

Department for International Development

The Department for International Development (DFID) is the UK Government department responsible for promoting sustainable development and reducing poverty. The central focus of the Government's policy, based on the 1997 and 2000 White Papers on International Development, is a commitment to the internationally agreed Millennium Development Goals, to be achieved by 2015. These seek to:

- Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- Achieve universal primary education
- Promote gender equality and empower women
- Reduce child mortality
- Improve maternal health
- Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- Ensure environmental sustainability
- Develop a global partnership for development

DFID's assistance is concentrated in the poorest countries of sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, but also contributes to poverty reduction and sustainable development in middle-income countries, including those in Latin America, the Caribbean and Eastern Europe.

DFID works in partnership with governments committed to the Millennium Development Goals, with civil society, the private sector and the research community. It also works with multilateral institutions, including the World Bank, United Nations agencies, and the European Commission.

DFID has headquarters in London and East Kilbride, offices in many developing countries, and staff based in British embassies and high commissions around the world.

WHAT IS A COUNTRY PLAN?

For each country where it works, DFID produces a plan for how it aims to contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. This Country Plan for Burma differs from those in most other countries in that there is not a Government-led strategy for reducing poverty to work from. This Country Plan therefore relies on DFID's assessment of the situation and consultations with a wide range of partners. This plan includes indicators for annual assessment of DFID's performance in implementing the plan. We will update this plan annually with a major review, leading to a new printed document, every three to four years.

Country Plan for Burma

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**Part 3 and Annex 4 are to be made available electronically on the DFID website, www.dfid.gov.uk. These are subject to change from time to time. Enquiries can be sent by e-mail to enquiry@dfid.gov.uk*

Alternatively, hard copies of Part 3 can be sent on request. Please phone 0845 3004100 or write to Enquiry Point, DFID, Abercrombie House, Eaglesham Road, East Kilbride, Glasgow G75 8EA

Summary

- 1.1 Burma¹ is one of the poorest countries in Asia and is not on track to achieve any of the Millennium Development Goals. Available poverty indicators are comparable to Cambodia and Laos. Burma is one of three countries in Asia with a generalised HIV/AIDS epidemic and prevalence rates are rising.
- 1.2 The limited efforts of the ruling State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) to promote development are not having an impact. Despite official statistics suggesting very rapid economic growth, in reality the economy has largely stagnated as a result of economic mismanagement and policies and practices that discourage private enterprise. Public investment in education and healthcare combined is less than \$1 per person each year – one of the lowest levels in the world. Corruption and arbitrary decision-making are a problem at all levels of authority.
- 1.3 The military remains in power with no progress so far at achieving a political settlement with the democratic opposition or the ethnic nationalities. A National Convention to draft a new constitution has recommenced although there is not yet any indication that this process will be more inclusive and transparent than before. Progress towards a political settlement in Burma is an essential ingredient for significant pro-poor development and until such progress is made large-scale, sustainable poverty reduction will remain out of reach.
- 1.4 Low level conflict with ethnic groups continues in some areas and although the SPDC has been able to agree ceasefires with a number of groups a permanent political settlement is needed. The impact of conflict includes human rights abuses and there are large numbers of refugees in neighbouring countries and internally displaced people inside Burma.
- 1.5 Poor people in Burma face pressing humanitarian needs as well as other urgent problems such as HIV/AIDS. Despite a very difficult environment for poverty reduction, we have a duty to address these needs and to make whatever progress we can to tackle poverty. DFID's purpose and objectives for its work in Burma over the next three years will be:

Purpose:

- Increased opportunities for the poor and excluded people of Burma.

Objectives:

- Reduced incidence of communicable and vaccine-preventable diseases, particularly in vulnerable and marginalised populations.
- Enhanced food security and productive assets for the poor.
- Increased access to quality basic education for poor people.
- Increased prospects for successful transition to a democratic society.

- 1.6 Tackling HIV/AIDS will be essential to all four objectives and will remain a top priority for DFID's work in Burma. Deepening our understanding of the context of Burma and learning lessons will be integral to our work, especially during the first year of this plan. We expect to spend around £5 million each year over the next three years.
- 1.7 Although the prospects for change look bleak at present, change will come eventually. We will seek to put in place foundations for good donor practice now while the volume of donor activity is relatively small.

¹ All references to Burma in this document refer to the state called variously Union of Myanmar, Union of Burma or Myanmar Naing-ngan. References to the Burmese people include all ethnic groups living in and associated with the country.

Part 1 – Context

A. The challenge

Poverty in Burma

2.1 Burma is one of the poorest countries in Asia. It is classified by the United Nations as one of the 49 Least Developed Countries in the World. Reliable data about poverty in Burma is scarce, but the evidence indicates widespread poverty and vulnerability (see box 2.a). Burma is almost certainly not on track to achieve any of the Millennium Development Goals.

BOX 2.A: WHAT IS THE SCALE OF POVERTY IN BURMA?

Data does not exist to definitively quantify how many of the 50 million people in Burma live in poverty. A household survey from 1997 found that 23% of people (11.2 million) had an income below subsistence level². The percentage of poor people earning less than \$1 a day is likely to be significantly higher than this. The same government survey found that 70% of household expenditure was on food, an indicator of the vulnerability of poor people in Burma.

2.2 There is widespread malnutrition with one in three children aged five being moderately to severely malnourished. In 2001, 109 of every 1000 children died before they reached the age of five, double the East

Asia and Pacific regional average. Maternal mortality is among the highest in the region. Only 40% of children complete five years of primary education. As table 2.b shows, poverty in Burma is a great deal higher than the regional average, comparable to Cambodia and Laos on available measures.

2.3 Social sector spending fell steadily during the 1990s and the authorities now spend less than \$1 per person each year on basic health care and education combined. This is one of the lowest levels of public investment in the world. Over 40% of public expenditure supports the military on which the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC)⁴ relies for political and economic control over the country. Public sector salaries are way below a living wage and teachers, doctors and other public servants are forced to either supplement their income through unofficial charges or undertake additional income earning activities. Most poor people rely on informal, private healthcare providers, often receiving poor quality or ineffective treatment as a result. Although education has traditionally been highly valued in Burma, its quality is being undermined by under-investment in the crumbling public education system.

