

# **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

## **DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH PAPER**

**Developed in a workshop by representatives from  
nine ethnic minority groups in Burma, as part of the  
Nationalities' Youth Development Program**

**June 2000.**

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## **RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROBLEMS**

1. Small farmers are being dispossessed of their land by government and large businesses.
2. The traditional livelihood of upland farmers is being destroyed.
3. Poverty and debt amongst low land farmers is increasing.
4. Government & large business are causing environmental damage.

## **RURAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY PROPOSALS**

### **POLICIES REGARDING PROBLEM NUMBER 1: Small farmers are being dispossessed of their land by governments and large businesses.**

- \* Legal recognition of traditional land ownership.
- \* Regulate land ownership with a progressive land tax.
- \* Stop forced relocations.
- \* Regulate foreign land ownership with progressive land taxes, long term leases, bans, limits on land size, or limits on the percentage of foreign land ownership.

### **POLICIES REGARDING PROBLEM NUMBER 2: The traditional livelihood of upland farmers is being destroyed.**

- \* Legal recognition of traditional land ownership.
- \* Regulate land ownership with a progressive land tax.
- \* Upland development should be based on principles of community forestry.
- \* Large business should be regulated by progressive business tax or land tax.

### **POLICIES REGARDING PROBLEM NUMBER 3: Poverty and debt amongst low land farmers is increasing.**

- \* Choice of crops should be decided by farmers not government.
- \* Break government monopolies on the purchase of crops.
- \* Quantity of crops should depend on farmers, not government.
- \* Government should guarantee a minimum price for crops. (ie If no one buys at a higher price, the government will buy at a basic price)
- \* Legal protection for an independent farmers trade union.
- \* Government should offer agricultural loans, not force farmers into debt.
- \* Large business should be regulated by progressive business tax or land tax.

## **POLICIES REGARDING PROBLEMS NUMBER 4 :** **Government & large business are causing environmental damage.**

- \* Ban on wholesale logging.
- \* Logging businesses should pay for reforestation.
- \* Logging businesses should be regulated by designated areas, age of trees, type of trees, progressive taxes, licenses, or limits to annual logging.
- \* Chemical fertilizers and pesticides should be regulated by tax, limits, or bans.
- \* Mining and other large business should be regulated by progressive tax, social & environmental tax, quotas or licenses.
- \* Ban the export of raw materials

## **URBAN DEVELOPMENT PROBLEMS**

1Workers are exploited and in poverty even though there has been economic growth. (eg. low wages, no job security, no compensation for injuries, no health care).

2The urban poor suffer the environmental and social costs of economic growth. (eg. unemployment, homelessness, poverty, forced relocation, higher costs of living).

## **URBAN DEVELOPMENT POLICY PROPOSALS**

### **Policies regarding problem number 1 : Workers are exploited and in poverty even though there has been economic growth.**

- \* Legal protection for independent trade unions to protect workers' rights.
- \* Taxation principles should be to redistribute wealth from the rich to the poor.
- \* Establish a legally enforceable minimum wage level.
- \* Establish a government owned bank with low interest rates.
- \* Regulations for business to protect workers health and safety.
- \* Business funded, government managed fund for workers' sickness & injury compensation.
- \* Establish a minimum age for laborers to protect against child labor.
- \* Legal protection against wage discrimination between men & women.

\* Regulations for business about the duration of work. (eg extra pay for working over time.)

## **Policies regarding problem number 2 : The urban poor suffer the environmental and social costs of economic growth.**

- \* Social security to meet the basic economic rights of the urban poor for food, accommodation, health & education.
- \* Micro-credit schemes at low interest rates to encourage small businesses.
- \* Legal protection for civil society groups to protect the rights of the urban poor.
- \* Taxation principles should be to redistribute wealth from the rich to the poor.

## **ENERGY PRODUCTION & ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION PROBLEMS**

1-Large scale mining of gas and oil for energy production is destroying the environment. (eg deforestation, erosion, pollution from accidents).

2.Large scale dams are threatening and destroying the environment. (eg stopping fish migration, killing fish by changing the habitat, floods).

3.Large scale energy production is destroying local communities. (eg loss of land, loss of livelihood, forced relocation, forced labour).

