

Economic mismanagement

- Burma has the world's 10th largest reserves of natural gas and receives an estimated US\$150 million a month in revenues from gas exports.¹
- The Shwe gas project will earn the junta's generals between US\$580 and \$824 million per year when completed.²
- While the military junta has pocketed at least US\$2.5 billion from the sale of natural gas in the last fiscal year, none of this money has been used to alleviate poverty or build a stronger economy.³
- The SPDC has made massive investments into its military and has spent at least US\$1.69 billion importing military hardware from China between 1988 and 2006.⁴
- The SPDC's spending on the new and extravagant capital of Naypyidaw was financed by printing money that fueled an annual inflation rate of about 30%.⁵
- Burma is ranked as the third most economically repressed country in the world, and the second most corrupt.⁶
- The junta manipulated its foreign exchange rate to steal more than US\$10 million from cyclone Nargis aid.⁷

Food insecurity

- The number of people in Burma living under the poverty line increased from 23% to 32% between 1997 and 2001.⁸ By 2007, 90% were living on less than \$1 per day.⁹
- While Burma still produces rice surpluses, approximately five million people, or around 10% of the population, are suffering from malnutrition.¹⁰
- One child in three under the age of five is suffering from malnutrition.¹¹
- The regime has increased the forced planting of jatropha for biofuel.¹²

Disastrous health

- The regime allocates 40% of its annual budget to military spending but less than 3% to health and education a situation that has caused the collapse of human services.¹³
- In conflict areas of Eastern Burma, basic health indicators mirror those of the world's worst disaster zones of Afghanistan and Sudan.¹⁴
- Burma has the second worst child mortality rate in Asia, after Afghanistan, with approximately 10% of all children not surviving past five years old.¹⁵
- Over two-thirds of the causes of death for children under five in Burma are preventable or treatable.¹⁶
- HIV/AIDS in Burma is a "generalized epidemic," with an infection rate higher than Cambodia or Thailand. According to official statistics, the current infection rate is 1.3%, but other estimates suggest it is closer to 3.5%.¹⁷

¹ Reuters (25 Sep 07) FACTBOX: What's behind Myanmar's painful oil and gas price rise?

² Shwe Gas Movement (Jul 06) Supply and Command: Natural gas in western Burma set to entrench military rule

³ Irrawaddy (03 Jul 09) Junta Itself is Main 'Sanction' on Burma: Expert

⁴ AP (13 Oct 07) Despite poor human rights record, Myanmar easily finds foreign suppliers for its military

⁵ FT (10 May 09) Burma's economic prospects 'bleak'

⁶ Heritage Foundation (Jan 06) Index of Economic Freedom; AP (20 Oct 04) 10 Best and Worst in Global Corruption Survey; Transparency International (Sep 08) Corruption Perceptions Index

⁷ Inner City Press (23 Jul 08) In Myanmar, UN loses 25% of aid in currency exchange, up from 15% pre-cyclone; Irrawaddy (08 Jul 08) Junta profits from growing gap in value of cash and FECs

⁸ International Crisis Group (08 Dec 06) Myanmar: New Threats to Humanitarian Aid

⁹ HRW (10 Oct 07) Burma: Security Council Should Impose Arms Embargo

¹⁰ VOA (09 Jan 08) Burma's control of the transportation system causes millions to go hungry; Irrawaddy (05 Aug 05) UN warns of humanitarian crisis in Burma

¹¹ Asian Tribune (29 Apr 09) Sanction is an essential for Orwellian Regime of Burma

¹² See, for instance, ALTSEAN-Burma (Jul 08) Burma Bulletin

¹³ HRW (10 Oct 07) Burma: Security Council Should Impose Arms Embargo

¹⁴ Back Pack Health Worker Team (Sep 06) Chronic Emergency – Health and Human Rights in Eastern Burma

¹⁵ UNICEF (15 Jan 09) The State of the World's Children 2009

¹⁶ IRIN (26 Feb 09) Majority of under-five deaths preventable - UNICEF

¹⁷ UNAIDS/WHO Global HIV/AIDS Online Database, Beyrer, Suwanvanichkij, Mullany, Richards, Franck, Samuels and Lee (Oct 06) Responding to AIDS, Tuberculosis, Malaria, and emerging infectious diseases in Burma

- Approximately 40% of Burma's population is infected with tuberculosis and Burma has the highest mortality rate among patients with TB in Southeast Asia.¹⁸ Official rates of multi-drug resistant TB are 4%, double the Southeast Asia average. Drug resistant malaria continues to be a problem.¹⁹

