



Empowering People for Change

ActionAid Myanmar's Strategy 2012—2017

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“(youth) are a force for change, developing themselves and other young people to take a leading role at regional and national level to bring about a just and peaceful and democratic society where all ethnic nationalities are united and enjoy equal rights”.

Note from Country Director

This is the first strategy document of ActionAid Myanmar which is coming out at a very significant stage of the country's development. However, this strategy is not just written but has evolved out of a decade of ActionAid's engagement in Myanmar. This is an effort to document our strategies in response to the current and future needs and opportunities in Myanmar, informed by our learning.

Myanmar, with its long history of political struggle, is now at a juncture where people, especially the youth, keenly want to take an active part in the change process. The youth comprise a major segment of the Myanmar population who suffered under the iron fist of the state and are now ready to take a leadership role in removing the barriers and bringing about positive changes. They themselves have a vision:

“(youth) are a force for change, developing themselves and other young people to take a leading role at regional and national level to bring about a just and peaceful and democratic society where all ethnic nationalities are united and enjoy equal rights”.

The programme strategies of ActionAid Myanmar have been developed around this vision, with AAM providing solidarity and other forms of support so that youth can take on leadership roles to bring the changes they envision.

From a small presence in 2006 ActionAid Myanmar has become one of the most respected and creditable among some 80 INGOs in Myanmar at this time. It was not an easy journey. It required the hard work of the Myanmar team, with support from Asia region, other affiliates and AAI. Support and encouragement from Myanmar government, civil society, our partners and donors was also crucial to reach where we are today. We will need similar support from these same actors to implement this strategy successfully.

Since the beginning, all work of ActionAid Myanmar has been influenced by young people, referred to as Fellows in our programme in Myanmar. Though young, they brought exciting experience from the ground which was a continuous influence in shaping this strategy. Therefore, this strategy is dedicated to the Fellows in Myanmar.

Cyclone Nargis in 2008 also had significant influence on the evolution of AAM. I also want to dedicate this strategy to those people who died during the cyclone and to the survivors who showed us a way of working where the rights and dignity of the people are respected during an emergency response. This strategy is also dedicated to those brave people who have fought for justice around the country over many years. Without their struggle we would not be in a position to write such a bold strategy that talks of rights and justice for the people.

Special thanks to the AAM team who has contributed to the formulation of this strategy, to the consultant and volunteers who prepared background documents and edited this strategy document, and to the friends who participated in the consultation process to shape and validate the thoughts contained in the document. I believe with the support and active participation of all these actors, we will be able contribute to meaningful change in Myanmar.

Shihab Uddin Ahamad,
Country Director
ActionAid Myanmar

List of Acronyms

AAI	ActionAid International
AAM	ActionAid Myanmar
AUSAID	Australian Agency for International Development
CBM	Christian Blind Mission – USA
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CRSA	Climate Resilient Sustainable Agriculture
CS	Child Sponsorship
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSP	Country Strategy Paper
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DFID	Department for International Development – UK
DIPECHO	European Commission's Disaster Preparedness Programme
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EuropeAid	European Commission Development & Cooperation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HDI	Human Development Index
HDR	Human Development Report
HRBA	Human Rights Based Approach
HROD	Human Resource and Organisational Development
IDPs	Internally Displaced People
IFIs	International Financial Institutions
LIFT	Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund
LRP	Local Rights Programme
MAS	Myanmar Agricultural Services
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MSWRR	Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement
MOAI	Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation
NGO	Non Government Organisation
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
NRM	Natural Resource Management
NSPAW	National Strategic Plan for the Advancement Women
PTA	Parent-Teacher Association
PRS	Promoting Rights in Schools
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
SMC	School Management Committee
VAW	Violence Against Women

This is ActionAid's first country strategy paper for Myanmar to cover the period 2013 – 2017. Although AAI started engaging in Myanmar on a limited scale in 2000 through the then Asia Regional office in Bangkok, ActionAid Myanmar's real journey began in 2006, through a Fellowship project in upper Myanmar.



1 Introduction

This country strategy is guided by ActionAid International's strategy, 'People's Action to End Poverty', as well as by the voices of the people of Myanmar. It has been developed through an extensive consultative process from December 2011 to September 2012. In the consultation, a large and diverse group of stake holders participated including all staff of AAM, rights holders from different ethnic and religious groups, government line ministries, academicians, partners, peer organisations, the UN and Donors. In addition to consultation, a number of secondary documents have been used to obtain the necessary context and statistics including three external reviews commissioned by AAM. However, AAM and its partners' work – especially from the Fellow's experiences and achievements since 2006 – were the main inspiration and guiding factors in developing this strategy.

This is ActionAid's first country strategy

paper for Myanmar to cover the period 2013 – 2017. Although AAI started engaging in Myanmar on a limited scale in 2000 through the then Asia Regional office in Bangkok, ActionAid Myanmar's real journey began in 2006, through a Fellowship project in upper Myanmar, at a time when NGOs were yet to talk about community led empowerment. Since then the programme has grown in scale of operations and in financial terms from GBP 250,000 per year to GBP 6 million per year by 2013.

As of January 2013, AAM's programme covers more 500 communities in 26 townships under 8 states/regions and AAM supports around 180,000 people in partnership with 17 local organisations. Along with community-led self reliance work, AAM is heavily involved in national policy level work in the area of women's rights, disability, education, food security, Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation. All of

this work is taking place through the lens of the Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA), and HRBA is expected to remain an important methodology for AAM going forward.

For over a decade, AAM has continuously engaged in social analysis with different ethnic groups through the Fellows and with different civil society actors and the government. This active and participatory engagement has contributed immensely to gaining knowledge and understanding of the context and has informed AAM of the kind of engagement which is needed to ensure a firm footing in Myanmar. AAM is one of the key players in the developmental sector in Myanmar today, acknowledged for the 'change makers' or Fellows — its youth leadership approach and is recognised as an organisation striving for community-led empowerment.

A formal country appraisal was carried out in 2009 in order for Myanmar to be considered for a full-fledged country program. In 2010 AA's International Board approved Myanmar as a country programme with effect from 2011. This Country Strategy Paper (CSP) will seek a greater alignment with the current ActionAid International strategy: 'Peoples Action to End Poverty' in its implementation.

Myanmar is comparatively new to the NGO concept and international organisations have popularised social development since cyclone Nargis. Since the emergency response, the tone for development has been typically "welfaristic" with the exception of a few organisations voicing different approaches. The recent elections in 2010 have led to extensive reforms and the fast-changing political context of Myanmar is promising positive developments on the social, economic and political fronts. This is the transition period for Myanmar as it moves towards becoming a democratic nation.

AAM believes that with its dynamic

energy and commitment, it can identify the right opportunities to bring about sustained change in the lives of the most vulnerable people and enabling them to lead a life with equity and dignity.

ActionAid Myanmar has 4 programme priorities:

Priority 1: Sustainable livelihood: To promote sustainable income through improved access to and control over natural resources and capital, alternative livelihood practices, and build community resilience to withstand disasters.

Priority 2: Women's rights: To promote women's active leadership and the policies, practices and mechanisms that enable women to live free of fear and violence and to be economically independent.

Priority 3: Governance: To support the reform process for just and democratic governance in Myanmar, strengthening democratic institutions and promoting active citizenship.

Priority 4: Youth and education: To encourage and support young people to become change-makers, driving peace, democracy and development in Myanmar, and to ensure that all children in the LRP target villages have access to quality primary education.

And 3 organisational priorities:

Priority 1: Staff capacity: To empower AAM staff through equipping them with knowledge and skills and creating an organisational culture which promotes the internalisation and practice of ActionAid's values, with a special focus on building women's leadership.

Priority 2: Organisational systems and processes: To strengthen organisational systems and processes to promote and measure our accountability, efficiency and effectiveness.

Priority 3: Resource Mobilisation: To mobilise adequate financial resources to fund our programme priorities from compatible funding partners.

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Context

Internal Context

A country with a diverse and young population... Myanmar's estimated population of 56.2 million¹ is made up of diverse ethnic and religious groups that enrich the society with multicultural and multiethnic communities². The ratio of men to women in Myanmar is almost equal. The population pyramid is the opposite of developed economies with adults occupying only a quarter of the population while those under fifteen make up more than a third.