## **SUSTAINABLE ENERGY POLICY PROPOSALS** **Policies to protect against large scale, non-renewable energy production.**

- \* Government approval for investment should depend on local community consultations.
- \* Government approval should depend on environmental impact assessments by local, independent NGOs.
- \* Large scale, non renewable energy production should be regulated by high business tax, social & environmental tax, quotas or bans.
- \* Legal protection for environmental activism by NGOs.
- \* Ban on nuclear energy production.

## **Policies to promote small scale & renewable energy production.**

- \* Government should redistribute funds away from large scale projects towards small scale, renewable energy production.
- \* Encourage small scale & renewable energy production with subsidies, tax breaks, and loans at low interest rates.
- \* Priorities research funding for technology to develop solar, biomass, wind and hydrogen energy.
- \* Decentralize the distribution of energy by promoting mobile turbines to refine natural gas. (ie Use a transitional fuel for industry, until technology for renewable energy develops).

## **WEALTH DISTRIBUTION & SOCIAL JUSTICE PROBLEMS**

1 The burden of taxation on the poor is unfair and worsens poverty. (eg lack of food, family breakdown, debts.)

2. Government spending strengthens their own power, but increases the gaps between rich and poor. (eg corruption, lots of spending on military, lack of education and health services.)

## **GOVERNMENT BUDGET POLICY PROPOSALS**

### **Policies regarding problem number 1 : The burden of taxation on the poor is unfair and worsens poverty.**

- \* Stop arbitrary taxes. (eg labour tax, conscription tax, fire protection tax, porter tax)
- \* Taxation policies should be based on the principle of taking proportionately more from the rich than the poor. (eg progressive income tax, luxury goods tax, progressive land tax, progressive business tax, social and environmental tax).
- \* Freedom of the media, expression and political opinion & a multi-party political system to encourage government accountability to the public.
- \* Taxation should be shared between the Federal and State governments. (States should not be dependent on Federal funding.)

### **Policies regarding problem number 2 : Government spending strengthens their own power, but increases the gaps between rich and poor.**

- \* Government budgets should be freely distributed for public analysis and criticism to increase accountability and transparency.
- \* The priority in the budget should be social security. (eg food security, accommodation for the homeless, health & education).
- \* The priority for health care and education spending should be primary services. (eg not hospitals & universities.)
- \* Resist privatization of government services. (eg health care & education.)

## **DANGERS & PROBLEMS OF GLOBALISATION**

1. Globalisation of capitalism has supported some economic growth in Burma, but also decreased sovereignty & increased dependency on multinational companies & foreign governments.
2. Foreign investment, trade & loans are strengthening government and big businesses in Burma, but are worsening poverty amongst civil society.
3. Natural resources are being arbitrarily exploited without concern to the environmental, economic & social debt that future generations will inherit.

## **FOREIGN ECONOMIC POLICY PROPOSALS**

### **Foreign investment policies.**

- \* Priorities foreign investment in appropriate technology to support production to satisfy domestic needs.
- \* Protection to local communities & businesses through progressive business tax and regulations on foreign land ownership.
- \* Protect sovereignty by regulating foreign investment on infrastructure. (eg sea ports, air ports, energy)
- \* Protect currency stability by establishing minimum time periods for foreign investment to stay in the country,
- \* Legal protection for trade unions and other civil society groups to protect the rights of workers, farmers, urban poor etc.
- \* Protect against foreign cultural domination, by regulating foreign ownership of the media.

### **Foreign trade policies.**

- \* Priorities trade with developing countries to protect against unfair trade.
- \* Protect small businesses & society from imported goods, through import taxes, subsidies to local businesses, quotas & bans.
- \* Priorities domestic needs & limit the amount of exports.

- \* Regulate the export of raw materials with quotas, high taxes & bans.
- \* Regulate imports that cause social & environmental damage (eg cigarettes & guns), through taxes, quotas & bans.

### **Foreign borrowing policies.**

- \* The conditions of foreign loans should be open for public analysis & criticism, before they are accepted (or rejected).
- \* Approval for proposed projects should be dependent on environmental impact assessments by local, independent NGOs.
- \* Loans should not be accepted if the conditions decrease sovereignty. (eg privatization & structural adjustment programs).
- \* Loans should not be accepted for large scale, non-renewable energy projects. (eg dams.)
- \* Protect against foreign debt by prioritizing small loans with low interest rates that can be repaid in a short time period.
- \* Government spending and debt management should be accountable and transparent to civil society, so that social & environmental costs are minimized.