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Joint statement from UNFPA and UN Women in Myanmar: impacts of the compounded political and health crisis on women and girls in Myanmar

Yangon – Six months since the military takeover in Myanmar, the country faces a compounded political and public health crisis, on top of intensification of conflicts, putting the lives of even more women and girls at serious risk with the deteriorating socio-economic situation adding hundreds of thousands of people to those in need of humanitarian assistance in the country who were not previously targeted for humanitarian support.

Since February 1, women and girls have been at the frontlines as leaders of civil society organizations, civil servants, activists, journalists, artists and influencers, exercising their fundamental rights to express their hopes for the future of their country. Even before the coup, women, who make up 75 per cent of Myanmar’s healthcare professionals, were at the forefront of the COVID-19 response. Now, during a tragic surge in COVID-19 cases, many women continue in their activism and serve their communities while also assuming significant responsibilities as caregivers for sick family members, and for their children’s home-based learning.

Women and children are also expected to bear the heaviest brunt of the combined crises with those most at-risk including single women, pregnant and breastfeeding women and girls, ethnic and religious minorities, older persons, people with disabilities, children and people of diverse gender identities and sexual orientations.

The impact on women workers has already been pronounced with [580,000 women estimated](#) to have lost employment since February 1. Women and girls experience challenges to access sexual and reproductive health services due to the collapsed health system, with attacks on hospitals, financial barriers and movement restrictions further jeopardizing their health and well-being. Over 685,000 women are currently pregnant in Myanmar and it is estimated that nearly 250 preventable maternal deaths may occur in the next month alone if they are not able to access appropriate emergency obstetric care. Furthermore, the adolescence of over almost five million girls (10 to 19 years old) in Myanmar has been seriously disrupted by public-health, loss of school-year, and security-related restrictions and fears.

LGBTIQ+ populations have flagged serious concerns about their mental health and wellbeing before the coup, and these concerns are now heightened. Moreover, with continued arbitrary arrests and detainment of women and girls and people of diverse gender identities and sexual orientations, serious protection concerns persist with continued reports of sexual harassment and of sexual violence perpetrated against activists and detainees. Conflict-related sexual violence remains a key risk given recent reports on top of evidence of widespread previous allegations.

Non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations and women’s organizations/activists have been working very hard to respond to all these increasing safety, health and protection risks faced by women, girls, young people and people of diverse gender identities and sexual orientation. While the need to provide support to these population groups increases, the operational environment is becoming more and more challenging due to the ongoing conflict/insecurity as well as the COVID-19 pandemic, in addition to the banking crisis and the access restrictions.

UNFPA and UN Women as co-chairs of the UN Gender Thematic Group in Myanmar stand in solidarity with the women and girls of Myanmar and urge all stakeholders in Myanmar and abroad to listen to their voices and uphold commitments to international human rights for all people. We reiterate the [UN Secretary-General’s call](#) to release all who have been arbitrarily detained and echo [the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence to end all forms of violence against women and girls](#). We will continue to work with our partners to deliver life-saving social and health services to reach women and girls in Myanmar.