... living in unjust and extreme poverty... The 2010 Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey shows a poverty incidence of 25.6 percent³. Severe deprivation in income poverty is indicated by the incidence or head count of food poverty which was 4.8 percent in 2010. Overall poverty and low income levels are also indicated by the average household budget share for food which stands at 69 percent

(compared to 57 percent of consumption expenditure of households in Cambodia and 52 percent in Bangladesh)⁴.

...and even though Myanmar is not among the poorest countries...

Myanmar lags far behind all other ASEAN countries. Myanmar is ranked 149th as a less developed country in the 2011 Human Development Report⁵, with Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia ranking as 128, 138 and 139 respectively, and classified as medium developed countries.

...because of mismanagement and flawed macro-economic policies...

Official GDP figures for Myanmar are problematic; and several scholars and international institutions such as the IMF have adjusted the GDP estimates. The figures using adjusted growth rates and trade-value weighted exchange rates provided a GDP estimate of USD 38.5 billion (at current prices) in 2010/11.

Per capita (adjusted) GDP, which closely represents the income level of the Myanmar people, was USD 624 in 2010 compared to USD 532 in 2009. The recent GDP growth is not attributed to systematic economic policies but rather a combination of three factors: real GDP growth rate of 5.5 percent, the appreciation of the Myanmar Kyat against the USD of 2.4 percent, and increase in the GDP deflator by 10.2 percent⁶. The GDP for 2011/12 is estimated to be USD 83.74 billion with estimated growth rate of 5.5 percent in 2011⁷. Agricultural policies affecting the livelihoods of more than 70 percent of poor people contribute to the continued decline in agriculture as evidenced by the reversal of Myanmar's place as the largest producer of rice in the world, exporting some 3.3 million tonnes in 1938 to exporting only 180,000 metric tonnes of rice today⁸.

The overall pattern of development in the past five years indicates that the living conditions of lower and middle income groups have deteriorated particularly on account of persistent inflation of over 20 percent that has systematically eroded household income.

...the uneven nature of economic growth has been reinforced... Poverty is higher in rural areas where 70 percent of the population lives. Poverty incidence in rural areas is 29.2 percent compared to 15.7 percent in urban areas⁹. Living conditions of both rural and urban households have come under further stress because of an unequal growth of GDP and no major investment for the development of the rural economy. As result, out of the 15.1 million people living below the poverty line in 2010, 10.6 million were in the rural areas and the remaining 4.5 million in the urban areas¹⁰.

Development in Myanmar is concentrated along the growth corridors running north-south down the middle

of Myanmar and along the historic silk route. These have primarily evolved to service regions with high resource endowments, namely the rice-producing regions and states and those with significant gas, mineral and timber reserves. The further a region/state is from the growth corridor, the less access the population has to markets and investment. This has been particularly acute in remote mountainous areas where low population-density and poor physical access present natural barriers to the development of markets and to economic mobility.

There are also large regional/sub-national differences in poverty. The worst states with over 30 percent in poverty head count are Chin (73.3 percent), Shan East (46.4 percent), Rakhine (43.5 percent), Shan North (37.4 percent), Tanintharyi (32.6 percent) and Ayeyarwaddy (32.2 percent). Ayeyarwaddy has the largest share of population in poverty, with 2.81 million living below the poverty line. Relatively high food poverty incidence is prevalent in Chin (25 percent), Rakhine (10 percent), Tanintharyi (9.6 percent) and Shan north, east and south (9.9 percent, 9.1 percent and 8.2 percent respectively)¹¹.

The higher than average incidence of poverty in five out of the seven ethnic states means that ethnic minorities are disproportionately represented among the poor. This results from ...

...structural discrimination on the basis on ethnicity and religion... The long history of unresolved struggle for equal representation and preservation of identity by Myanmar's ethnic minorities continues. Differences between groups have been exploited to intensify distrust and fear. In the past, this worked to the military government's advantage as it maintained their control over and power to exploit the country's resources many of which are located in ethnic states. Vulnerability, particularly

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among the ethnic minorities, results from: inadequate or non-existent provision of services such as education, restricted mobility (particularly for the stateless Rohingya people) and lack of opportunities in all fields. This creates a poverty trap.

...and the impoverishing impact of the armed conflict... Directly connected to identity are the armed conflicts which have also impoverished ethnic states. Destruction, displacement, poverty and insecurity characterise many areas even where ceasefires have been negotiated. Refugees, returnees, internally displaced people and among them, women and children, are extremely vulnerable populations. Three million people from Myanmar are working in Thailand,

Malaysia and on the Bangladesh border as official or unofficial refugees, the majority of whom are women¹², who are extremely vulnerable to labour and sexual exploitation. Sexual violence against ethnic women, carried out with impunity by the military, has been consistently reported¹³.

Other key issues for Myanmar's development include...

...the natural hazards and climate change induced disasters... High-impact disasters such as cyclones (as powerfully demonstrated by cyclone Nargis), more frequent and localised floods in coastal areas and lower parts of Myanmar, and slow on-set disasters such as droughts in central Myanmar's

dry zone are increasing in frequency. In addition, saline intrusion is increasing in coastal areas. Frequent disasters with short recovery periods decrease people's ability to cope and this is exacerbated by lack of preparedness and state support. Asset sales, particularly of land, and people selling their labour at a very low rate are key coping strategies which are contributing to long-term impoverishment.

...women's inequality... Despite women's visibility in Myanmar's society and the relatively high rates of school enrolment and literacy, women typically have less decision making power and representation in positions of leadership and in government. Discrimination

against women is deep-seated in Myanmar, and gender inequalities are an important determinant in household food security. Poor women face fewer opportunities as a result of limited access to education and skills training, fewer assets and lower wage earning power. Female-headed households earn lower average daily per capita income than male-headed households in all types of employment except perhaps non-agricultural labour¹⁴. In 2007, the estimated earned annual income for women in Myanmar 2007 was US USD 640, but for men it was USD 1,043¹⁵. Almost 19 percent of all households are female-headed¹⁶. Access to reproductive health services is very limited with a consequent high maternal mortality rate



The political situation in Myanmar is undergoing the most significant changes in a generation and, perhaps, since the advent of military rule in 1962.

of 316 per 100,000 live births and an infant mortality rate of 75 per 1,000 live births¹⁷. The HIV prevalence rate among pregnant mothers is over 1 percent.

...children's vulnerability... 1.6 million children are orphans¹⁸ and 4 out of 10 children are either malnourished or die before their 5th birthday. Many live in situations of fear and uncertainty. According to official statistics 83.3 percent of children attend school. However ActionAid's community assessments reveal less than 50 percent of the children have access to formal education, and of those enrolled many drop out before their third year.

...and the impact of the long history of human rights violations... Justified on the grounds of protecting national unity, integrity and autonomy, successive governments severely restricted freedoms and held back progress on civil and political rights. Myanmar is not a signatory to the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights, or to Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Due to decades of top-down repressive government, Myanmar citizens are unused to having any active say or role in the country's development and lack the trust and confidence to engage with government authorities. Despite the significant improvements in the human rights situation in Myanmar, the important reforms implemented and the expressed intention by the new government to instigate people centred governance, the practices and mindsets across the structure of government are yet to change.

...ongoing conflict and failure to address the aspirations of ethnic minorities... Widespread ethnic violence in Rakhine State and the increasing emergence of social tensions as more freedom allows local conflicts to (re) surface pose a significant challenge to the reform process. Any further rupturing of inter-communal relations

could threaten national stability¹⁹. Although ten ethnic insurgent groups signed preliminary ceasefires with the government in 2012, there has been an ongoing conflict in Kachin state since the breakdown of the 17-year-old ceasefire in June 2011. This conflict has displaced more than 75,000 people²⁰ with many of them allegedly fleeing forced labor, killings, rape and torture by the Myanmar military. This has undermined confidence in the government's sincerity and expressed commitment to peace and political settlement. The difficulty in reaching a ceasefire in Kachin State underlines the complexity of forging sustainable peace with ethnic armed groups.

There are also rising grassroots tensions over land grabbing and abuses by local authorities, and environmental and social concerns over foreign-backed infrastructure and mining projects. In a context of rising popular expectations, with serious unaddressed grievances from the past, and with the new-found freedom to organise and demonstrate, there is potential for the emergence of more radical and confrontational social movements²¹.