2.4 Many of the poorest and most vulnerable people live in the border areas although there is considerable poverty throughout the country, in both rural and urban areas. Ongoing conflict exacerbates an already difficult development environment. Ethnic nationalities are among the poorest and most socially excluded people in Burma.

TABLE 2.B: POVERTY DATA FOR BURMA AND SELECTED COUNTRIES IN THE REGION³

Country/region	Population (millions)	Life expectancy at birth (years)	Child malnutrition (%)	Under five mortality rate (per 1000 live births)
Burma	50	57	43	109
Cambodia	12	54	45	138
Laos PDR	5	54	40	100
Vietnam	80	69	34	38
China	1,272	70	10	39
East Asia and Pacific average	1,823	69	15	44

² The UN is supporting a further household survey which will provide valuable new data on poverty in Burma.

³ Data from World Bank World Development Indicators, 2003. Internationally comparable data was not available for key poverty indices including numbers of people living on less than a dollar a day, primary school completion or births attended by skilled health personnel.

⁴ Burma is currently ruled by the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), made up of 12 senior military commanders and headed by Senior General Than Shwe. Government ministers wield comparatively little power.

- 2.5 The SPDC has signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and argues that women traditionally enjoy equal status with men. But women are not included in any senior decision-making bodies. There is insufficient gender disaggregated data to give a clear picture of gender equity in Burma, but in 2002 the Gender-related Development Index⁵ ranked Burma 106 out of 146 countries, indicating that gender equity remains a cause for concern.
- 2.6 There is well-documented evidence of human rights abuses against women. Several international organisations have reported that rape by the military is frequent in conflict areas. The SPDC has acknowledged that trafficking of women and children in Burma is a problem⁶. Overall it seems likely that the reality for women in Burma, as in all poor countries, is that they tend to be poorer, more vulnerable and suffer greater barriers to securing their rights than men.
- 2.7 HIV/AIDS is a major public health risk in Burma. 420,000 people are estimated to be infected with the virus⁷ and prevalence continues to rise. Prevalence in pregnant women exceeds 2%⁸ indicating that the epidemic has spread from high-risk groups into the general population. The authorities have taken some steps in response to the situation. However, a comprehensive and transparent response is needed to prevent HIV/AIDS from having a devastating impact on health as well as social and economic development in Burma.

Military rule

- 2.8 At the time of independence from Britain in 1948 Burma was expected to become one of the most prosperous countries in Asia due to its rich natural resources and comparatively strong human resource base. But there has been little progress in building a nation from Burma's diverse groups. The country has been under de-facto military rule since a coup in 1962. Even during the period as a one-party (the Burma Socialist Programme Party) civilian state (1974-88), the military still dominated decision-making and the government sought to control all aspects of the economy while

pursuing a policy of isolation from the rest of the world. Mismanagement and corruption contributed to economic decline and increasing poverty for the general population.

- 2.9 In 1988 resentment against the Burma Socialist Programme Party government led to widespread street demonstrations and demands for democracy. The army directly seized power, and announced that multiparty elections would be held. From 1989 onwards they brought in limited economic reforms aimed at encouraging greater private sector involvement in the economy. Elections were held in 1990, resulting in a landslide victory for the National League for Democracy (NLD) led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. However the military rulers refused to honour the results and hand over power or invite the elected representatives to draw up a new constitution. Those MPs were later given only a minor role in the National Convention, which began work on a constitution in 1993, but was suspended in 1996. In August 2003, the SPDC committed itself to pursuing a seven-step programme involving the reconvening of the National Convention to draft the constitution (which took place on 17 May 2004), a referendum, and national elections, to establish Burma as a 'modern developed and democratic nation'. But the timetable for these steps is unspecified, and there is not yet any indication that this process will be more inclusive and transparent than before.

Government policy

- 2.10 The SPDC has made some efforts to tackle poverty and problems such as HIV/AIDS, but these have yet to have an impact on the ground. The SPDC is unaccountable and decision-making is top down - there is no tradition or experience in government of consultation with or participation by those affected by decisions. Furthermore top leaders are insulated from the genuine situation in the country by a civil service that avoids giving bad news. Very limited development expenditures tend to emphasise physical infrastructure rather than delivering essential services and reducing inequality. Corruption and arbitrary decision-making at

5 UNDP Human Development Report 2002

6 The 2001 country report for Burma (Myanmar) to the Committee for the Elimination of All Discrimination Against Women - www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw

7 World Health Organisation: see <http://w3.who.sea.org/hiv aids/fact1.htm>

8 UNICEF

all levels of authority hinder implementation of policies and affect the poor most of all.

- 2.11 The SPDC seeks to extend its control into aspects of civil and social life that are private in most countries. There is a framework for legal registration of non-governmental organisations (NGOs). But the attitude and practice of the authorities discourages independent NGOs, and tends to limit their number, size and activities. With a mixture of threat and incentive, the SPDC encourages people to participate in government organised non-governmental organisations (GONGOS)⁹ whose leadership is drawn from the military commanders and their wives. Nonetheless some genuinely independent groups have registered, and many other civil society organisations exist, particularly at the community level, often under the auspices of religious and cultural groups¹⁰. While civil society networking is limited, some networks have re-emerged during the past decade, including among and between ethnic communities.

The economy

- 2.12 Burma remains at a low level of economic development, broadly on a par with Cambodia and Laos, two of the poorest countries in Asia. Agriculture still accounts for about 60% of GDP and most exports. There has been very little industrial development, with manufacturing only making up 7% of GDP, although there has been substantial foreign investment in the gas sector with gas exports to Thailand now being the largest foreign exchange earner. Official statistics suggest that there has been very rapid growth in Burma, but the figures are not credible. There seems to have been modest growth in the early 1990s, following some liberalisation of the economy. Since 1997, however, despite a stated objective "to build a peaceful, modern and prosperous nation", the economy has largely stagnated due to poor economic management and a reversal of many of the liberalisation measures taken earlier
- 2.13 There are still enormous barriers to private enterprise, including major exchange rate distortions, corruption, controls on trade, and arbitrary decision-making by those in power. There has been a sharp decline in foreign investment. The poor business climate has led Asian investors to withdraw, or stay away. This,

compounded by lobbying against investment and trade by pro-democracy groups (and in the case of the US, legal measures), has deterred Western investment.

