

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE SUPPORT PROJECT



Implemented by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)

MYA/96/010

The Human Development Initiative Support project is one of 10 projects under the United Nations Development Programme's multisectoral Human Development Initiative Extension (HDIE) programme in Myanmar. This complex initiative aims to eradicate poverty in some of the most disadvantaged areas of Myanmar. It targets the poorest people, by introducing a participatory and decentralized mode of development, and by strengthening local people's abilities to help themselves.

HDIE activities are funded by the United Nations Development Programme and are implemented by various United Nations agencies: FAO, Habitat, Unesco, UNOPS, and WHO.

HDIE projects

Three of the HDIE projects focus on improving agricultural production and increasing incomes. These projects are based in the Ayeyarwady Delta, Shan State, and the dry zone of central Myanmar. Another five projects aim to help Myanmar citizens improve their lives and livelihoods in specific areas: improving education, strengthening primary health care services, helping people avoid AIDS infection, building water supply and improving sanitation in villages, and providing small amounts of credit to help villagers build small businesses.

These eight projects focus their efforts on 11 of the poorest townships in Myanmar (of a total of 328 townships), and on the poorest villages in these townships. By concentrating its efforts in this way, the projects aim to achieve a significant improvement in the standard of living in these villages. In addition, some of the projects work nationally: for example, the AIDS project educates people at risk of AIDS in such as prostitutes and migrant workers throughout the country.

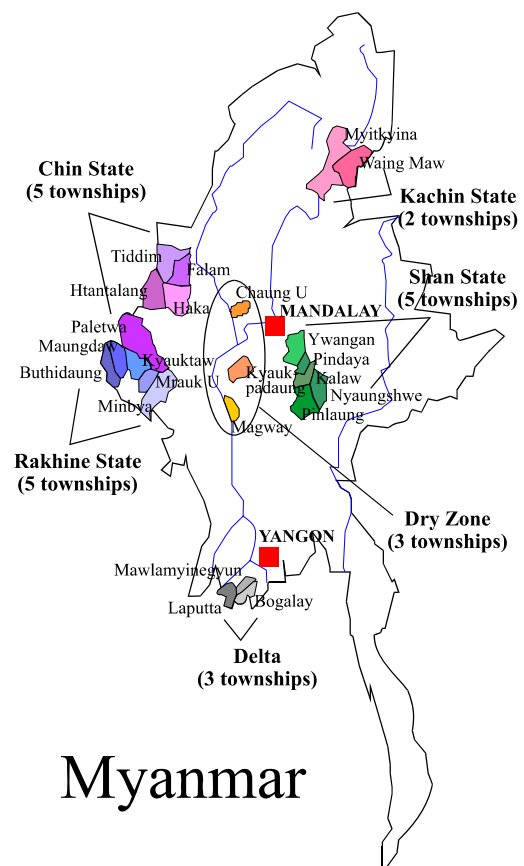
A ninth project provides integrated development services (encompassing agriculture, health, education, water supplies and credit) in a further 12 townships in the remoter areas of northern and western Myanmar.

The Human Development Initiative Support project

The tenth project, known as the Human Development Initiative Support project, provides support and services to the other nine projects. The Support project aims to help its sibling projects achieve their objectives – by providing services that would be uneconomic for each project to perform by itself, and by stimulating symbiotic linkages and synergies among them.

The Support project includes six components:

- Common services
- Integrated development management
- Research and analysis
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Training
- Information, education and communication



Common services

For services to be coordinated within each township and village, it is important to build strong teams of field-level workers and township managers. HDIE staff in each township are based at an office operated by the Support project; this provides office space and services such as transport, communication and photocopying. A Support project "human development officer" in each township manages the office, and coordinates the activities of his or her peers in the sectoral projects. Community development workers, recruited and trained by the Support project, are the front-line workers who work with villagers on a day-to-day basis. They are supported and coordinated by the human development officer and the sectoral specialists in each township.

Integrated development management

The Support project provides the glue that holds the various HDIE projects together in the villages and townships. The human development officers support planning exercises in their townships, and coordinate the formulation of a common programme framework. They host bimonthly meetings of community development workers, and also exchange information and ideas among each other through regular meetings, four times a year. Because the various HDIE project workers are in daily contact, they can coordinate their work: an education specialist can promote sanitation at the same time as a sanitation engineer is working with villagers to build latrines, or the micro-credit project can offer loans to farmers wishing to try out a technique introduced by the agriculturist.

Research and analysis

Myanmar's long isolation means that there is a lack of information on development problems and experiences on how to solve them within the country's special socio-economic and agro-ecological conditions. The Support project's research programme aims to fill this gap. It has introduced participatory research methods to support the HDIE programme, and implements studies to identify constraints and ways to overcome them. This includes process evaluation and documentation, the writing of case studies and village profiles, an analysis of community organizations, and a stratification of households to enable the better targeting of project initiatives.

Monitoring and evaluation

Much of the HDIE initiative is new and experimental in nature. Regular, systematic reporting of results is vital if HDIE staff and managers are to learn from project experiences and correct mistakes. The Support project operates an integrated, HDIE-wide monitoring and evaluation system that complements the sector-specific systems under each project. This M&E system includes monthly reports by community development workers, monthly progress statements for each township, quarterly reports by each project, and information to alert project managers to problems or to highlight successes.

Training

Because HDIE works directly in the field as well as through other organizations, it has a large field staff. Some are very experienced in development work; others are recent school leavers and must learn difficult, new techniques on the job. The Support project offers on-the-job training in areas common to all the HDIE projects: an orientation for new staff, team building, participatory rural appraisal, information and communication techniques, and village-level community development approaches. The Support project can also help the other projects conduct sector-specific training, for example on soil conservation or disease prevention.

Information, education and communication

Communication is key to the success of the HDIE initiative. The Support project provides training in communication and the development of cheap, easy-to-use media, provides information materials to township offices, coordinates information campaigns in the townships, and produces information materials for policymakers and visitors. It also provides support to the sectoral projects to produce information and extension materials for township and village use.