



# Myanmar

## SDC Humanitarian Aid (HA)

The Swiss Confederation's Humanitarian Aid is active since 1994 in the Myanmar context (the country itself including the refugee camps in Thailand), which became since 2001 a priority for SDC/HA with the presence of a Regional Humanitarian Coordinator responsible for SDC/HA activities in Thailand and Myanmar.

In the Medium Term Programme 2010 -12 SDC/HA goals are to restore and improve the living conditions and reduce vulnerability of people at risk. SDC/HA supports projects with the following objectives:

- Access to and quality of social infrastructure and networks among vulnerable communities in the Ayeyarwady Delta (Cyclone Nargis), in Eastern Myanmar as well as in/around the Myanmar refugee camps in Thailand are improved.
- Food and livelihood security of internally displaced persons (IDPs), host communities and ex-poppy farmers in Eastern Myanmar as well as Myanmar refugees in Thailand are improved.

About one million people are currently direct beneficiaries and the overall annual budget of SDC/HA in the Myanmar context amounts to approx. CHF 6 million (additional budget of CHF 3.6 million for emergency and early recovery support following Cyclone Nargis 2008/09). A programme office was established in Yangon in 2008.

## Current SDC/HA activities and partners

### Myanmar:

- Direct implementation of a school/storm shelter reconstruction project in the cyclone affected Ayeyarwaddy Delta. 40 disaster resistant schools (partly funded by UNICEF) are built, which serve as storm shelters and safe haven for the entire communities. The provision of water and sanitation as well as disaster preparedness and awareness are part of the project.
- Direct implementation of a community infrastructures project (schools, sub health centres, water supply) for people affect by conflict in Mon and Kayin States in collaboration with UNHCR.
- Budget support to the UN World Food Programme (WFP) focusing on food security.
- Assistance to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which is providing amputees with artificial limbs and supporting prisoners through their families.
- Financial contribution to the Livelihood and Food Security Trust Fund (LIFT) and active participation on a strategic/policy level as member of the LIFT Fund Board.

### Thailand:

The activities are concentrated on the Myanmar refugees along the border through:

- Financial support for food, fuel, shelter and other essentials through the Thailand Burma Border Consortium (TBBC) via Caritas Switzerland.
- Budget support addressing protection issues through the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).
- Active participation in policy dialogue and stakeholder coordination related to the refugees.



## Future SDC/HA strategy

The Swiss strategy in Myanmar, as part of the SDC Mekong Region Strategy, is currently under revision and will be approved this fall. The SDC/HA engagement will continue, reinforced by a development programme. The overall SDC annual budget for Myanmar will presumably increase within the new strategy from currently approx. 6 Mio. to approx. 25 Mio.

## Background Information

Following general elections in 2010, a new civilian government was formed in March 2011, which initiated a reform oriented period that encouraged Western countries (including Switzerland) to suspend or lift their sanctions with Myanmar. Ceasefire agreements were signed with the major armed resistance groups. Despite the rapidly ongoing reform process, ethnic tensions prevail and it will be crucial for the future of Myanmar how the ethnic diversity will be addressed. Past economic and social policies have so far failed to release the country's huge economic potential. The benefits from natural resources have not reached the majority of the population. The average income is the lowest in Southeast Asia, 25 % of the population live on less than 1 USD per day. Clean drinking water, food, education and basic health services are still inadequate and over 30 percent of all children suffer from malnutrition. Half a million people are displaced within Myanmar. 150,000 members of ethnic minorities live as refugees in camps in Thailand. Approximately three million migrants live in neighbouring countries where they are used as inexpensive labour force.

## Further information

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