- 2.14 Official government revenues, at some 4% of GDP, are amongst the lowest in the world. This, together with high defence expenditure and heavy losses by state enterprises, has led to budget deficits of approximately 5% a year, which have been financed by printing money. Consequent inflation has exceeded 50% in some years, eroding the real household incomes of the poor and landless, as well as public sector salaries. Inflation was significantly lower in 2003 but this was largely due to a domestic banking crisis that hit the economy and dampened domestic investment and consumer demand.
- 2.15 Much state revenue and expenditure occurs off-budget and the SPDC no longer publishes an annual budget. Revenue, both to supplement departmental and military spending, and individuals' salaries, is raised through a variety of informal taxes. These include unofficial taxes on both legitimate and illegal cross-border trade (including drugs), natural resource extraction (particularly timber), import monopolies and other restrictions that keep prices artificially high. Local civilian and military authorities also regularly demand donations of money, goods or labour. These charges all worsen the business environment and have an adverse impact on household incomes and living costs, hitting the poor particularly hard.

Conflict, refugees and migration

- 2.16 After independence, a number of ethnic groups within Burma engaged in armed conflict in an attempt to secure autonomy. Resultant low level conflict has persisted in many border areas resulting in incomplete Government control over the territory of Burma. This impacts both on immediate humanitarian conditions of the affected populations as well as longer term livelihood development.
- 2.17 Since 1989 the SPDC has reached ceasefire agreements with 17 armed ethnic nationality groups, giving them varying degrees of autonomy, and in some cases permission to retain ethnic militias, as well as business

9 For example, Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation and the Union Solidarity and Development Association.

10 A forthcoming study on 'Civil Society in Myanmar' conducted in 2003 by Save the Children (UK) estimates that there are 270 NGOs and 214,000 community-based organisations (CBOs) in Burma.

and natural resource concessions in return for ending armed insurrection. (Ceasefire talks with the last major group, the Karen National Union were underway at the time of writing). However, these ceasefires do not address the underlying issues of equity and distribution of power, and a comprehensive political solution is still needed. Additionally, most of the ceasefire authorities have minimal capacity to carry out state functions and lines of responsibility between these groups and the authorities in Rangoon are unclear. These factors hamper development in these areas.

- 2.18 More than five decades of political and armed conflict between the government and ethnic groups has resulted in severe hardship and substantial, sometimes repeated, displacement for the populations of conflict-affected areas. Large numbers of people have left their homes and remain displaced within Burma – in September 2002 the Burmese Border Consortium estimated that there are over 600,000 internally displaced people in Burma¹¹ hiding in temporary settlements or relocation sites. Others have crossed into neighbouring countries – approximately 140,000 Burmese refugees currently reside in refugee camps inside Thailand, and a further one to two million people from Burma live in Thailand, a majority of whom are likely to be economic migrants. Internally displaced people are among the most vulnerable but as a result of access restrictions and ongoing low-level conflict in some areas donors have found this a difficult group to reach.

Human rights

- 2.19 Human rights abuses by the authorities in Burma have been well documented by human rights organisations. These include forced labour, violence, arbitrary arrest and intimidation by security forces and displacement of

people from their homes. In its 2003 resolution the UN General Assembly expressed its grave concerns at the ongoing systematic violation of human rights, including civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, of the people of Burma¹².

Regional context

- 2.20 Incomplete control of some border areas, low-level conflict and a wealth of natural resources have led to significant illicit movement of goods and people across Burma's borders. Exploitation of forest and mineral resources has increased in the last decade, partly as a result of ceasefire agreements, with detrimental effects on local economies and the environment¹³. Poverty, conflict and lawlessness have all contributed to the production of opium and heroin in Shan State, although recent trends show a shift from heroin to amphetamine production. The leaders of the Wa Authority, the group in control of one of the major opium producing areas have announced their intention to end opium production by 2006.
- 2.21 Burma is strategically located between India, China and South East Asia. With the West, in particular the United States and the European Union, pursuing a policy of diplomatic isolation and sanctions to encourage Burma's rulers to recognise the need for political change, the SPDC has a policy of seeking strong relations with its neighbours. Members of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), of which Burma is a member, have favoured engagement, as has China, which is perhaps the country with the greatest influence over the SPDC.

¹¹ www.idppproject.org.

¹² The UN General Assembly stated the following:

"The UNGA has regularly expressed its grave concerns at the ongoing systematic violation of human rights, including civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, of the people of Myanmar, and in particular:

- i. Extra-judicial killing; continuing use of torture; rape and other forms of sexual violence persistently carried out by members of the armed forces; unsatisfactory conditions of detention; forced relocation; wide disrespect for the rule of law and lack of independence of the judiciary; trafficking in persons; forced labour, including child labour; destruction of livelihoods and confiscations of land by the armed forces and the violations of the right to an adequate standard of living, including food, medical care and education;
- ii. Denial of freedom of expression, including freedom of the media, association, assembly, and movement;
- iii. Discrimination and persecution on the basis of religious or ethnic background suffered by persons belonging to ethnic minorities, women and children;
- iv. The situation of the large number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and the flow of refugees to neighbouring countries, and recalls in this context the obligations of Myanmar under international law"

¹³ See for example Global Witness: A Conflict of Interests: <http://www.globalwitness.org/reports/show.php/en.00046.html>

TABLE 2.C: DFID AND EC BILATERAL ASSISTANCE SINCE 2001¹⁴

UK bilateral assistance		EC assistance (of which 20% attributable to UK)	
Year	(£ million)	Year	(€ million)
2001/02	2.3	2001	8.6
2002/03	7.0	2002	15.5
2003/04	3.4	2003	23.6

International assistance to Burma

- 2.22 Burma has never been a major recipient of bilateral or multilateral aid, thanks largely to an unfavourable policy environment, although prior to 1988 aid was a significant proportion of public expenditure. Following the 1988 coup, and the refusal of the SPDC to respect the 1990 election results, many major donors instituted a ban on bilateral development assistance. Neither the World Bank nor Asian Development Bank have programmes in Burma. Total development assistance in 2002 was \$121 million (\$2.5 per person, compared with \$39 per person for Cambodia) with Japan being by far the largest donor. At present UN agencies account for approximately \$37 million p.a. of humanitarian and grassroots assistance, with international NGOs implementing projects worth about \$20 million per year. In addition, some \$20 million a year is channelled through the Burmese Border Consortium (a consortium of NGOs working with refugees and internally displaced people on the Burma-Thai border).
- 2.23 The UK is the largest EC donor and has provided humanitarian assistance to help the people of Burma over several decades. DFID and EU assistance to Burma over the past three years is shown in table 2.c.
- 2.24 There is a limited ASEAN technical assistance programme. China provides some low interest long-term loans. Thai assistance has been tied to procurement by Thai companies, with the exception of Baht 20 million (US\$500,000) for the Yong Kha crop substitution project implemented by the Mae Fah Luang Foundation.

