

UNFPA FIRST PROGRAMME OF ASSISTANCE TO MYANMAR 2002-2006

UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund conducted its first special programme of assistance to Myanmar from 2002 to 2006 in the amount of \$12 million from regular resources, supplementing that sum with an additional \$4 million through co-financing modalities. The special programme focused mainly on reproductive health with particular emphasis on the reduction of maternal mortality, and meeting the reproductive health needs of men and women including adolescents and youth to prevent the spread of HIV.

During its first programme of assistance, UNFPA interventions reached many of the most vulnerable populations of the country through service delivery points in the public health system, especially in rural health centres and township hospitals. An important lesson learned was that community mobilization is a successful mechanism to build demand for services and empower people to take control of their own reproductive health. Furthermore, working with different partners, in both the public and private sector and with both national and international organizations, enabled UNFPA programmes to reach a wide range of population groups as well as to share technical and working experiences with partners.

The hallmarks of the first programme included training; commodity supply; information, education and communication (IEC) materials/tools development; behaviour change communication interventions at the community level; and data collection. The first UNFPA programme of assistance focused on two proven strategies to reduce maternal deaths:

- a) Increasing skilled attendance at birth, including increasing the capacity of midwives; and
- b) Providing birth-spacing services to enhance the health of mothers and children.

A clear lesson of the first programme was, however, that if a significant reduction in the level of maternal mortality is to be achieved, an additional strategy - access to emergency obstetric care - must also be included.