocations as a result of reallocation within existing budgets and increased State revenues from natural gas, electricity and other exports. This can build necessary social capital to assist in achieving the MDGs. For its part, the international community should strengthen its capacity development initiatives in Myanmar so that the country can have the right human resources and institutions to undertake and implement recommended policy reforms.

Promote market access

Myanmar will need to undertake a series of bold, far-reaching policy reforms if it is to benefit from the internationally agreed support measures that are in place for LDCs. It needs to create an environment where the private sector can play its due role in creating the productive capacity required to help the country

⁸⁹ These data do not include ODA from China and India, which is likely to be significant but is difficult to quantify.

⁹⁰ The United Kingdom is the largest provider of bilateral assistance, committing about US\$50 million in 2008, while the European Commission committed about US\$43 million in the same year.

⁹¹ Even before Cyclone Nargis, humanitarian aid stood at almost 30 percent – still a huge proportion in comparison with other country ODA profiles in 2007, such as less than 0.1 percent in Cambodia and less than 0.5 percent in Lao PDR.

⁹² Myanmar's largest trading partner and a source of foreign remittances through the 2 million workers from Myanmar currently in Thailand.

⁹³ Further highlighted in the Brussels Programme of Action for LDCs.

⁹⁴ For example, the proportion of telephone lines increased from 0.17 percent in 1990 to 1.62 percent in 2009, while more than 1.4 million mobile phones are in use in the country. Asian Development Bank, op. cit., and Ministry of Industry/Ministry of Post and Telecommunications, Chronicle of National Development: Comparison Between Period Preceding 1988 and After (Up to 31/12/2009).

⁹⁵ Ibid. The same source mentions that the percentage of population in 2009 with telephone lines, cellular subscriptions and Internet use stood at 10.37 percent, 122.57 percent and 25.8 percent in Thailand; 34.85 percent, 100.56 and 27.25 percent in Viet Nam; and 0.37, 37.78 and 0.53 in Cambodia.

effectively participate in international trade, including utilizing market access preferences set aside for LDCs. Myanmar also would be well advised to put in place a banking and financial architecture that will efficiently meet the investment requirements of the economy and facilitate trade financing needs of exporters and importers alike so that the private sector can effectively exploit opportunities in the region and beyond. It also will be necessary to modernize rules and regulations that govern foreign investment in the country and design an effective incentive structure so that FDI flows into activities that ensure employment generation and technology transfer.

Remittances, most of which are sent home by migrant workers employed in neighbouring countries, constitute a particularly important resource for Myanmar. The country will benefit from having a clear labour and migration management migration policy to protect and promote the interests of migrant workers, who generally come from very poor rural households. Some key dimensions of a national migration management policy could include the expansion of bilateral labour migration agreements within the ASEAN region, measures to gradually regularize the transfer of remittances, and skills training and awareness-raising among potential migrants. In this context, Myanmar will need to intensify its work with destination countries and other stakeholders so that migrant workers in-

creasingly benefit from working abroad while enjoying social rights and increasing protection from exploitation at destination.

Undertake regional and South-South cooperation

Regional and South-South cooperation provide excellent opportunities for a developing country like Myanmar to overcome the constraints of small market size as well as to reap the full benefits of economic specialization. Myanmar strongly requires both the mitigation of negative impacts of economic sanctions and market diversification to maintain economic growth and reduce poverty and inequality. To transform its economy for the benefit of its people, Myanmar should robustly engage with regional groupings such as ASEAN, the Greater Mekong Sub-Region (GMS), the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIM-STECC) and the Ayeyarwaddy-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACEMEC). In particular, Myanmar needs to move quickly to position itself to benefit from the ASEAN integration process before the 2015 deadline. Continued South-South cooperation with neighbouring countries such as Thailand, China, India and Bangladesh also can work to sustain overall development, significantly boosting intra-regional trade and investment and bringing fresh opportunities.



Section III

Conclusion

This analysis of the development situation indicates priorities for United Nations Country Team development cooperation in Myanmar in the years to come, so that the country can accelerate its efforts toward all eight MDGs, which are interlinked. While each United Nations Agency in Myanmar has its distinct mandate, some strategic goals and shared values consistent with global and national development agendas complement one another – and thus incorporate the roots of collaboration. Combining these considerations with the diversity of mandates of the United Nations has yielded the four broad areas in which support for Myanmar can be concentrated, thereby serving as a foundation for broader change. Again, these are:

- i. *Encouraging inclusive growth (both rural and urban), including agricultural development and enhancement of employment opportunities* (MDG1, with implications for MDGs 2, 3, 4-6, 7)
- ii. *Increasing equitable access to quality social services* (MDGs 2, 3, 4-6, with implications for MDG1)
- iii. *Reducing vulnerability to natural disasters and climate change* (MDG7, climate change and disasters)
- iv. *Promoting good governance and strengthening democratic institution and rights* (foundation for all MDGs)

Overall, root causes of many of these key issues can be traced to: governance structures still in the process of development; a shortage of qualified human resources that can propel socioeconomic reforms; underdeveloped support for rights holders' claims, along with a need for strengthened traditions of civil society participation; persistent variations in socioeconomic indicators, particularly by region, rural-urban divide and gender; and a need for strengthened sustainable resource use and

elimination of practices that can harm the environment.

The selected strategic priorities to guide cooperation are not intended to be fully inclusive of all stakeholders' interventions, but they do represent an explicit common response for accelerating MDG progress as against business as usual. The main criteria for proposing these four areas of cooperation are: priority national needs and potential for long-term impact on national goals; lessons learnt and good practices; and opportunities to strengthen both national capacities and international cooperation. By embracing a network of public, private and civil society actors who can help clarify and develop norms, embark on integrated activities, and monitor progress and performance, joint efforts can create a source of further legitimacy that complements traditional structures.

New windows of opportunity exist to address the desire for progress that the people in Myanmar hold. The strategic priorities will be coherently reflected by individual United Nations organizations in their mandated activities within the United Nations Strategic Framework 2012-2015. Organizations can build on their strong field presence, impartiality and credibility with Government and civil society, then act together to help conceptualize, implement and monitor country-owned development programmes and projects.

Myanmar must accelerate its efforts if the MDGs and their targets are to be fully realized by 2015. The United Nations can do much to assist in ensuring more secure future for all Myanmar's people, supporting a rights-based approach that underpins the development agenda. In so doing, the United Nations can work with the people of Myanmar to capitalize on its potential, and on unprecedented opportunities for sustainable human development.

The UN Millennium Development Goals



1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

- Reduce by half the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1 a day;
- Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people;
- Reduce by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.



2. Achieve universal primary education

- Ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling.



3. Promote gender equality and empower women

- Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015.



4. Reduce child mortality

- Reduce by two thirds the mortality of children under five.



5. Improve maternal health

- Reduce maternal mortality by three quarters;
- Achieve universal access to reproductive health.



6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

- Halt and reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS;
- Achieve, by 2010, universal access to treatment for HIV/AIDS for all those who need it;
- Halt and reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases.



7. Ensure environmental sustainability

- Integrate principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources
- Reduce biodiversity loss, achieving, by 2010, a significant reduction in the rate of loss;
- Halve the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation
- Improve the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020.



8. Develop a global partnership for development

- Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system;
- Address special needs of the least developed countries, landlocked countries and small island developing States;
- Deal comprehensively with developing countries' debt;
- In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries;
- In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications technologies.



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