¹⁴ DFID and the European Commission have different financial years. Data for the last three financial years are shown in each case.

B. Lessons learned

3.1 DFID's experience of working in Burma has highlighted a number of lessons for the future:

- **We need to be realistic about what we seek to achieve:** donors cannot hope to substitute for lack of effective government action to reduce poverty. We need to set achievable targets and focus our efforts carefully on the highest priorities.
- **We need to take a long-term approach:** In the past there has been a mismatch between short term (mostly one-year) interventions and the long-term objective we are seeking to achieve. This impedes effective planning by partner organisations. Where possible we need to take a longer-term approach and enter into multi-year partnerships.
- **Policy change is possible:** Patient advocacy by NGOs and the UN on specific issues such as voluntary HIV/AIDS testing has been successful at changing SPDC policy. Change is achievable in the medium to long term if the case for change is presented in a way that both demonstrates the benefits for the people and does not challenge the SPDC. The international community should continue to push for concrete change to policies and practices of the SPDC that affect the poor.
- **Better analysis of the political economy:** We need a better understanding of how policy is made and implemented by the authorities, where decision-making power rests and the incentives acting on different people in the system. This will help ensure our programmes are focused appropriately to make the case for change in policy and practice by the authorities.
- **Donors need to, and can, work better together in Burma:** Effective co-ordination and learning among donors is especially important in a difficult context such as Burma. Early experience from the multi-donor "Fund for HIV/AIDS in Myanmar" has demonstrated that funding mechanisms which promote co-ordination and lesson learning can have a significant impact on enhancing the collective effort of donors.
- **Adequate human resources are needed to manage the programme effectively:** In the past, the Burma programme was managed from London with limited human resources, with individual staff struggling to free up time for Burma from other priorities. Transferring management of the programme to DFID South East Asia in Bangkok (Spring 2003) and the appointment of a DFID adviser to the Embassy in Rangoon (Spring 2004) have helped to address this.

C. Risks

4.1 The operating environment in Burma is one of the most difficult in the world. There are risks to DFID's reputation and money, as well as risks to achieving effective impact on the poor. Overall, we judge working in Burma is a medium-high risk endeavour. However, there are also opportunities. The environment is so difficult that unexpected positive developments that would significantly increase the scope for poverty reduction are possible. Tables 4.a and 4.b below set out our assessment of the major risks to/opportunities for DFID and poverty reduction in Burma:

TABLE 4.A: RISKS

Risk	Probability	Impact	Risk management
The regime is able to secure benefits or legitimacy as a result of DFID's work which enables it to maintain its grip on power	M	M	Design of programme to avoid regime capturing benefits or reaping undue legitimacy from our work
DFID funds are misappropriated or not used for their intended purposes	M	M	Careful design and rigorous monitoring of DFID interventions
Violent conflict increases, particularly in the areas around the border of Burma	M	H	Further analytical work on risk of conflict, ensuring we consider conflict issues in design of all our programmes
DFID fails to achieve impact on a scale needed to contribute significantly to poverty reduction in Burma as a whole	H	M	Appropriate balance between supporting a range of different organisations as well as those with a proven track record for high impact programmes
Continued macroeconomic mismanagement undermines scope for sustainable improvement in the lives of poor people	H	M	Take opportunities for advocacy (by us or others) with regime on macroeconomic issues, factor into programme design
The regime becomes actively hostile to donors or NGOs working in Burma and obstructs their ability to function in Burma	M	H	Keep authorities informed about our work to avoid misunderstandings
Lack of reliable data results in wrongly designed or focussed interventions	M	M	Work with other donors, UN agencies and NGOs to share available data. Contribute to plugging greater data gaps. Work initially on a smaller scale and in areas where good data exists. Undertake targeted analytical work where necessary
Forced or premature repatriation of Burmese refugees in Thailand if ceasefire talks with Karen National Union successful	M	M	Continue good links/ communication with Thai Government over plans for repatriation of refugees

TABLE 4.B: OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunity	Probability	Impact	DFID role
Political dialogue makes substantial progress at mapping out a path to a democratic, representative government	L (see box 5.b)	H	Support and engage with HMG's and international and local efforts to promote dialogue
Ethnic ceasefires open up areas of the country for humanitarian assistance	M	H	Continued advocacy for increased access for all humanitarian agencies
SPDC recognises its self-interest in promoting growth and poverty reduction	L	H	Take opportunities for advocacy with the regime on poverty reduction in targeted areas (e.g. HIV/AIDS), encourage dialogue between SPDC and ASEAN/China on development issues
Donors able to put in place good donor practice now in preparation for increased donor engagement at the appropriate time when change comes	M	M	Dialogue with donor partners on co-ordination mechanisms and donor practices, as well as change scenarios and donor responses

Part 2 – UK assistance plans

D. Why work in Burma?

5.1 Recognising the difficult context and the limited opportunities for major change in Burma, there are a number of reasons why DFID and others in the international community should remain engaged in Burma. These include:

- **Meeting humanitarian needs:** We have a duty to meet humanitarian needs, irrespective of political considerations or the policies of the government of the country in question.
- **Tackling or mitigating problems now to prevent greater negative impact in the future (including inter-generational impact):** Some problems, if not addressed will greatly increase the scale of the development challenge in the future. HIV/AIDS is an obvious example. If we can help tackle these problems now, even in the absence of wider change and poverty reduction, this will prevent more people falling into poverty and reduce the size of the task facing the Burmese people when positive change does come. This could include work to reduce conflict or the risk of conflict.
- **Incrementally influencing policy and practice by the authorities:** Experience does show that it can be possible to influence policy in some areas through patient advocacy (see lessons learned). Although progress will remain frustratingly slow without greater government commitment to poverty reduction, we should seek to take opportunities through our work in Burma to stimulate change in policy, practice or approach, without strengthening or lending legitimacy to the military regime.
- **Supporting activities that may help strengthen prospects for pro-poor change:** We will work especially closely with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on this issue including supporting their efforts to build effective alliances with Asian countries. We can support those who have ideas and want to demonstrate innovative ways to tackle poverty or, in the case of community

groups, support efforts to help people tackle their own problems. This could include ceasefire areas where ethnic nationality administrations have obtained a degree of autonomy from central government and are keen to adopt new ways of working. This could also include supporting a credible reconciliation process involving the authorities, political parties and civil society.

