

# Asia Issues

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## Burma

### Key Messages

- Burma is a resource-rich country that suffers from abject poverty: 25% of the 51 million population are estimated to live below the poverty line and a higher percentage live on less than \$1 per day, although Burma is data-poor and statistics are often inaccurate or out of date
- Years of poor economic and social sector policies have severely weakened Burma's infrastructures in areas such as health care and education - 1 million children suffer from malnutrition. HIV/AIDS is a major public health risk - up to 440,000 people are estimated to be infected, making it the second-worst epidemic in Asia after Cambodia.
- Since the military's takeover of Burma in 1962, the country's economy has deteriorated and Burma has a long history of human rights abuse. Most major donors do not provide bilateral assistance, mainly due to unsatisfactory policy and human rights environment and 40% of public spending is spent on the military budget.

### Overview / Progress on MDGs

- Almost certainly not on track to achieve any of the Millennium Development Goals
- Regime spends less than \$1 per person each year on basic health care and education combined - one of the lowest levels of public investment in the world.

### International and DFID Inputs

- Total development assistance in 2002 was \$121 million with Japan being largest donor UN agencies - \$37 million
- International NGOs - \$20 million
- NGOs working with refugees and internally displaced people on the Burma-Thai border - \$20 million
- Total domestic revenue = approx \$300m (at market exchange rate)
- DFID = £4m
- DFID broken down by sector:
  - Health, Health education and HIV/AIDS: £ £3.9m
  - Embassy-run Small Grants scheme: 0.09m

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### DFID's Focus

- Circumscribed by the EU Common Position – only humanitarian assistance
- Country Plan for three years beginning 2004/05 under preparation. Likely 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
- DFID Country Plan which aims to provide “increased opportunities for the poor and excluded people of Burma” will be published shortly
- The EU Common Position will continue to set the parameters for all our work
- Current focus:
  - HIV/AIDS: £10m over three years starting 2003/04
  - Support to British Broadcasting Corporation World Service Trust soap opera which focuses on health and HIV/AIDS issues
  - Annual funding for health interventions
  - Annual funding for support to refugees

### Country Level Examples

Fund for HIV/AIDS in Myanmar (to which DFID is the largest donor: £10m over three years starting 2003/04): This is a pool of money available to support HIV/AIDS projects in Burma; projects are prepared in line with the UN Joint Plan of Action on HIV/AIDS; and a recent project saw over 400 families receive monthly food packages over a period of nine months, as part of a home-based community care scheme for victims infected with HIV/AIDS.