



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

31 August 2022

PRESS RELEASE

Response to Myanmar's humanitarian crisis must be localized

More support needed for local border-based programs

- Civilians in Myanmar's 'Dry Zone' have suffered a worsening humanitarian crisis with little support from international aid providers, while the illegal Myanmar junta has continuously weaponized aid to further its ongoing lethal attempts to take control of the country through a terror campaign.
- The international community, including ASEAN, must employ a solidarity-based approach in addressing the deepening humanitarian crisis in Myanmar by supporting local humanitarian organizations and cross-border assistance.

Humanitarian assistance provision in partnership with the Myanmar military junta has allowed the military to weaponize aid in order to further its political agenda of attempting to illegally seize power. This should cease immediately and instead the international community must focus on providing direct support towards local humanitarian organizations, including those that are based along Myanmar's borders, said Progressive Voice.

The briefing paper "[*Setting the Tinderbox Alight — The Humanitarian Crisis in Myanmar's Dry Zone*](#)", that was launched today, highlights the expansive humanitarian challenges and local responses on the ground in Sagaing, Magwe and Mandalay Regions – Myanmar's 'Dry Zone' – since the military junta's attempted coup on 1 February 2021.

Rampant and constant airstrikes, artillery attacks, and torching of villages by the military and Pyu Saw Thee, the civilian armed militia formed by the junta, have led to an intensifying humanitarian crisis and ongoing immense human suffering that calls for immediate solutions.

For the past two weeks, the junta has laid siege on several communities in southern Sagaing Region, leaving in its path torch homes, massacres and devastation from aerial attacks and ground offensives. These amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Khin Ohmar, Chairperson of Progressive Voice said: "The international community and ASEAN must stop attempting to provide humanitarian aid to people in Myanmar by forming partnership with the terrorist junta, as this violates the principles of impartiality, neutrality and do-no-harm. Those who created this crisis and immense human suffering can never be partners in providing the solution. Instead, the UN and ASEAN need to work with and fully support local and ethnic humanitarian groups that have been at the forefront of effectively responding to the humanitarian crisis if they are genuinely committed to live saving humanitarian aid service provisions in Myanmar.

"Local organizations have been successfully providing financial and subsistence support for internally displaced people in central areas of Myanmar, including from border-based areas, despite the immense challenges.

“To effectively respond to the crisis in the far-reaching Dry Zones of Myanmar, donors and the international community must immediately shift to direct funding and flexible requirements for local community-based and civil society organizations, including by strengthening and extending existing cross-border assistance. The international community must stop relying on the AHA Center, an inter-governmental agency in which the ASEAN continues to allow the junta’s representative to be a part of the governing body. Aid through the AHA Center will be controlled, manipulated and weaponized by the junta.”

Grace, youth humanitarian aid worker in Sagaing said: “We, local humanitarian and civil society groups, have devised robust responses to the deteriorating situation on the ground. With limited support from local people and diaspora communities, effective operations, like our local groups, have provided timely subsistence items and cash to people in dire need, but we need more support.

“Communities trust us and rely on local groups — which enables us to successfully deliver aid. Our insight into the acute needs of vulnerable communities as well as our expertise of appropriate, urgent and emergency responses to various situations have been indispensable for assistance to reach those areas in need, including remote areas.”

Jack Musgrave of Progressive Voice said: “It is outrageous that the junta continuously blocks, destroys, restricts aid and then limits the areas where UN agencies and international organizations can have access — meanwhile the international community deflects responsibility onto ASEAN and its failed Five-Point Consensus.

“At a time when the junta is continuously attacking humanitarian aid and medical workers, facilitating assistance through junta channels must be out of the question. Partnership with the military junta to deliver aid is not only guaranteed to fail, but it would do more harm on the ground and exacerbate escalating conflict and misery for innocent people throughout Myanmar.”

The briefing paper was produced based on interviews with local humanitarian aid providers and desk research, including news and reports by human rights and humanitarian organizations from May to July 2022.

- The briefing paper can be downloaded [here](#).
- Photos and videos from Sagaing Region are available to download [here](#). All photos must be credited to: Ko Nway Oo – Myaung.

About Progressive Voice

Progressive Voice is a participatory rights-based policy research and advocacy organization rooted in civil society, that maintains strong networks and relationships with grassroots organizations and community-based organizations throughout Myanmar. <http://progressivevoicemyanmar.org/>

Media Contact: Saw Atun

Media and Communications Officer

info@progressive-voice.org