The Changing Nature Of Internal Governance In Myanmar

The political situation in Myanmar is undergoing the most significant changes in a generation and, perhaps, since the advent of military rule in 1962. The election in November 2010, which was one of the former military government's milestones in the implementation of the road map to "disciplined democracy", is changing the prospects for democratisation in Myanmar. This, along with the nature of President Thein Sein's leadership and the substantial reforms undertaken, is leading to cautious optimism for Myanmar's future. The reforms include: the release of large numbers of political prisoners, most significantly Aung San

Su Kyi (although some still remain in custody); reconciliation between the government and the opposition parties and the NLD's subsequent participation and success in the 2012 by-election reflecting the government's willingness to respect multi-party democracy; the introduction of new legislation such as the freedom of assembly laws which has been implemented; and the relaxation of Myanmar's very strict censorship laws to the point where internet access is more constrained by poor infrastructure than by government intrusion.

Increasingly, civil society, political parties and other stakeholders are engaging with the reform process. There is greater openness and space to discuss human rights issues and more critical debate on the direction, pace and scope of reforms. The emergence of a nascent civil society and NGO sector and the continued presence of previously apolitical networks of social, cultural and community groups at local levels will enable construction of the foundations of democracy, brick by brick from below. In addition, national institutions with important roles in furthering democratic transition and respect for human rights have continued to develop.

Though the President announced "people-centred governance" and "bottom up planning processes", the meaning and practice of these is yet to be internalised/applied by relevant government officials and public representatives. As previously mentioned, the role of local government at village and township level during the last 60 years of military-led government was mainly to control people, an approach which needs to be reversed in the current political reforms. Thus far, centrally directed reforms have had limited impact beyond urban elite circles and the benefits have yet to be felt among most ordinary citizens, particularly in ethnic nationality-populated and conflict-affected areas.

The reforms currently underway in Myanmar can only be judged to be successful when they begin to impact positively on the lives of ordinary people, including ethnic minority communities. Real progress can only be achieved by addressing the long-standing grievances and aspirations of Myanmar's ethnic nationality communities and, above all, by improving the livelihoods and human rights situation in ethnic areas.

But the slow progress of peace talks in Karen state, the break-down of the peace agreement in Kachin state since 2011, and the recent communal violence in Rakhine state indicate that resolving ethnic issues in Myanmar presents serious challenges to the new government's positive image and reform efforts. Public services and the country's infrastructure are in a dire state, particularly in remote and ethnic areas.

A key issue regarding internal governance is lack of capacity among state officials such as civil servants and elected ministers who include many retired military officers. Despite all the members of parliament (MPs) being new to the culture and system of parliamentary democracy and procedures, and, most importantly, their own rights and responsibilities, processes are moving in positive directions. An example being that in January 2012, for the first time in Myanmar, the parliament started open discussion on the national budget. At the same time, however, the average citizen or even MPs have yet to understand how they will participate actively in the national budget process in their own capacity. Similarly, many of the changes and reforms are happening too fast for citizens, and even MPs, to be able to actively participate in the discussions about them.

Up to the present, the Myanmar military feels that it is both the architect and guardian of this country's embryonic

Myanmar's position in the international community has changed dramatically since the 2010 election and the inauguration of President Thein Sein's government.

democracy. There is no indication it has any plan of giving up its presence in the parliament, where its unelected delegates occupy a quarter of the seats. There is a danger of a two-track political process emerging in Myanmar, with substantial reforms being implemented in areas under the authority of the President (in the social, economic and political sectors), while security issues, under the authority of the military, remain unresolved. Thus, the credibility and sustainability of the current transition is, in part, dependent on the government's ability to resolve armed conflicts, and bring peace to ethnic nationality-populated areas. While political transition emanating from Nay Pyi Taw should be recognised and supported, it is essential to keep ethnic issues on the agenda. It is difficult to imagine a peaceful and progressive Myanmar, while the military continues to behave with impunity.

Myanmar's Expanding Political Space Internationally

Myanmar's position in the international community has changed dramatically since the 2010 election and the inauguration of President Thein Sein's government. Until 2010, international perspectives concerning Myanmar were polarised between the western countries who (mostly) demanded democracy and respect for human rights through a combination of diplomatic pressure and economic sanctions, and its neighbouring Asian countries that made a case for "constructive engagement" with the military government. However, with the reforms, a stream of leaders have visited Myanmar leading to re-engagement, followed by increased aid, the lifting of sanctions and moral support to President Thein Sein for the reform measures, thereby strengthening his position.

One of the most significant events was in September 2010 when the President suspended the construction of a huge

hydroelectric dam at the confluence ('Myitsone') of the Ayeyarwaddy River which was to supply power to China.. This has been seen as a strong signal to China to indicate the end of Chinese political and economic influence over Burma, a repositioning which the US and its allies have been keen to promote. After his re-election in late 2012, President Obama visited Myanmar highlighting both Myanmar's reintegration into the international political and economic arena and Myanmar's importance for regional geopolitics.

Myanmar's upcoming chair of ASEAN in 2014 is going to be a major factor in changing Myanmar's political influence inside and outside the country. Western countries seem very keen to engage with Myanmar as the upcoming chair of ASEAN to reduce China's influence on ASEAN which might bring significant political dynamics in ASEAN member countries, centering on Myanmar.

Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon: Changes In Myanmar's Economic Prospect

The expansion of Myanmar's political space and the growing interest of the West and neighboring countries will enable Myanmar to accelerate its economic growth to at least 7.7 percent a year²². No other comparable country in Asia has, for example, the economic growth and employment potential of Myanmar, given its untapped gas and mineral reserves, its agricultural sector and its pool of low-wage labour.

Rapid economic advancement, growth of new business interests, the emergence of a larger middle class and a new industrial working class, and greater urbanisation may create possibilities and spaces to further liberalise politics. However, the recent overwhelming

interest and engagement of the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and Asian Development Bank might jeopardise the natural growth of Myanmar's economy by rushing for "quick wins" and promoting neo-liberal economic policies. Another fear is a too rapid change from a command economy to a fully open market before national businesses are ready to compete with the international market. It also seems that the military will retain a leading role in Myanmar's economy through its holding companies, which are among the country's biggest commercial enterprises.

Furthermore, with the opening of Myanmar's political and economic environment, new investment is entering the country. The Foreign investment law passed by the parliament in 2012 provides space for foreign companies to invest. The law permits 100 percent ownership by foreign firms, provides a series of tax breaks and eases restrictions on leasing land²³. However, there is growing fear that most of the investment will be only in the extractive industries such as timber, gas, and minerals. Some investment may come for agri-business which may take away land from small holding and marginalised farmers.

In order to ensure equitable development it is essential that investment is not limited only to extractive industries. While there has been much discussion on best practice in the field of corporate social responsibility and investments being transparent and creating employment in Myanmar, it remains to be seen if business will operate ethically. A positive step by the government is the establishment of the "Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative Leading Authority" to ensure better management for extractive industries of natural resources.

New Vulnerabilities And Issues

If Myanmar's external relations, economy and domestic politics change as anticipated, new vulnerabilities and issues are likely to emerge, including: the potential for greater inequalities of income and wealth; increased land grabbing; a growth in urban poverty; gradual control of the nation's extractive industries into the hands of multi-national companies; the growth of international debt; potential escalation of cessionary movements; greater vulnerability of women and children as a result of a possible growth in HIV/AIDS and human or drug trafficking. The timing, extent and probability of these happening are unpredictable but they will be important issues to monitor and respond to in the future.

The large youth population is waiting for increased opportunities in the job market and their number will continue to increase substantially. Currently the rhetoric about future expansion of job opportunities for the youth is common. Failure to create decent jobs for young people in the near future can create further frustration among them and potentially lead to political chaos, increased substance abuse and other social problems.

Despite the huge expectations and optimism about the 2015 elections, there are growing concerns for polarising internal politics, further marginalisation of ethnic communities and failure of the democratic process. In case the current government fails to establish trust in the ethnic regions, the upcoming election might end in a chaotic political situation.

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3



Our Vision, Mission and Values

Our vision: A world without poverty and injustice in which every person enjoys their right to a life of dignity.

Our mission: To work with poor and excluded people to eradicate poverty and injustice.

Our Values: The values guiding all of our work to transform ourselves, the community and the society, to free people from poverty and injustice are:

- Solidarity with people living in poverty, taking sides with the powerless and the excluded.
- Transparency and accountability at all levels for the effectiveness of our actions and openness in our judgements and

communication with others.

- Independence and neutrality from any personal religious, party-political or identity affiliation in the conduct of AAM's work.
- Equity and justice in working to ensure equal opportunity for everyone, irrespective of race, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, HIV status, colour, class, ethnicity, disability, location and religion.
- Courage of conviction requiring us to be creative and radical, bold and innovative – without fear of failure – in pursuit of making the greatest possible impact on the causes of poverty.
- Humility in our presentation and behaviour, recognising that we are part of a wider alliance against poverty.