- **Preparing for change:** Change will eventually come to Burma and the international community needs to be in a position to respond quickly and effectively when this happens. We can also contribute to strengthening the preparedness of the Burmese people to take advantage of change, for example by building the capacity of civil society and supporting reconciliation initiatives.
- **Global or regional public goods:** Poverty in Burma has an impact on its neighbours in a number of ways. Cross-border transmission of HIV/AIDS is an obvious challenge for neighbouring countries. Conflict, illegal logging, illegal immigration and production of illicit drugs are other issues with a poverty dimension that have regional impacts.

UK approach in Burma

5.2 The current prospects for a major change in the political situation look bleak in the short term. The situation has changed little over the three years since DFID's last Country Strategy Paper was written as the extract in box 5.a shows.

5.3 The Common Position of the European Union sets the parameters for our work (see box 5.b). DFID's work is part of the overall UK Government approach to Burma. UK policy is to use targeted sanctions to persuade the SPDC of the need for political progress, but as far as is possible, to avoid measures which hurt ordinary Burmese people¹⁵. Making the Government more accountable and responsive to the needs of all the people of Burma is an important part of tackling poverty in Burma.

¹⁵ For more information about UK foreign policy towards Burma, see www.fco.gov.uk/Burma

BOX 5.A: PROSPECTS FOR POLITICAL CHANGE – EXTRACT FROM DFID 2000 COUNTRY STRATEGY

"The ruling junta is largely insulated from any impact from the poor state of the economy. They have weakened and marginalized the NLD, the principal voice of internal democratic opposition. The isolation of the junta from the international community, especially the West, has not yet brought any signs of weakening their resolve to maintain their authority.

In short, it is hard to predict how and when political change will come in Burma. But political reform and development are vital to Burma's development. Until this takes place, sustainable economic, social and human development will remain difficult, limited and fragile."

BOX 5.B EXTRACT FROM EU COMMON POSITION COVERING DEVELOPMENT AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE¹⁶

Article 5

Non-humanitarian aid or development programme shall be suspended. Exceptions shall be made for project and programmes in support of:

- Human rights, democracy, good governance, conflict prevention and building the capacity of civil society,
- Health and education, poverty alleviation and in particular the provision of basic needs and livelihoods for the poorest and most vulnerable populations,
- Environmental protection, and in particular programmes addressing the problem of non-sustainable, excessive logging resulting in deforestation.

The programmes and projects should be implemented through UN agencies, non-governmental organisations, and through decentralised co-operation with local civilian administrations. In this context, the European Union will continue to engage with the government of Burma over its responsibility to make greater efforts to attain the UN Millennium Development Goals.

Programmes and projects should, as far as possible, be defined, monitored, run and evaluated in consultation with civil society and all democratic groups, including the National League for Democracy.

¹⁶ The full text of the Common Position is available at <http://europa.eu.int/>

E. DFID objectives in Burma

- 6.1 DFID aims to achieve a tangible impact for poor people in Burma. However, we should also seek to improve the broader environment for poverty reduction in Burma. Over the next three years (2004–2006), our purpose and objectives in Burma will be:

Purpose:

- Increased opportunities for the poor and excluded people of Burma ¹⁷.

Objectives:

- Reduced incidence of communicable and vaccine-preventable diseases particularly in vulnerable and marginalised populations.
 - Enhanced food security and productive assets for the poor.
 - Increased access to quality basic education for poor people.
 - Increased prospects for successful transition to a democratic society.
- 6.2 The first three objectives indicate areas in which we hope to support improvements in the lives of poor people. The fourth is a crosscutting objective in which we will seek to pursue throughout our work. These objectives are broad and, with relatively modest resources, it is important that we recognise that DFID can only hope to make a modest contribution to achieving them. DFID will seek to achieve an impact beyond the impact of its funds: by helping to increase the effective use of finance from other sources; influencing policy or practice of the authorities; providing a platform for consultation and dialogue; learning from and sharing experience; and testing new approaches.

Health

- 6.3 Our main focus in the health sector will be on the major communicable diseases (tuberculosis and malaria in addition to continued support for HIV/AIDS work) and vaccine preventable diseases. We will seek to reduce the burden of these diseases through support to treatment and prevention activities that reflect international best

practice. We will deliver our support in ways which build upon the experience with the existing Fund for HIV/AIDS in Myanmar, maximise the effective use of all available resources (including from the Global Fund) and lay the foundations for a broad approach to health sector development. We will aim to ensure that efforts by different agencies are co-ordinated to maximise impact and promote compatibility between different delivery systems, for example central government, ceasefire authorities and those developed by non-governmental health care providers.

- 6.4 During consultations on the draft Country Plan, many of those who responded called for the inclusion of reproductive health in our objectives. DFID considers reproductive health to be an important part of the health agenda and agrees that there are urgent, unmet needs in Burma. However, with limited resources and already broad objectives, we conclude that, at present, our health priority should remain communicable and vaccine-preventable diseases. Our support to the Fund for HIV/AIDS in Myanmar contributes to part of the reproductive health agenda. We hope that other donors will be able to respond to wider reproductive health funding needs.