Militarization and oppression

- The SPDC Army is Southeast Asia's second largest army. It has more than doubled in size since 1989, reaching around 400,000 personnel.²⁰
- The SPDC Army has 70,000 child soldiers - the world's highest number.²¹
- Since 1996, the regime's military offensives in Eastern Burma have resulted in the destruction of over 3,300 villages and the displacement of over half a million civilians.²²
- While the Burmese people struggle to make ends meet, the SPDC has reportedly spent over US\$9 billion to construct underground bunkers and tunnels in Naypidaw with the assistance of North Korea.²³

Refugees and IDPs

- Burma is the world's third largest source of refugees and asylum seekers. As of December 2008, there were over 700,000 refugees and asylum seekers from Burma around the world.²⁴
- With about 451,000 IDPs, Burma has the worst internal displacement situation in Southeast Asia, and the 4th worst in Asia.²⁵
- The SPDC's most recent military offensive in Karen State in June 2009 forced over 6,000 civilians to flee into Thailand.²⁶
- Villagers in Arakan and Chin States continued to flee to Bangladesh and India because of food shortages and SPDC persecution.²⁷

Political prisoners

- There are about 2,160 political prisoners in Burma.²⁸
- Over the past 12 months, the SPDC arrested 274 dissidents and sentenced 319, including 102 NLD members and four elected MPs, to prison terms of up to 104 years.
- Since 1988, 141 political prisoners have died in custody.

Forced labor

- Despite having ratified the International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention 29 on forced labor, the regime continues to engage in the widespread and systematic use of forced labor.
- The forced labor situation in Burma has not improved since the ILO first addressed the issue in November 2000.²⁹
- In June 2009, an ILO Committee of Experts ruled that the practice of forced labor continued to prevail and reminded the SPDC that no military personnel, with the exception of three cases, had been held accountable for any alleged forced labor violations.³⁰

¹⁸ Global Fund (2006) Portfolio of grants in Myanmar

¹⁹ Beyrer, Suwanvanichkij, Mullany, Richards, Franck, Samuels and Lee (Oct 06) Responding to AIDS, Tuberculosis, Malaria, and emerging infectious diseases in Burma

²⁰ Andrew Selth (2002) Burma's armed forces: power without glory

²¹ HRW (18 Oct 02) Burma: World's Highest Number of Child Soldiers

²² TBBC (Oct 08) Internal Displacement and International Law in Eastern Burma

²³ Asia Times Online (26 Jun 09) A UN snub: Two regimes in a tub; FEER (06 Jul 09) Allies in paranoia and repression; DVB (06 Jul 09) Digging the tunnels, part two; Asia Times Online (19 Jul 06) Myanmar and North Korea share a tunnel vision

²⁴ USCRI (16 Jul 08) World Refugee Survey 2008

²⁵ IDMC (Apr 09) Internal Displacement Global Overview 2008

²⁶ BBC (08 Jun 09) Burma's Karen flee army offensive; AP (07 Jun 09) Aid groups: 3,000 villagers flee Myanmar shelling; AP (07 Jun 09) Aid group says 4,000 refugees flee to Thailand from Myanmar; BBC (11 Jun 09) Burma's Karen unable to return home; Irrawaddy (13 Jun 09) Burmese and DKBA Troops Block Civilians Fleeing Conflict

²⁷ Narinjara News (16 Jul 09) Life in Arakan Challenged by Rains; Irrawaddy (25 Jun 09) 85 Percent of Chins in Debt; IRIN (02 Apr 09) Myanmar: Rohingya face rising food insecurity;

²⁸ AAPP (07 Aug 09) Prisoners list; available at: <http://www.aappb.org/prisoners1.html>

²⁹ International Labor Conference Provisional Record 97th Session (13 Jun 08) Special sitting to examine developments concerning the question of the observance by the Government of Myanmar of the Forced Labor Convention, 1930 (No. 29)

Drugs

- Burma continues to be the main opium producer in Southeast Asia and the second largest opium producer in the world.³¹
- Poppy cultivation in Burma increased by 3% in 2008 - the second consecutive annual increase. Opium poppy cultivation has rebounded by about 33% - to 28,500 hectares - between 2006 and 2008.³²
- Burma is also the top producer of amphetamines in Southeast Asia. In 2004, Burma produced approximately 700 million amphetamine tablets - about 7.5% of total global manufacture.³³

³⁰ Mizzima News (08 Jun 09) Constitutional loophole leaves door open for forced labor: ILO

³¹ DVB (25 Jun 09) Opium poppy cultivation in Burma rises

³² IHT (02 Feb 09) UN reports more opium coming from Myanmar

³³ Situational analysis of illicit drug issues and responses in the Asia-Pacific Region, A report prepared for the Australian National Council on Drugs, November 2004 – May 2005