4

Our Identity, Understanding of Poverty and Injustice and How Change Happens

Our Identity

AAM is part of an international federation working alongside others in the struggle for a world free of poverty and injustice.

Seeking alternatives to a situation of poverty and injustice requires a collective understanding and actions for change. AAM works with different groups of poor and marginalised people, communities, youth, knowledge institutions, civil society organisations, government and other stakeholders to bring and sustain change. AAM is rooted in communities and is recognised for its promotion of youth and women's leadership, community led development processes, and linking peoples' needs/issues with policy work including capacity development of local,

regional and national governments, as well as bringing alternative development perspectives.

Understanding of poverty and Injustice

ActionAid's understanding of the root causes of poverty is that the denial of fundamental rights to certain categories of people through systematic and consistent social, economic, cultural and political injustice, result in them being excluded, marginalised and vulnerable and forces them to live a life without dignity. Poverty is reinforced when the state assumes a minimalistic role, not recognising its obligation to promote, protect and fulfill the rights of the poor and excluded people.



AAM believes that the causes of poverty can be challenged and that change can and will happen over time.

Inequality and injustice have complex and inter-related causes including structural discrimination by institutions of the State, the market, the local community, religious and education systems, and the family. Poor and vulnerable people also suffer multiple rights violations during disaster and conflict situations which result in their further marginalisation, displacement and forced migration, both internally and internationally. AAM believes that the structure of poverty and inequality is furthered by a powerful patriarchal culture which underpins the state and society.

Theory of Change

AAM believes that the causes of poverty can be challenged and that change can and will happen over time. AAM believes

that a rights based approach to sustainable, community led development and strong youth and women's leadership can be powerful drivers of transformational change. AAM also believe that all changes have to be led and facilitated by the people of Myanmar but this needs the "open minded" support of the international community who are receptive to the ideas of Myanmar people and not furthering their own agenda.

The change processes in empowering communities will be reinforced and expanded through simultaneous engagement with civil society who will work in solidarity with people, the media who will amplify people's voice to influence the state — who will actively ensure justice and promote, protect and fulfill people's rights.



5

Our Approach

Who We Work With People living in Poverty and Vulnerable Communities

AAM will continue to focus its engagement with the most vulnerable people: landless, daily wage labourers, small scale fisherfolk, marginal and smallholder farmers, internally displaced people, ethnic minorities, people with disability — and among these groups — particularly women, youth and children, in remote rural areas. AAM will also start to engage with vulnerable young women in urban areas from Year 2 of the strategy.

Partners

ActionAid Myanmar believes that partnership is crucial to our work in Myanmar for two key reasons. First, we value the local knowledge and wisdom of local organisations and their role in the struggle against poverty and injustice and we recognise their legitimacy in promoting and claiming the rights of people in Myanmar. Supporting their aims and growth is important to the development

of a vibrant civil society. Second, through partnership we can reach a wider variety of groups and areas and work collectively to address key issues and concerns. AAM engages in partnerships at the local and national level.

AAM will continue to partner with local NGOs, CBOs and individuals, and through harnessing our complementary expertise we will both be better able to achieve our development aims. AAM also recognises that the political context in Myanmar previously restricted the growth of civil society. Cyclone Nargis in 2008 created the space for many Myanmar NGOs to emerge and this is continuing in the current environment of political change. As required, AAM will strengthen the capacity of partners to achieve their aims, particularly in promoting alternative development and Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA), and in building strategic linkages, organisational systems and procedures, developmental ethics and technical expertise.

We have learned to believe in the potential of young leaders to be drivers of change; empowering and mobilising communities to address their priority needs and engaging with local government to secure their rights.

AAM will develop strategic alliances with partners that support AAM in its efforts to: contribute to building an informed and gender sensitive civil society and stronger community based organisations; undertake policy influencing and advocacy efforts; and taking forward the fellowship approach for community-led empowerment. The strategic partners will include peer organisations, technical working groups such as those on women, disability, food security, disaster risk reduction, networks, consortia and the State itself, particularly at local and regional/state levels.

At the national level, AAM will engage with: Government to advocate for policy and practice change and to support ministries and departments to strengthen their capacity to deliver services; donors to advocate for aid effectiveness; business/private sector to pursue practices which are socially responsible and accountable; media to amplify the people's voice and to ensure state accountability; and academia and research institutions to bring the evidence required to influence policy change. At the international level AAM will engage strategically with ActionAid counterparts, peer organisations and international solidarity/like-minded groups.

How We Work

AAM's core approach in Myanmar since 2006 has been the development and support of youth leadership through its Fellowship Programme. With this experience, we have learned to believe in the potential of young leaders to be drivers of change; empowering and mobilising communities to address their priority needs and engaging with local government to secure their rights.

The human rights-based approach (HRBA) is central to all our work. AAM is committed to asserting the indivisibility and inter-connectedness of rights, recognising that for people to enjoy their

rights we need to work with them to change not only political, socio-economic policies and practices but also strive to bring about change in those attitudes and behaviors which discriminate against people on the basis of their gender, ethnicity, religion or sexual preference. Elements of empowerment, solidarity and campaigning will guide our programming.

Empowerment: Empowerment comes through the participatory practices of our development work. We will strengthen the capacity of Fellows and communities to mobilise, organise and work together to implement self-reliant, sustainable development processes and to engage with government agencies. Facilitating change in the knowledge, attitudes and skills of individuals, groups and communities is crucial for building "power within" and for effective mobilisation and strategic action to address their priority issues.

Solidarity will be fostered and strengthened by connecting and organising people committed to a common cause at local, national and global level. Forging partnerships and alliances with many different actors, including CBOs and their networks, NGOs, and solidarity groups will create "power with", bringing the confidence and numbers to influence change. Networks of Fellows, women, and people with different identities will be supported to share learning across issues, sectors and geographies to build movements for change. As part of the larger international family of ActionAid, we will contribute to strengthening work at the regional and global levels.

To support sustainable change AAM and its partners will campaign and influence the policies and practices of state and non state actors which impact the lives of poor and excluded people. In the new political scenario, AAM will engage with the legal and policy reform process, particularly in areas related to

women and vulnerable groups such as women's rights and gender equality, rights of people with disability, land law reform, climate justice, food sovereignty. Evidence based research will provide the necessary analysis to support arguments for policy and practice change. Working with the media will influence the direction of and amplify the need for change.

To achieve our goal, AAM will intervene both directly and with partners. AAM's direct implementation will be limited to issues or locations where compatible partners do not yet exist, and/or when AAM wants to pilot innovations, but with the ultimate aim to handover this work to partners.

Where We Work

AAM with our partners, aims to have a national presence, with priority accorded to areas of greatest need based on (i) geo-ecological context, for example the Dry Zone and the Ayeyarwaddy Delta, and (ii) remote and disadvantaged ethnic areas where there has been limited development assistance to date. In this CSP period, AAM needs to consolidate its organisational and programming capacity. Further expansion of the programme will be undertaken only after careful consideration of the need, opportunity and AAM's capacity, to ensure that AAM can deliver quality results, where maximum impact can be achieved and risks can be managed.



6 Programme Priorities

Programme Priority 1:
Sustainable Livelihoods

Objective: To promote sustainable income through improved access to and control over natural resource and capital, alternative livelihood practices, and build community resilience to withstand disasters.

The root causes of poverty in Myanmar can be explained by three factors: (i) a lack of income and assets to attain basic necessities, including food, shelter, clothing, and basic health and education; (ii) a sense of voicelessness and powerlessness, mainly due to the deep-rooted exclusion of some groups including women and ethnic minorities in the society; and (iii) vulnerability to shocks, owing to their adversity and coping capacity of the individual, households, communities and the nation.

Lack of income and assets is essentially a result of: inadequate and unequal growth; unemployment and very high underemployment; lack of adequate physical and human assets; lack of access to capital; low return on physical and natural assets; lack of diversified income sources; lack of access to and control over natural resources such as land, forest and water bodies; and excessive reliance on export of natural resources with inadequate emphasis on broad-based growth that can come from

improvements in the agrarian economy.

Powerlessness and voicelessness are the result of social exclusion and the inequalities which exist between the majority and minority ethnic groups of Myanmar. This is due to their differential access to adequate economic, budgetary resources and infrastructure services.