Livelihoods

- 6.5 DFID will support credible and realistic ways to improve the livelihoods of the poor in rural Burma, who make up a very large proportion of the population. Specifically, we will focus on improving food security and improving or creating productive assets for the poor. In the medium-term, we will aim to build a network of partners to enable DFID to support a wide range of poor and vulnerable communities, as well as to learn from the experience of others. In addition, interventions we support will also have the potential to build local capacity to plan and manage various resources more effectively. This includes building awareness and capacity to manage natural resources in a sustainable manner. We will focus on interventions that are based on clear needs assessments, that will result in tangible benefits for the poor and that will have an impact in the difficult policy and economic conditions in Burma.

¹⁷ This includes poor and excluded people in Burma and refugees from Burma living in neighbouring countries.

Education

- 6.6 Low completion rates of basic education, coupled with under-investment and declining quality, are a major threat to future prospects for poverty reduction in Burma. Possible responses include advocacy with the authorities as well as financial support to education programmes. DFID has not previously been active in primary education in Burma and we will need to explore the options carefully. We will consider the strengths and weaknesses of potential partners and the opportunities to make an appreciable difference to poor people's ability to access quality basic education. In considering choices on how we engage, we will prioritise those that best offer opportunities to promote policy change, more effective donor partnerships and coordination and learning.

Transition to a democratic society

- 6.7 It is difficult to overstate the enormity and complexity of the changes that will be needed to transform Burma into a modern, prosperous, democratic state capable of eliminating poverty. It will involve creation of new and strengthened institutions to promote faster development, greater accountability, reduced poverty and injustice as well as mediation of conflict. Changes to incentives, mindsets and attitudes that have prevailed for decades will be needed. These changes will take a long time, even with the full support of the leaders of Burma.
- 6.8 Within this process there are numerous challenges for civil society, weakened by decades of conflict and restrictions. Alongside our planned work to deliver services and improve livelihoods we will look for opportunities to support participatory decision-making, constructive dialogue, innovation and other work to build capacity and institutions that would assist Burma's transition. As well as integrating such approaches into our activities focused on livelihoods, health and education, we will consider supporting programmes focused on this objective.

HIV/AIDS

- 6.9 Tackling HIV/AIDS will be essential to all four objectives and will remain a top priority for DFID's work in Burma. We remain committed to the success of the "Fund for HIV/AIDS in Myanmar", our largest ongoing intervention. This programme has successfully brought together donors and implementing agencies around a common framework for action. We are committed to ensuring that this co-ordination leads to increased impact on the ground. We will ensure that HIV/AIDS issues are addressed appropriately in all the programmes we support.
- 6.10 See Annex A for a summary of DFID's ongoing work in Burma.

Geographical coverage

- 6.11 We are not at this stage narrowing our overall focus by geographical region. DFID will focus its assistance on helping the poorest and most vulnerable. Many of the most vulnerable live in border regions and a significant proportion of our support is likely to be directed to these areas. But there are poor people throughout Burma and we do not rule out supporting programmes focused on the needs of poor people in other parts of the country. Support will also continue to meet the needs of refugees from Burma in neighbouring countries.

F. Partnerships

- 7.1 The current scale of development activities is insufficient to meet the huge needs in Burma. DFID will need to work in partnerships if we are to have a significant impact. Development and political progress cannot be separated in Burma. We will continue to work very closely with other parts of the UK Government, particularly the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, to maximise impact on our collective objectives.
- 7.2 One of the challenges in Burma will be adapting established models of harmonisation and good donor practice to work in a challenging policy environment. The 'Fund for HIV/AIDS in Myanmar' has helped to bring key agencies (UN, other donors, NGOs and the National AIDS Programme) together to support a UN Joint Programme for tackling HIV/AIDS in Burma. But aside from HIV/AIDS, there are limited channels for donor assistance that bring together donor and implementing agencies around common objectives and a shared framework for implementation. We will, therefore, over time seek to identify or help develop such suitable funding mechanisms focusing on increasing impact, improving co-ordination, targeting and lesson learning amongst partners.

The SPDC and political groups

- 7.3 The SPDC needs to do much more to establish and effectively implement policies to reduce poverty in Burma. This includes improving the environment for poverty reduction, for example by reducing the constraints the authorities at all levels place on people's ability to organise to help themselves, or reducing informal taxes which inhibit poor people from accessing education. We will look for opportunities to make the case with the authorities for changes to policy and practice that will benefit the poor. At present our primary implementing partners will continue to be UN agencies and NGOs, although we will not rule out support through local civilian authorities where we are convinced that this is the best way to deliver, that the fiduciary risks are acceptable and that any such work is consistent with the EU Common Position.

- 7.4 We will consult with all stakeholders, including political parties, as appropriate to the specific programmes we support. This will include ethnic groups in areas where we work.

Multilateral agencies

- 7.5 The UN has a significant presence in Burma with a range of UN agencies active in the country. In the absence of the World Bank and Asian Development Bank, the UN's role is even more important than elsewhere. We expect the UN to be an important partner in our efforts to tackle poverty in Burma. We will support the efforts of the UN Resident Co-ordinator to position the UN as a neutral voice for development and poverty reduction in Burma. The UN will also have an important role in promoting effective co-ordination and knowledge sharing amongst UN agencies, donors and NGOs working in Burma. We will share knowledge and lessons with the World Bank and Asian Development Bank to assist their efforts to maintain expertise and knowledge about developments in Burma.

Bilateral agencies

- 7.6 Few bilateral agencies have staff based in Rangoon, although there are a number of staff working on aid issues based in Embassies. By far the largest donor to Burma over recent years has been Japan. Co-ordinating our work with that of the Japanese Government will therefore be essential. As our knowledge improves we will seek to share lessons and experience with other donors, including those who do not have programmes in Burma. Where we see opportunities to do more to meet humanitarian needs, we will encourage such donors to consider providing support to the people of Burma.

Civil society including non-governmental organisations (NGOs)

- 7.7 Civil society will be an important partner in our work in Burma. A diverse, capable civil society will be essential to support a successful transition to a peaceful, prosperous, democratic nation. Through our work we will seek to strengthen the capacity of civil society to successfully facilitate efforts of poor people to help themselves and

represent their interests to local authorities. This could include community groups, religious-based groups, non-governmental organisations, trade unions (who are not currently able to operate) and other groups. We will encourage the authorities to recognise the role of a diverse and active civil society in a modern Burma, and to change practices and policies that inhibit this.

