

THE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE



An integrated development programme in Myanmar, funded by the United Nations Development Programme

Despite its extraordinary potential and abundant natural resources, Myanmar remains a least-developed country with serious development needs. In 1996, with a population of 46.6 million, the country ranked 133rd out of 174 countries in UNDP's human development index:

- Three out of every four children do not complete primary school.
- 50% of the rural population does not have access to safe water.
- Only 3 of 5 people have access to primary health services.
- 230 of every 100,000 mothers die as a result of complications during pregnancy or giving birth—40% because of problems related to abortions.
- AIDS and the virus that causes it, HIV, are spreading rapidly.

HDIE

The Human Development Initiative (HDI) uses an integrated strategy to provide basic needs and alleviate poverty in some of the poorest areas of Myanmar. In its first phase (1994–1996), HDI consisted of 15 projects totalling \$25.6 million. The Extension phase (HDIE) began in late 1996; its 10 projects total \$52.1 million.

Both HDI and HDIE have the following three objectives:

- To improve rural people's living standards.
- To involve local people in planning and implementing activities that will benefit them directly.
- To strengthen local people's abilities to develop their community further.

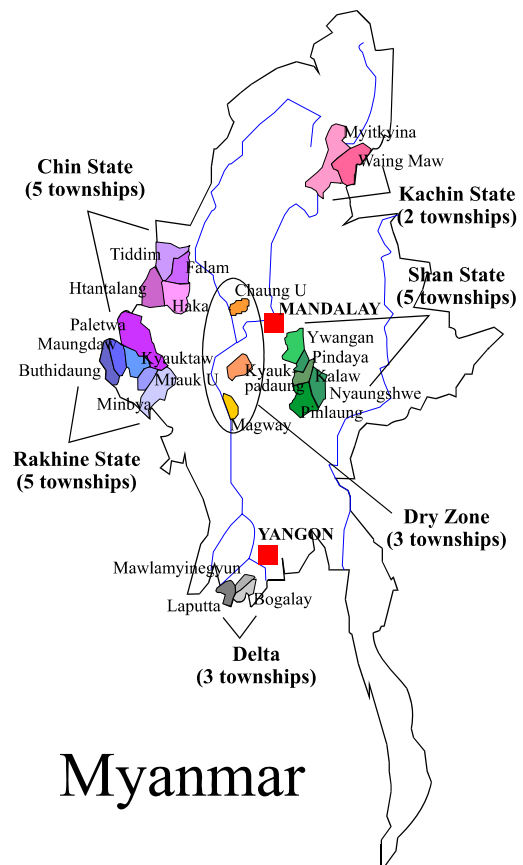
Unique among UNDP programmes the world over, HDIE activities are focused strictly at the local community level. HDIE focuses on 23 of the poorest townships in Myanmar (of a total of 328 townships), and on the poorest villages in these townships. This focus allows the project to aim to improve significantly the standard of living in these villages.

HDIE projects

Environmentally sustainable livelihoods and food security

Three of the 10 HDIE projects focus on helping poor farmers and the landless improve their production and increase their incomes from forestry, agriculture, aquaculture and livestock. These projects are implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). They cover 11 townships in three ecological zones:

- The **Dry Zone Food Security** project covers the three townships of Chaung U, Kyaukpadaung and Magway of central Myanmar: an area of poor soils, frequent droughts and severe soil erosion.



- The **Shan State Food Security** project covers five townships: Kalaw, Nyaungshwe, Pindaya, Pinlaung and Ywangan, with problems of deforestation and erosion.
- The **Delta Food Security** project covers an area where the original mangrove forests of the Ayeyarwady Delta have been cut, destroying fish-breeding habitats, making soil saline, and causing a severe shortage of fuelwood. The project covers three townships: Bogalay, Laputta and Mawlamyinegyun.

Humanitarian needs

Four projects help people in these same 11 townships improve their living standards in key areas.

- The **primary health care** project aims to help local people meet their own primary health care needs, and to improve their access to basic health services. It focuses on the major threats of malaria, leprosy, iodine deficiency and tuberculosis. It trains midwives and auxiliary health workers, and promotes family planning. This project is implemented by the World Health Organization (WHO).
- The community **water supply and sanitation** project builds water-supply systems for villages that lack a supply of clean water—and that often have no water at all in the dry season. It also improves sanitation, for example by promoting simple pit-latrines, and helps local people build bridges and other facilities that they themselves identify. This project is managed by the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat).
- The **HIV/AIDS** project, implemented by WHO, educates people to avoid infection by the deadly AIDS virus, and how to care for people who have the disease. It targets groups at greatest risk of infection: commercial sex workers and their clients, transport and mine workers, fisherfolk and refugees.
- The **primary education** project aims to improve access to and the quality of primary education, for example by building schools in deprived areas, loaning textbooks to the neediest, and by training teachers. This project is implemented by Unesco.

Intersectoral projects

The remaining three HDIE projects cut across economic sectors. They are managed by the United Nations Office for Project Services (Unops):

- The **micro-credit** project loans small amounts of money to villagers to help them build small businesses. The implementation of this project is subcontracted to non-government organizations: Pact/Myanmar in the Dry Zone, Gret in Shan State, and Grameen Trust in the Delta.
- The **remote townships** project provides integrated community development services (encompassing social development, income generation and local capacity-building in agriculture, health, education, water supplies and credit) in 12 townships—in Rakhine and Chin States in western Myanmar, and in Kachin State in the north of the country.
- The tenth project provides **support services** to the other nine projects in areas such as the provision of common services, integrated development management, research, monitoring and evaluation, training, and communication.

Participatory, integrated approach

HDIE strives to provide the services that local people want. It uses a bottom-up, integrated approach that identifies and responds to local needs. A baseline survey in each of the project's 23 townships identified areas of greatest need and established indicators for subsequent monitoring and evaluation. Township planning exercises produced an integrated programme framework, setting out common priorities and targets. Participatory rural appraisals involving local people serve as the basis for village development plans. The villagers and project staff together decide what problems to address, and then work together to solve them.

Within each township, staff of the different HDIE projects work as a team. For example, Water and Sanitation project engineers may help villagers build a well for drinking water, while Health and Education staff teach the importance of clean water. The Food Security project may plant trees on slopes to help control soil erosion, thereby raising the water table and keeping the well from drying out. The Micro-Credit project may lend farmers small amounts of money to start a trading business that earns income and avoids the need to plant on the steeper slopes. A "human development officer" (employed by the Support project) coordinates these activities throughout the township.