Vulnerability results from the lack of capacity to withstand natural, man-made and policy shocks such as inappropriate government policy; population displacement due to large-scale civil/development projects; local conflicts and internal displacement; and natural disaster and the impact of climate change. These shocks have negatively affected individual households as well as economic stability and the long term growth of the Myanmar economy.

AAM understands that a sustainable income adequate to meet basic needs depends on people's capacity to claim access to and control over their entitlements, and their appropriate use of natural resources, and access to capital, physical and human assets. People's resilience to natural and man-made disasters enabling them to protect their income and assets is also critical.

Anticipated achievements

By end of 2017:

- 3,000 landless or marginalised farmers and fisherfolk, especially women, will have mobilised and taken actions to improve their access to and control over land and/or forest or water bodies.
- Civil society organisations supported by AAM and networks/working groups involving AAM will internalise and advocate access to and control over natural resources (land, water, forest).
- At least 3,000 farmers, 50 percent of whom are women, will adopt or improve sustainable agriculture practices.
- At least 4,000 women headed

households will have access to alternative livelihoods and affordable credit through self-help approach.

- 300 communities where we work will become more resilient to natural and human made hazards, including climate change.
- Effective mitigation and adaptation mechanisms to climate change as well as Disaster Management law and bi-laws and standing orders are in place through ActionAid's contribution to DRR Working Group, Disaster Preparedness and Response Education Working Group, CSOs and media engagement with the Myanmar Government, on relevant research, laws and policies.
- 10 Township Disaster Management plans are developed through linking villages' disaster preparedness plan/village development plans to ensure inclusivity and mainstream DRR into development.
- 120 schools are better prepared from the effect of natural and climate change induced hazards, and play active role at building community resilience.

Key interventions

- Conduct relevant action research, particularly related to women's livelihoods and climate resilient agricultural practices, and undertake appropriate evidence-based policy and advocacy with government and other actors such as media to bring necessary changes in policy and practices on agriculture, natural resource management and DRR/CCA.
- Mobilise, organise and support landless and marginalised farmers, fishing communities and forest users, especially women, to claim their access to and control over relevant natural resources.
- Work with Food Security Working Group, the Land Core Group, Fisheries Federation, Disaster Risk Reduction Working Group and Gender Equality Network to change the relevant laws,

AAM understands that a sustainable income adequate to meet basic needs depends on people's capacity to claim access to and control over their entitlements, and their appropriate use of natural resources, and access to capital, physical and human assets.

policies and practices on access to and control over land, water bodies and forests.

- Actively participate in the Land Core Group and support grassroots land rights movements to campaign against land grabs at all levels and link to AAI's multi-county campaign.
- Support farmers to develop models for sustainable agriculture practices, providing the necessary skills and inputs to replicate good practice models. Similarly, support fishing communities to develop practice models of sustainable fishing and forest users to promote community forestry to ensure community access to and control over forests
- Provide technical skills and knowledge for alternative livelihoods, particularly for women, based on research, and facilitate market linkages.
- Organise women's self help groups and provide capital to revolve within the group.
- Facilitate community based disaster risk reduction analyses and plans where communities take initiative to reduce their vulnerability to disasters.

- Based on research and lessons learnt, provide technical knowledge and skills for farmers to pilot climate change adaptation measures and scale up effective models.
- Promote re-forestation and greening in the dry zone of Myanmar, also related to watershed management.
- Build capacity of communities, Village Disaster Management Committees, Task Forces and Township Disaster Management Committees for disaster preparedness and response.
- Develop Village Disaster Management Plans identifying resources, capacities and evacuation plans.

Tools and processes

Fellowship, village books/rights registers, formation of women's self help groups, farmers and fishers organisations/co-operatives, capacity building with a focus on women's livelihoods, natural resource management, climate change adaptation, market linkages, piloting good practices, community based DRR, PVA, action research, policy, advocacy and campaigns.



Programme Priority 2: Women's Rights

Objective: To promote women's active leadership and the policies, practices and mechanisms that enable women to live free of fear and violence and to be economically independent.



There is a general understanding, among both women and men, that gender inequality is not a major issue in Myanmar. The widespread and structural discrimination of women, the denial of their rights in Myanmar and the situation of inequality between men and women has gone largely unnoticed and unchallenged for a long time. The norms that privilege the male position and hold women to be inferior in many aspects of life are deeply internalised, among both men and women. There is, however, an acute shortage of data and information that describes and analyses the situation of women relative to that of men.

Despite laws, policies, and official reports and statements that document the right of women to social, economic, political and judicial equality, women in Myanmar

remain profoundly underrepresented in public life and Government, at both local and central levels. A study by ActionAid in 2011²⁴ on women's participation in decision-making and leadership at local level in Myanmar found the most prevailing norm to be the male prerogative of leadership. Ideas about leadership are set in the home, where men are commonly considered the household head. These ideas are then reinforced in public and religious life, where men dominate positions of power. The same study found that women's participation in local authorities in the study areas was less than 3 percent. Following the general election in 2010, women's participation in parliament at both national and state/regional levels is less than 4 percent.

When women come together, share their problems, are sensitised to and realise that they have rights, and can practice their leadership skills in a safe space, they will be empowered and have confidence to take broader leadership roles, challenge patriarchy, pursue economic independence and negotiate their rights.

Norms and practices emphasising women's dependence on men come to bear on women's economic rights and livelihood opportunities. For example, the notion of the male breadwinner has implications for income generation, access to and control over resources, as well as wage inequality.

Speaking with women in Myanmar reveals that violence is a very common occurrence, both inside and outside the home. As country-wide gender-focused information and systematically collected sex-disaggregated data is severely lacking, little is known of the magnitude and types of violence encountered by women and girls in Myanmar. Such violence is also widely accepted as "normal" and is not acknowledged publicly in society or in the media. Women in conflict affected areas are particularly vulnerable to physical and sexual violence.

AAM believes that when women come together, share their problems, are sensitised to and realise that they have rights, and can practice their leadership skills in a safe space, they will be empowered and have confidence to take broader leadership roles, challenge patriarchy, pursue economic independence and negotiate their rights. As well as women's own initiatives and power, institutional mechanisms, policies and practices are required to promote and sustain women's rights and leadership. In addition, women's organisations, particularly outside the main cities, require access to both technical and financial resources in order to strengthen and expand their work for women's rights and gender equality.

Anticipated achievements

By the end of 2017:

- 600 communities will be sensitised to and actively enabling women's leadership and participation in decision-making at household and community levels.

- Civil society organisations supported by AAM and networks/working groups involving AAM will provide appropriate interventions and be engaged in policy advocacy to promote legal reform, policies and institutions which will enable women's meaningful participation and leadership in all spheres and at all levels. Women and girls in 300 communities will be organised to challenge violence against women and community level mechanisms will be in place to monitor and reduce VAW as well as to respond to survivors of violence.
- Civil society organisations supported by AAM and networks/working groups involving AAM will provide appropriate interventions and be engaged in policy advocacy to promote legal reform, policies and institutions to effectively address violence against women in society.
- Women in 600 self-help groups in the communities where AAM is working will have increased their economic independence and realised their collective power to push for gender equality.
- Support will be provided to the Government at different levels to strengthen their knowledge and skills on women's rights and gender equality.

Key Interventions

- Raise awareness of women, youth and men on gender and gender inequality and build conviction and motivation of village leaders, CBOs, fellows and local authorities to change the position of women in private and public realms of community life
- Provide capacity building to enable women and girls to actively take on leadership positions and decision making roles in the social, economical and political spheres
- Collaborate with and support other agencies in regard to implementation of the National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women (NSPAW), with specific emphasis on women's

participation in public life, violence against women, women's role in emergency preparedness and response and economic empowerment

- Collaborate with other agencies to establish and operationalise a Trust Fund to provide small grants to women's organisations to advance women's rights and gender equality.
- Support civil society organisations and networks/working groups to engage in policy advocacy to promote legal reform, policies and institutions which will enable women's meaningful participation and leadership, and eliminate violence against women, in all spheres and at all levels.
- Conduct relevant research to provide the evidence base on issues related to women's leadership, social and cultural norms, power relations, customary law and violence against women, to inform implementation of NSPAW and Myanmar's progress on its CEDAW commitments.
- In all target villages conduct VAW campaigns and in 300 communities establish community level mechanisms to monitor and reduce VAW as well as to respond to survivors of violence and pilot the provision of legal services.
- From 2013, support AAM partners to engage with vulnerable young women in urban areas, particularly on violence

against women and link to the multi-country campaign on safer cities.