- 7.8 We will also work with parts of civil society as implementers of poverty reduction programmes. We will support the work of selected Burmese and international non-governmental organisations, including on the Thai-Burma border, to meet priority needs of poor people.

Private sector

- 7.9 As in other countries, different parts of the business community can be a force for positive change in Burma or contribute to perpetuating the status quo. The domestic private sector is a potentially important partner for development in Burma, both as an investor and as a source of ideas and pressure for change. We will encourage changes in policy and practice by the authorities that support entrepreneurship and reduce barriers to enterprise, especially for small-scale and poor entrepreneurs. This is distinct from international investment which the UK actively discourages.
- 7.10 Through social marketing, the private sector can also be a conduit for expanding access to key goods and services to improve people's quality of life and reduce vulnerability. Social marketing of condoms is already working well and this method is being trialled with a number of other healthcare and other products valuable to poor people. Social marketing can be an effective way to supply key products to those with sufficient purchasing power, although other mechanisms will be needed to reach the significant proportion of the poorest people who are unable to afford such products.

G. How we will work to achieve our objectives

- 8.1 Working in Burma will entail difficult choices. How we work will be as important as the objectives we focus on. We will use the criteria in box 8.a to guide our work in Burma, including our choice of interventions. These criteria are not intended to be prescriptive but will be used as guidance for consideration of any proposed activity. The first two are essential for any work that we do. However, the others provide a checklist of factors that we regard as particularly important for our work in Burma. An intervention need not necessarily 'score' highly on all of these criteria: individual pieces of work may be worthwhile because of their contribution to one of these aspects.

Knowledge and learning

- 8.2 Burma is a complex, diverse society where reliable data on social and economic issues is scarce and access to information is limited. These factors, plus DFID's relative lack of in-depth knowledge of the country, mean that actively deepening our understanding of the context of Burma and learning lessons will be an essential part of our work, including learning from and with other development partners. In the initial stages of this Country Plan, we will seek to support interventions which, as well as contributing to our objectives, provide opportunities to increase our knowledge of the country and learn about how best to contribute to change and poverty reduction. As our knowledge deepens, we will tighten the focus of our activities further.

BOX 8.A: CRITERIA TO GUIDE DFID'S WORK IN BURMA¹⁸

1. Priority for reducing poverty and promoting human rights of poor people
2. Fit with EU Common Position
3. Political space in Burma to operate and make progress
4. Potential to contribute to prospects for successful transition to a democratic society
5. Potential for sustained or broader impact on policies and institutions, scope to scale up
6. Viable partners to work with, added value of DFID, coherence with work of others
7. Benefits (financial and political) not able to be co-opted by SPDC
8. Opportunities for enhancing knowledge, learning and building networks in the development community
9. Contribution to reducing the risk of conflict
10. Addressing problems now to prevent greater negative impact in the future (including inter-generational impact)
11. Contributing to delivery of global or regional public goods

¹⁸ These criteria focus only on issues that are particular to working in Burma. We will continue to apply good development practice on the range of key development issues such as sustainability and gender equity.

H. Resources and staffing

9.1 For financial year 2003/04 our total expenditure was £3.4 million. The main constraint is finding effective ways to work in such a difficult environment. Provided we can do so we expect to spend around £5 million each year over the next three years (see table 9.a). If there are effective opportunities to do more, we will consider bidding for additional funds from the Asia Performance Fund in 2005/06 and 2006/07:

9.5 DFID's small Burma Team does not have the management capacity to support a large number of separate interventions. The need to find management-efficient ways to work reinforces our preference for working through multi-donor mechanisms around a common implementing framework. In some areas, particularly livelihoods, we will consider a challenge fund mechanism for supporting work by civil society organisations. However, we recognise that the capacity of many potential partners in Burma is limited, and that

TABLE 9.A: PLANNED EXPENDITURE – 2004/05 TO 2006/07

Year	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Planned expenditure	£5 million	£5 million	£5 million

9.2 If the Government of Burma was to embrace substantive political change and demonstrate real commitment to poverty reduction and human rights for all – for example by reallocating scarce resources from the military to basic health and education services, backed by credible economic policies – the UK would be willing to substantially increase its programme in Burma, in line with the scale and depth of poverty in the country.

9.3 DFID is committed to ensuring that maximum value is obtained from its assistance and the SPDC does not benefit from exchange rate distortions. Products and services will be sourced in hard currency outside or inside Burma, or in kyats at the market rate. This applies to funding to UN agencies and NGOs as well as any money disbursed directly.

9.4 DFID's Burma programme will continue to be managed by DFID South East Asia in Bangkok. The Burma team in Bangkok consists of a mixture of programme management staff and technical specialists who focus part-time on Burma (none are full time). To increase our capacity to understand Burma and develop appropriate programmes, we have created an Adviser post in the British Embassy in Rangoon. This post was filled in spring 2004 and will enable us to better understand the context for poverty reduction and liaise more effectively with other donors and non-governmental organisations based in Burma.

support to strengthen their capacity will require time and patience on our part.

9.6 When looking at future staffing in Burma, we will explore the possibility of sharing resources with like-minded development agencies. This would be done with a view, when change comes, to building confidence in the donor community to re-engage/scale up in Burma in an effective and coordinated manner. We will seek to put in place foundations for good donor practice now while the volume of donor activity is relatively small.

I. Monitoring and evaluation

- 10.1 We will monitor progress against this plan at least every quarter, with a progress review six months into implementation. At the end of the first year of implementation, we will update the Country Plan, focusing on a summary of progress and identifying indicators for progress in the year ahead (changes will be published electronically, but new printed copies will not be produced).
- 10.2 We will also build robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms into programmes we support to ensure that funds are spent effectively and to enable us to learn and share lessons from these programmes.

Annex 1

DFID's existing programmes in Burma and with Burmese refugees

DFID's existing programmes are summarised below. The figures indicate the total funding for each programme. Disbursements can take place over several years:

Grant to 'Fund for HIV/AIDS in Myanmar' – £10 million over three years. The Fund for HIV/AIDS in Myanmar supports programmes that contribute to the UN Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS. The Fund brings together donors and implementing agencies including UN agencies, NGOs and the National Aids Programme and promotes co-ordination and lesson learning amongst partners.

Technical assistance to Fund for HIV/AIDS in Myanmar – £185,300, one year. This programme provided additional capacity to help set up and manage the Fund for HIV/AIDS in Myanmar.

