

USAID/Burma

Annual Report

FY 2005

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Burma

Performance:

Background: Conditions in Burma continue to reflect the State Peace and Development Council's (SPDC, formerly called SLORC) thus far successful effort to maintain political and military control of the country. Despite multiparty elections in 1990 that resulted in the main opposition party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), winning a decisive victory, SPDC refused to hand over power. U.S. Government policies are increasing pressure on the SPDC to engage in meaningful dialogue with the democratic opposition leading toward a peaceful transition to civilian rule.

In 2002, the regime released NLD leader Aung San Suu Kyi from her most recent period of house arrest and freed hundreds of political prisoners. However on May 30, 2003, Suu Kyi's convoy upcountry was attacked; several NLD supporters were killed or injured. This prompted the arrest of Suu Kyi and many party leaders as well as closure of all NLD offices and activities. This has been an enormous setback for the opposition and the potential for any type of reconciliation or talks about power sharing. The SPDC has since presented its own 'roadmap' to democracy, which has been met with much skepticism by the international community.

In September 2004 Prime Minister Khin Nyunt was removed from his position and detained under house arrest. Numerous military intelligence officers who had reported to the PM were jailed. This is thought to be an effort by regime's leader, Senior General Than Shwe to further consolidate political, intelligence and economic power in the hands of hard line elements. It is unclear what impact these moves will have on the ability of social, political and educational entities to function in the country. The military is now more powerful than it has ever been, due to an aggressive recruitment program, improved weaponry, and cease-fire agreements with several ethnic armies that have allowed troops to be concentrated in fewer areas. The SPDC has cease-fire agreements with all but three armed insurgent groups representing the Shan, Karenni, and Karen ethnic groups, but all of these agreements are verbal, and were with PM Khin Nyunt. Extra-judiciary killings, torture, forced labor, portering, forced relocation, rape, and other abuses still commonly occur in most of the ethnic states of Burma. It is important to note that there is a likelihood of increased conflict in the short to medium term, and the potential for new large scale refugee and IDP movements is a real possibility.

U.S. Interests and Goals: United States interests in Burma include promoting democracy, supporting human rights and religious freedom, fighting HIV/AIDS, furthering effective counter-narcotics efforts, and promoting regional stability.

Donor Relations: The activities being funded under the earmark operate independently of the Burmese regime, and are coordinated with more than 30 other donor agencies through either the Burma Donors Forum, or the Coordinating Council for Support to Displaced Persons in Thailand. There are regular coordinating meetings, led by UNAIDS, among HIV/AIDS donors to try and maximize use of funds. Bilateral donor programs that focus on humanitarian assistance to Burma and to Burmese refugees include the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Australia, and the United Kingdom. Multilateral donors with activities in Burma include the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Development Program, the World Food Program, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Challenges: Economic policies pursued by the Burmese Government have resulted in a deteriorating social and economic situation. U.S. sanctions following May 30 have also added to the economic hardship, causing closure of several factories and making it much more difficult for Burma to operate in the international arena due to restrictions on use of dollars. While statistics are hard to verify, most agree that at least 13 million of Burma's 48 million people, more than 25 percent of the population, live below

the subsistence level of \$1.00 per day. According to the World Bank, Burma has relatively poor health indicators. Infant mortality rate is 77 per 1,000 live births, the under five child mortality rate is 109 per 1,000 children and the life expectancy is 57 years. In contrast, the infant mortality rate, under-five child mortality rate, and life expectancy in Thailand are 24, 28, and 69, respectively. Health care facilities are eroding and HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases are becoming endemic. Universities are sporadically open and the public education system is in very poor condition.

The intensifying economic hardship in Burma over the past decade has resulted in many Burmese relocating along the border with Thailand because of the relative safety, prosperity, and economic opportunities available in Thailand. In the 10 Thai provinces along the 1,800 kilometers border with Burma, there are about 112,000 displaced Burmese living in camps, about 129,000 registered Burmese migrant workers, and an estimated 280,000 to 465,000 unregistered (illegal) Burmese migrants.

Key Achievements: USAID's main partners in democracy activities are the Open Society Institute (OSI) and Internews. OSI grants scholarships and provides ongoing interim education to Burmese refugee students who have fled Burma and wish to continue their studies. In FY2004 more than 300 students in higher education were supported by OSI. Internews provided basic media management training courses and provided ongoing monitoring and coaching sessions for 54 media managers (including 12 women). Internews-funded media resource centers made it possible for all journalism and media professionals to access, free of charge, valuable information to improve their production, marketing, fundraising, office systems and technical skills. Internews also granted funds to media organizations to support the core costs of running their projects. In 2003/4, it granted six partner organizations for amounts of \$5,000 to \$12,000 per year.

USAID works primarily through International Refugee Committee (IRC) in the camps and International Organization on Migration (IOM) outside of the camps on health related activities along the Thai/Burma border. IOM FY 2004 accomplishments include: (1) health care training for more than 150 medics who work in the camps and as backpack medics inside Burma in the IDP areas; (2) sustained levels of maternal and child survival (an infant mortality rate of 29 deaths/1,000 live births) on par with those of surrounding Thai communities; and (3) the Mae Tao clinic in Thailand led by Dr. Cynthia Maung treated more than 30,000 refugees and IDPs living along the border. In addition, an outpost of Mae Tao Clinic inside the Karen State of Burma provided preventive and curative health services for approximately 15,000 IDPs living in 28 villages and communities near the border.

To address the needs of Burmese refugees that live outside of the refugee camps in Thailand, USAID signed a grant with IOM at the end of FY 2002 to work on migrant health issues, and at the end of FY 2004, to work on migrant rights issues. The Migrant Health Project focuses on Chiang Rai and Tak provinces and aims to increase the level of awareness on primary and secondary preventative and curative measures for basic primary health care, communicable disease control, and reproductive health conditions. In FY 2004, IOM held health promotion or training activities for nearly 25,000 migrants, or about 63% of the targeted population. Likewise, IRC helped more than 32,000 migrants to access public health centers. The new Migrant Rights Project aims to build capacity in Thailand to incorporate human rights approach in labor migration management.

Consortium is USAID's main partner in education on the border. Key FY 2004 achievements include the organization of discussions and bimonthly meeting among the Karen Education Department, ZOA Refugee Care-Netherlands and Consortium to plan and coordinate activities to maximize the efficiency of resource use in educational development activities inside the camps and in the migrant communities outside the camps. Management training was held for 78 school head teachers and camp leaders. Forty-five science teachers received training to teach the science curriculum and science activities more efficiently.

In the area of adult literacy and special education, significant results include the completion of Phase I of the Adult Literacy classes through a sub-grant to the Karen Women Organization (KWO). The KWO in Nupo will likely take responsibility for the continuation of the Adult Literacy School. Sixteen new students were enrolled in special education classes, bring the total up to 50 students for the school year. Thirty-

five teachers attended the workshop to discuss about standardizing the Karen Sign Language, Blind and Deaf curriculum in all Karen camps.

Gender: Gender is intrinsic to the USAID programs as most of the refugees receiving assistance are women and children. USAID is also building the capacity of women as leaders of the future in Burma. One example is a program in Chiang Mai, Thailand with the Burma Women's League which trained women leaders from several different ethnic groups from inside Burma. This lasted for several months and build inter-ethnic relationships while giving the women leadership and practical management skills to use in their home communities in Burma.

Results Framework

482-002 Promote Democracy and Aid Burmese Refugees

482-XXX 498-022 ANE Regional - Stabilize Population Growth and Protect Human Health