- Organise, mobilise and train 600 women's self-help groups who will create/increase their capital base through savings and, in conjunction with capital and training inputs in Priority One, increase their economic independence.
- Through awareness raising and training with women's self help groups, and federating these in area platforms, women will gain the confidence, skills and tools to work to change their position and condition in the society.
- Primarily in collaboration with the Department of Social Welfare, strengthen the capacity of the government on gender equality and women's rights and to conduct research on VAW in Myanmar, for the effective implementation of the National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Myanmar Women, and the development and application of anti-violence against women laws.

Tools and processes
Fellowship, PVA/Reflect tools, IEC materials, social mobilisation, formation of women's groups/SHGs/CBOs, institutional credit for SHG/CBO, research, networking, engaging with the government for policy reform.

The widespread and structural discrimination of women, the denial of their rights in Myanmar and the situation of inequality between men and women has gone largely unnoticed and unchallenged for a long time.



Programme Priority 3: Governance

Objective: To support the reform process for just and democratic governance in Myanmar, strengthening democratic institutions and promoting active citizenship.

In the context of rapid change and transition in Myanmar, addressing governance issues is critical. Due to the long absence of democratic space, citizens are unused to interacting with government bodies and have very limited expectations or vision of the state's duties and responsibilities or of holding it accountable. At the same time, the national government is implementing reforms and talking about bottom-up planning processes. Local government authorities have expressed willingness to do this, but the attitude, knowledge, mechanisms and tools to change old practices are not yet in place. Hence the crucial importance of people's and CSOs engagement with the government at all levels.

Members of national and regional parliaments, have a role to bring pro-

poor issues to work on legislative change, but their experience and capacity to raise evidence based pro-poor issues is limited due both to the absence of a parliament for decades and of research. The extent to which government becomes responsive to the people depends on the extent to which decentralisation is put into practice through empowering local and regional government. The new regional governments are yet to be given full authority/power or to be resourced.

Local government authorities, defined as village leaders, village tract leaders, and township officials including township-level departments of government ministries, have generally only been accountable upwards to higher authorities, if at all, and their new role in supporting accountable local

governance needs to be supported.

To fulfil their role in promoting just and accountable government the media, at present, has very limited capacity as they emerge from decades of censorship. The government has relaxed censorship and introduced a media law allowing for publication of independent daily newspapers in Myanmar. The BBC is working with the Government to convert one of the television channels into a public broadcaster. Support and capacity development is required to promote the media's understanding and reportage on pro-poor issues.

Poor communities and young people have been disempowered from active citizenship, in particular, not claiming rights, entitlements and access to services. Underrepresentation of marginalised groups within communities and CSOs, particularly women, very poor people and people with disability, is partially due to the relative absence of horizontal groups and networks. These include sub-groups around specific issues such as rights of people with disabilities, the interests of landless etc. This exclusion is due to socio-economic and cultural barriers and as a result active citizenship is often not exercised, particularly by women, who remain largely unorganised at village level or across communities. Often, they are not aware of their rights as citizens, lack confidence and resources and are unable or unwilling to engage with government authorities. In this current reform process there is top level commitment to bottom up, participatory development processes. Hence, the active engagement of communities and their networks in developing village plans and linking these to township and regional plans is required to ultimately contribute to and influence the national development strategy.

At this time civil society is emerging but is very much urban based. In

rural communities people tend not to be organised, except in religious or social groups. Work on governance in Myanmar has generally been taboo for CSOs due to government sensitivities and has only been done very cautiously and infrequently in the past. As a result, very few Myanmar CSOs have in-depth experience or the capacity to work on just and democratic governance in relation to empowering citizens and particularly underrepresented groups, educating government officials and holding them to account, and influencing policies and practices. Moreover, there are few tools, resources or training courses available in Myanmar for CSOs to learn how to advocate for responsive local governance including active citizenship especially for underrepresented groups.

AAM believes that just and democratic governance can be promoted through strengthening the constituency and voice of marginalised and poor people (rights-holders) to claim their rights; sensitising and strengthening the capacity of government authorities (as the primary duty-bearers) and public representatives to their responsibilities towards the citizenry; strengthening civil society to address governance issues in favour of poor people; and mobilising public opinion through the media and the conduct and dissemination of evidence based research.

Anticipated achievements

By the end of 2017 in the 600 villages and 11 states/regions where AAM/partners are working:

- 400 poor and excluded communities involving particularly, women and young people, will increase their capacity to claim their rights and entitlements through organising, establishing community based organisations, platforms and taking collective action/campaigns at the township/regional and national level.
- 1,000 local government officials, 500

Members of national and regional parliaments, have a role to bring pro-poor issues to work on legislative change, but their experience and capacity to raise evidence based pro-poor issues is limited due both to the absence of a parliament for decades and of research.

state/regional government officials and MPs and 300 staff of national line ministries will be better able to respond to the needs of poor and excluded people and develop pro-poor and gender sensitive national and local plans, budgets, policies and practices.

- 200 Government officials of Planning and other responsible department/institutions will develop the knowledge and perspective on people-centred participatory planning processes, relevant to a sustainable Comprehensive National Development Plan.
- 50 National and local CSOs will practice a rights based approach, promote active citizenship and lead advocacy on accountable governance, and have capacity to engage with and monitor government on policies and practices in favour of poor people
- 300 journalists/media will have the capacity to amplify the people's voice and to hold the government accountable for pro-poor policy and practices
- Tools and learning documents/materials on people centred participatory process will be produced and shared at different level such as village books, village plans, Economic Literacy and Budget Accountability on Governance (ELBAG), Social audits.

Key Interventions

- Support 600 Fellows to mobilise and organise 600 communities to establish inclusive CBOs, develop participatory village plans and facilitate their operationalisation and to strengthen women's leadership.
- Establish inclusive community area platforms and support communities/interest groups to take collective action at the township/regional and national level.
- Support piloting of bottom-up participatory planning in 15 Townships based on the village plans.
- Advocate links between township-level plans to district level and to

regional/state level and finally to the national level in order to promote bottom up, people-led planning processes.

- Develop training manuals, tools (ELBAG, Social Audit, Public Hearing etc) and resources to promote active citizenship, just and accountable governance, participatory, bottom up planning processes and to monitor government policies and practices.
- Conduct research to provide a strong evidence base for promoting pro-poor accountable governance.
- Train local and state/regional government officials and national ministries/parliamentarians in accountable governance and public financing, particularly for education.
- Train 50 national and local CSOs in HRBA, active citizenship, accountable governance and support them to engage with local, state/regional and national government on pro-poor people's issues.
- Train journalists – professional and youth rural journalists – to ensure that pro-poor, youth and women's issues are promoted through the media.

Tools and processes

Fellowship, ELBAG, Social Audit, Public Hearing, PVA/Reflect tools, IEC materials, social mobilisation, formation of women's groups/SHGs/CBOs, research, networking, engaging with the government for policy reform, strengthening media.



Programme Priority 4: Youth and Education

Objective: To encourage and support young people to become change-makers, driving peace, democracy and development in Myanmar, and to ensure that all children in the LRP target villages have access to quality primary education.

Structural, ethnic and religious discrimination, the impoverishing impact of armed conflict, military rule and highly centralised government for many decades stifled all public debate around democracy, human rights, poverty and inequality, and created a pervasive culture of silence in Myanmar society. The current civil and political reforms articulated at the national level have yet to penetrate to rural communities.

There are limited opportunities for young people, particularly rural youth, to engage in development processes. However, a strong spirit of volunteerism and social responsibility is common among young people in Myanmar. AAM has had significant success in training and mobilising young people as 'change makers' (Fellows) to facilitate inclusive, participatory and empowering processes in communities. With the Fellows'

leadership, communities have adopted democratic practices in undertaking pro-poor, inclusive, community-led development. Fellows have also played a role in supporting communities to respond to and prepare for disasters induced by climate change. In urban areas, AAM's Activista programme has been instrumental in mobilising and supporting youth networks and activities to work for social change.