World Health Organisation (WHO) – £246,578 over two years. DFID is supporting a WHO position to provide technical and operational support to strengthen the technical relevance and implementation of policies for the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS in the country.

BBC World Service Trust for Radio Soap Opera on HIV/AIDS and health messages – £1,249,179 over two years. This grant aims to raise awareness about health care including HIV/AIDS for people in Burma and to provide information and practical solutions, where they exist, to their everyday healthcare problems. The project will also support the efforts of people and organisations working to develop civil society.

Health Unlimited work on basic health care programmes in Wa and Kachin – £362,033, one year. This programme seeks to establish a basic primary health care service that covers 55,000 people in the Kachin Independence Organisation controlled areas and 82,000 people, prioritising women and children in Wa region. This was an extension of previous support to the Health Unlimited programme, which had been provided on a year-by-year basis.

Burmese Border Consortium food aid and relief programmes on the Thailand Burma Border – £450,000, one year. DFID provided funds via Christian Aid to support the Burmese Border Consortium to enable refugee communities to sustain a basic livelihood through provision of food and other relief items, whilst ensuring that the special needs of new and relocated refugees are addressed.

Coordination of health services at Thailand–Burma Border – £420,000 over two years. DFID is funding the World Health Organisation in order to improve the health of the population in the border areas of Thailand and Burma with a special focus on the health and humanitarian aspects of the most vulnerable groups.

Small grants to civil society organisations – £110,000 each year. The British Embassy in Rangoon operates the Small Grants Scheme that provides funds to a number of civil society organisations working to meet humanitarian needs and tackle poverty.

Street and working children – £451,224 over five years. DFID is supporting work by World Vision to improve the status and quality of life among children in Burma.

Community Action for HIV/AIDS Care and Support in the Mekong Sub-region – £236,295 over three years. This World Vision programme aims to develop community capacity and the growth of civil society organisations to respond to the ever-increasing threat of HIV/AIDS.

Looking Before Leaping: Migration and Trafficking of Vulnerable Women, Youth and Children – £235,352 over five years. This World Vision programme seeks to reduce the number of women, youth and children trafficked for sex work or other forms of exploitative labour by raising awareness among community members and community based organisations about trafficking and other risks of migration.

Annex 2

Process for producing this Country Plan

1. This Country Plan was produced by the Burma country team in DFID South East Asia who assumed responsibility for DFID's work in Burma in February 2003. The team worked very closely with colleagues in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office throughout the process. Before starting the Country Plan, the team met with a large number of stakeholders to gather information views and ideas about the humanitarian and poverty situation in Burma. Workshops involving DFID and Foreign and Commonwealth Office colleagues were held in September and October 2003 to develop key elements of the Country Plan.
2. We received valuable ideas and feedback from consultations on a draft of the plan held in February and March 2004. Consultation events were held in Rangoon, Bangkok and London and, in addition to DFID and UK Government colleagues, included civil society groups inside and outside Burma, the National League for Democracy, UN and other donors. Comments received during the consultations were taken into account before the plan was finalised.

Annex 3

DFID bilateral expenditure on Burma – 2000/01–2002/03

Programme	Expenditure (£000s)		
	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03
ICRC- Emergency Appeal		800	1,500
Fund for HIV/AIDS in Myanmar			1,500
PSI -HIV Et Reproductive Health			1,134
Assistance to Refugees on the Thai/Burma border	620	350	550
Care and Protection for Refugees		805	300
UNHCR- Repatriation and Reintegration of Returnees in Myanmar			607
UNICEF expanded programme on Immunization in Myanmar			567
Health Coordination at Thai/Burma border	261		
Polio – Acute Flaccid Paralysis Surveillance in Myanmar/Burma			207
WHO Post in Rangoon			128
Health Unlimited- Emergency relief and health training for the Kachin in Burma and on the Burma/China border	110	110	110
Street and Working Children	104	52	72
Condom Social Marketing to Improve Reproductive health	98		
Medecins Sans Frontieres- Basic Health Care Programme			95
Community Action for HIV/AIDS Care and Support		6	57
Financed technical assistance to Fund for HIV/AIDS in Myanmar			47
Migration Et Trafficking of Vulnerable People			20
Community Based Disability Prevention and Rehabilitation	27	21	13
Others	173	135	113
Total	1,393	2,279	7,020

Annex 5: Statistical annex based on international data

Burma					Region
	1990	1995	2001	2002	East Asia & Pacific
1 Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	2015 target = halve 1990 \$1 a day poverty and malnutrition rates				
Population below \$1 a day (%)	..	..	..	..	15.6 2201
2 Achieve universal primary education	2015 target = net enrolment to 100				
Net primary enrolment ratio (% of relevant age group)	..	..	83.2	..	92.7 2001
3 Promote gender equality	2005 target = education ratio to 100				
Ratio of girls to boys in primary and secondary education ((%)	94.7	95.4	97.8	..	97.4 2001
4 Reduce child mortality	2015 target = reduce 1990 under 5 mortality by two-thirds				
Under 5 mortality rate (per 1,000)	130.0	117.0	109.0	110.0	41.0 2002
5 Improve maternal health					
Births attended by skilled health staff (% of total)	..	56.4	..	..	70.0 2001
6 Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases	2015 target = halt, and begin to reverse, AIDS, etc				
Prevalence of HIV, female (% ages 15–24)	..	..	1.7	..	0.2 2001
7 Ensure environmental sustainability	2015 target = various (see notes)				
Access to an improved water source (% of population)	..	..	72.0	..	75.9 2001
Aid Need and Resources					
UK bilateral aid (£m)			1.2	4.3	
UK bilateral share of total aid (%)			1.4	5.1	
Total aid from all sources (£m)			88.3	83.7	
Total aid per poor person (£)			..	..
Number of DFID staff directly involved			..	..
Poor people per DFID staff member (thousands)			..	..
General Indicators					
Population (millions)	40.5	44.4	48.3	48.9	1800 2002
GNI per capita (\$)	..	..	..	..	950.0 2002
Life expectancy at birth (years)	54.7	55.7	56.9	57.2	69.4 2002
Source: World Development Indicators Database, April 2002, Statistics on International Development					