Myanmar is committed to the MDGs and Education For All goals. The 30 year Basic Education Development Plan 2001 – 2031 sets out a range of strategies under ten broad Programme Goals to achieve Universal Basic Education by 2016 and Universal Secondary Education by 2031. While official statistics on education are encouraging, for example a reported youth literacy rate of 96 percent, the experience in communities indicates

In Myanmar there is a need to promote opportunities for youth to develop as future leaders. The Fellowship programme has proven to be an effective way to develop youth leadership capacity in order to facilitate and enable people to come together, undertake community-led development and promote and defend the rights of the people.

formidable barriers to Myanmar children and youth achieving a good quality education, stemming from acute under-spending from the national budget. Apart from a poor quality curriculum and the lack of teachers/trained teachers, school facilities and school budgets, poverty prevents children from attending school. Many of these barriers need to be addressed by the central government. However, simultaneously youth and communities can take actions such as: mobilising parents to send their children to school, mobilising local resources and continuously engaging with the Township Education Department to claim a greater allocation of teachers, school budget, better facilities, and more teacher training.

ActionAid believes that young people are a critical human resource to contribute to the development of the country. In Myanmar there is a need to promote opportunities for youth to develop as future leaders. The Fellowship programme has proven to be an effective way to develop youth leadership capacity in order to facilitate and enable people to come together, undertake community-led development and promote and defend the rights of the people.

ActionAid also believes that basic primary education is a fundamental right of every citizen and that it is primarily the duty of the state to provide this. At the national level, action is required with both government and donors to increase the budget allocation, improve curriculum development and increase teachers' training. In communities, parents have to be encouraged to send their children to school and be organised in PTAs and SMCs to engage with the school management and teachers so that they are accountable for their services. In the current context of nascent reform in Myanmar, AAM believes that focusing on national and local education budgets – discussing priorities, developing plans, analysing proposed budgets, monitoring

spending and reporting on such issues – is a practical and effective way to engage and build the capacity of citizens, media and the state on equitable resource allocation issues, ultimately improving just and democratic governance.

Anticipated achievements

By the end of 2017:

- 1,800 rural young people (600 fellows and 1,200 village volunteers) equipped with leadership capacity, skills and knowledge and will be able to facilitate democratic practices and social transformation in 600 target communities.
- 5,000 Activista/youth will have formed groups/platforms to work for social justice.
- All children in LRPs will have access to quality primary education.
- People in 120 villages will be active in promoting quality education through using methodologies like SMCs, PTAs, budget accountability
- National and state/regional authorities will have increased budget allocation, and ensure an enabling environment irrespective of socio-economic class, ethnicity, religion, physical ability and improve quality of education.

Key Interventions

- Train 1,200 young people as change makers to promote inclusive, democratic processes in 600 communities for pro-poor development, particularly involving women.
- Support the establishment of platforms for township, regional/state, national rural and urban young people to actively engage in wider political, social and development processes at all levels.
- Continue and expand the Global Platform as a youth capacity development centre, and youth resource centres in rural areas to ensure access to information and networking.
- Train Fellows as peace makers and develop their knowledge and skills to respond to crises and to undertake conflict/disaster risk reduction with

communities.

- Support the establishment and strengthening of Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) and their respective School Management Committees (SMCs) in at least 120 communities.
- Support development of model budgets in 10 schools in order to ensure community engagement and needs in the planning process and fulfill quality education.
- Use the "Promoting Rights in Schools (PRS) framework" both as a way to fulfill AAM's education related commitments in LRPs, but also in linking education work in communities to national level education advocacy.
- Provide support for developing/reviewing basic education policy and plans to ensure free and compulsory education for primary school age

children by influencing the Education Department.

- Motivate and enable Fellows and partners to work with parents and teachers to ensure that all children in target villages are attending primary school.
- Conduct research on youth and education-related issues to document good practices and develop evidence for policy advocacy.

Tools and Processes

Fellowship, PRA/PVA, REFLECT, cultural theatre groups, Activista journeys, formation of PTAs, SMCs, campaigns, Global Platform for Youth, youth resource centres, Promoting Rights in Schools (PRS) Framework, model school budgets, Comprehensive Education Sector Review (CESR) process.



7 Organisational Priorities

To deliver on the programme priorities, ActionAid Myanmar will focus on the following three organisational priorities.

Organisational Priority 1: Staff Capacity

Objective: To empower AAM staff, equipping them with knowledge and skills and creating an organisational culture which promotes the internalisation and practice of ActionAid's values, with a special focus on building women's leadership.

ActionAid will focus on two key areas:
Organisational culture and staff capacity and leadership

Organisational culture

AAM commits to an organisational culture which is professional and values gender equality, inclusion, a voluntary spirit and commitment to ActionAid's core values and principles. AAM has and will promote

ethnic and religious diversity in staff recruitment and affirmative action for women. The practice of AA values will be reflected in the quality of our interactions with communities, Fellows and partners and in our humble and cost conscious approach.

Staff Capacity and leadership

AAM's presence in Myanmar started with

a representative in 2006, had a skeletal staff in 2008 and has grown significantly to around 100 staff in August 2012. AAM has become a recognised and creditable INGO in Myanmar, specialising in community-led empowerment through the core Fellowship approach. One of the key strengths of AAM is the commitment and dedication of young staff who have zeal to contribute to peace, democracy and development in Myanmar. However, as a new country programme, this young team understandably lacks experienced management and leadership capacity and technical skills. In this country strategy period AAM will build on existing staff strengths and identify the gaps and scope for improvement, particularly in the following areas:

• **ActionAid perspective and experiences on development:**

A series of training and ongoing mentoring will be provided to interns and new staff focusing on ActionAid's understanding of the cause of poverty, theory of change and HRBA. Advanced level training and mentoring will be provided to existing AAM staff on the same. Besides formal training, staff will be exposed to alternative thinking through interacting with visiting experts, attending seminars etc

• **Leadership skills:** AAM proactively provides staff with opportunities and responsibility to take up leadership positions and gives them the space and trusts in their capacity to perform, while at the same time providing back-up support. During this strategy period the staff with potential for senior and second line leadership will be identified and nurtured through formal leadership and management training.

• **Leadership development of women staff:** Since the beginning of the AAM programme, there has been a conscious decision to recruit and promote women staff, particularly in leadership roles. The organisation

strives to create a conducive environment for women leaders. AAM will continue to consciously sensitise staff in the organisational values in favour of women and the achievement of their rights. AAM has an active internship programme and as a strategy takes on young women as interns, invests in their skills and capacity and then, if appropriate, recruits them as AAM staff. Wherever possible, affirmative action will be taken to maximise opportunities for women's leadership. For example, AAM will identify potential women leaders and organise a specific women's leadership development course in Myanmar. In addition, the formal leadership training mentioned in the second point will integrate women's leadership.

• **Management skills:** More systematic management skills development will be provided through the review and restructuring of AAM's management structure, regular review and update of staff job descriptions, through the Staff Performance Management Process and the implementation of the associated staff development plans.

• **Technical skills:** In accordance with each programme priority, AAM will build the technical expertise so that a deeper understanding of relevant issues is reached. This will also enable the staff to contextualise perspectives in relation to global context. AAM will encourage participation of its staff in national and international programs, seminars, and conferences which will help in building a rich pool of human resources in areas such as sustainable agriculture, gender, disaster management and climate change so that Myanmar national staff can gain recognition in the international arena. AAM will also encourage secondments/immersions/exchange programs, both inter- and intra-country, for the development of expertise.

One of the key strengths of AAM is the commitment and dedication of young staff who have zeal to contribute to peace, democracy and development in Myanmar. However, as a new country programme, this young team understandably lacks experienced management and leadership capacity and technical skills.

Organisational Priority 2: Organisational Systems and Processes

Objective: To strengthen organisational systems and processes to promote and measure our accountability, efficiency and effectiveness

AAM will focus on 3 key areas: organisational systems, monitoring impact and communications.

Organisational systems

AAM will regularly review and update all policies and guidelines related to finance, logistics and HROD to ensure that these are adequate for the effective and efficient functioning of the organisation and comply with ActionAid International organisational policies and standards.. The organisational structure will also be regularly reviewed and restructured as necessary. As part of strengthening the systems, AAM will ensure the entire staff internalises various non-negotiable policies regarding anti-sexual harassment, bullying and harassment, whistle blowing, child protection, and respect for human resource and finance policies.

Monitoring and Reporting on impact

AAM will develop an effective system to monitor the progress and impact of our work with communities, partners, national and local government. AAM will conduct rigorous participatory baseline assessments primarily through the communities' development of their village books which will also involve the formulation of village development plans. In addition, other baseline assessments will be conducted, as necessary, in order to be able to measure the impact as proposed in donor funded projects. AAM will invest in capacity development of Fellows, AAM and partner staff to conduct high quality baselines, to monitor and analyse the progress and to document change.

Monitoring and evaluation plans will be developed for every LRP and donor funded project by IASL and project

monitoring and evaluation staff. AAM impact assessment will comprise ongoing participatory review and reflection (PRRP)), particularly on the village books and updating change, internal and external reviews and evaluations, and stories of change and struggle. A management information system will be established to ensure that the data is easily accessible to different parts of the organisation. Efforts will be made to more systematically Institutionalise good practices and methodologies across AAM, our partners and Fellows to enhance programme quality and effectiveness, and to share these more broadly.

Communications

AAM will finalise its communications framework in early 2013 to effectively implement the CSP. A communications team will be established and trained and links to focal people throughout the programme will be clarified and strengthened to improve AAM's communications both internally and with the communities. Communications will focus on 5 key areas: building alternative development perspectives; promoting AAM's identity; promoting learning on good models and practices; promoting AAM's programme for fundraising; and communications during emergencies and crises. AAM will publish a brief version of the CSP, annual report, brochures, stories of change, IEC materials, research and learning documents, policy briefs/position papers, video and still photo documentary and website. AAM will strengthen our relationship with print and electronic media inside and outside Myanmar.

Organisational Priority 3: Resource Mobilisation

Objective: To mobilise adequate financial resources to fund our programme priorities from compatible funding partners

Funding and financing

AAM has estimated that it requires GBP 26 million to implement our country strategy during the period 2012 – 2016. Based on this funding requirement AAM needs to scale up its fundraising efforts, in accordance with Table 1.

As a result of the present Myanmar government's reform agenda, more space is opening up for NGOs and, at the same time, donors are increasing their presence in and aid to the country. The current (and potential) sources of funding for AAM are in Table 2.

AAM will strategically invest in fundraising activities:

- Investing in building capacity of the national fundraising team: AAM will build the fundraising team consisting

of staff with the assistance of the international staff and consultants. These national staff will actively participate in developing concept notes and proposals and learning to constructively engage with existing and prospective donors.

- Actively maintaining and building our relationships with donors inside and outside Myanmar.
- Regularly undertaking donor scoping and donor intelligence.
- Establishing child sponsorship (CS) and other regular funding mechanisms: It is necessary that AAM continues to maintain strong support from the International Fundraising and Child Sponsorship team. AAM has planned for 8 LRPs across the project areas with around 8,000 child sponsorship links by the end of 2016.

As a result of the present Myanmar government's reform agenda, more space is opening up for NGOs and, at the same time, donors are increasing their presence in and aid to the country.

Table 1. Forecast Income Sources (GBP in thousands)

Income Type	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Total
Regular Giving	245	300	400	500	600	2,045
Partnership Official	3,000	3,250	3,500	4,000	4,250	18,000
Partnership other	500	600	700	900	900	3,600
AAI contribution - unrestricted	518	500	500	450	400	2,368
Total	4,263	4,650	5,100	5,850	6,150	26,013

Table 2. Potential Income sources

Major Donors through AA Affiliates	Institutional Donors	Child Sponsorship	Other
UK, Denmark, Australia, Sweden	SIDA, Europe Aid, DIPECHO, DFID, AUSAID, LIFT, FCO, DANIDA, SDC, NORAD, Embassies (Australian, UK, French, German, Italian)	AA UK AA Italy	BBC Trust, CBM, financial contributions from other INGOs for joint initiatives



8 Risk Register

There are five major risks perceived which are expected to impact on our CSP objectives:

- The Myanmar political scenario is changing. In the context of the rapid changes that have happened in the country, new governance structures are in place but there is discrepancy between laws and policies that promulgate human rights and the accessibility to those rights. The ethnic conflict and unresolved political agreements between the national government and ethnic groups can hinder stability and progress in the realisation of particularly, civil and political rights. This requires AAM to be attentive to the political changes and conduct ongoing political analyses. AAM should be prepared with contingency and security plans even though the possibilities of political instability and a reversal of the reform process are considered to be low.

so many interests (stakeholders) both internal and external, the incoming of new aid agencies and their service delivery approaches, AAM's Fellowship approach can be challenged in terms of the self-reliance development concept and capacity of the partners. Strengthening AAM and partner staff capacity on HRBA and AA development perspectives, and communities' understanding and ownership to promote their village development plans and village books to other agencies entering the village will be important measures.

- Since AAI's approval for AAM to be a full-fledged country programme, the size of the AAM's programme has rapidly expanded to address the people's needs and make the most of the opportunities that are emerging with the political transformation. AAM must be very clear how it expands in size and coverage so as to manage risk and achieve maximum

- As the country transforms and with

impact and good quality programmes.

• With Myanmar's opening up, the indications are that there will be a rapid increase in the number of humanitarian and development agencies (UN, INGOs, research institutes etc), embassies, private companies etc. In a country with limited local experienced and

skilled human resources, there is high possibility that there will be competition for experienced staff as well as increased turnover rate and difficulty to retain staff. It is critical for AAM to build our human resource, create growth and career opportunities for (young) staff and provide incentives to be competitive in the job market.



9

Conclusion

In the context of the new Myanmar, the first ActionAid CSP is very significant. There are a great many opportunities for ActionAid to engage with Myanmar's reform process for which this strategy will guide us. But at the same time there are numerous risks and challenges ahead. Managing expectations of different stakeholders including AAI, AAM staff, partners, donors and the government, without losing our focus,

will be a big challenge. However, our biggest strength is that we are rooted in communities through young Fellows (from our signature Fellowship programme) which, at the same time, is the pivot for all activities. This will help us to ensure that we maintain our focus on these communities and that expansion of all other efforts is to complement and ensure the rights of the people on the ground.

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End Notes

¹ Estimates for 2007 are provided by the Department of Population and presented in the Statistical Yearbook 2007, Central Statistical Organisation, Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development, Government of the Union of Myanmar. Population estimates for 2007 are based on the 1983 population census and 1991 Myanmar Population Changes and Fertility Survey.

² Myanmar society is made up of 135 ethnic groups including Bamar, Mon, Rakhine, Shan, Kachin, Kayah, Kahin and Chin. Bamar constitutes the majority — an estimated 75 percent of the country's population. The society embraces Chinese, Indian and Middle-eastern descents. An estimated 89 percent of the population practice Buddhism (mostly Theravada), 4 percent Christianity, 4 percent Islam. (official figure of 4 percent might be higher if the Rohingyas are included in the statistics) and 2 percent Hinduism and Chinese religions.

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⁵ UNDP, 2011, Human Development Report

⁶ ActionAid Myanmar, Internal Document, 2012, Recent Growth Trends and Poverty Situation in Myanmar: Opportunity for Co-operation for Improving Human Development in Myanmar.

⁷ CIA World Fact Book, July 26, 2012 www.indexmundi.com

⁸ Restricted circulation document 2009. Not to be quoted without permission.

⁹ IHLCA 2010 report

¹⁰ IHLCA 2010 report

¹¹ IHLCA 2010

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¹³ Impunity Prolonged: Burma and its 2008 Constitution, International Centre for Transitional Justice, September 2009

¹⁴ D.Kyaw and J.K. Routray, 2006, Gender and Rural Poverty in Myanmar: A Micro Level Study in the Dry Zone. Journal of Agriculture and Rural Development in the Tropics and Subtropics, Vol 107; ActionAid, 2001, "Thadar Consortium" project documentation, Internal

¹⁵ United Nations Development Programme, 2009, Gender Related Development Index, cited in Human Development Report, Overcoming barriers: Human mobility and development, UNDP, New York, p. 183.

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¹⁷ UNICEF, 2007, State of the World's Children

¹⁸ UNICEF Myanmar, 2009, Chief, Communications, Information and External Relations

¹⁹ International Crisis Group, November 2012, Myanmar: Storm Clouds on the Horizon

²⁰ UNOCHA December 2012, Myanmar Humanitarian Bulletin

²¹ http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-east-asia/burma-myanmar/238-myanmar-storm-clouds-on-the-horizon.pdf?utm_source=myanmarreport&utm_medium=3&utm_campaign=mremail

²² Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, 2012, Framework for Economic and Social Reforms: Policy Priorities for 2012-15 towards the Long-Term Goals of the National Comprehensive Development Plan" Draft

²³ Ibid

²⁴ ActionAid, Care, Oxfam. 2011. If Given the Chance: Women's Participation in Public Life in Myanmar.



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