Setting the Tinderbox Alight

The Humanitarian Crisis in

Myanmar’s Dry Zone

(Sagaing, Magwe and Mandalay Regions)
Contents

Introduction ........................................................................................................... 1
Background .......................................................................................................... 3
  Four Cuts (Phyet–Lay–Phyet) ............................................................................. 8
  Pyu Saw Htee and Thway Thout Ah Phwe ...................................................... 10
  Airstrikes and Artillery Shelling ....................................................................... 11
  Massacres ......................................................................................................... 13
  Torching Villages .............................................................................................. 14
New Humanitarian Challenges and Responses in Myanmar’s Dry Zone ..... 17
  “There is no support from international community” ........................................ 18
Complexities of Aid Distribution in Sagaing, Magwe and Mandalay Regions .......................................................... 20
  UN Fails to Meaningfully and Effectively Respond to the Myanmar Crisis ...... 26
ASEAN and the AHA Centre ........................................................................... 28
Solidarity Approach ......................................................................................... 30
Conclusion ....................................................................................................... 33
Recommendations ............................................................................................ 34
  ASEAN and AHA Centre .................................................................................. 34
  International Humanitarian Organizations and Donors ............................... 34
  United Nations ................................................................................................. 34
  UN Security Council ....................................................................................... 35
  Ethnic Revolutionary Organizations and the National Unity Government of Myanmar... 35
About Us

‘Progressive Voice,’ or in Burmese, Shay Pyay Athan,’ was born out of Burma Partnership, a network of organizations throughout the Asia-Pacific region, advocating for and mobilizing a movement for democracy and human rights in Myanmar that was established in 2006.

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. It acts as a bridge to the international community and international policymakers by amplifying voices from the ground, and advocating for a rights-based policy narrative.

Contact Information:

Progressive Voice

.URL http://www.progressivevoicemyanmar.org/
.URL https://www.facebook.com/progressivevoice
.URL @PVamplify
.URL info@progressive-voice.org

August 2022
Copyleft © 2022
Progressive Voice
Acknowledgements

We wish to acknowledge the brave contributions of interviewees from Myanmar and thank them for their willingness to share their experiences. We recognize the immense risks they are taking to provide the much needed aid to their communities through an unprecedented humanitarian crisis and hope that this briefing paper can support their efforts. We thank those who reviewed and gave valuable insights and contributions to this briefing paper, including our external reviewers.

We also extend our gratitude to partner organizations for their work and contribution to the dialogue on the humanitarian crisis in Myanmar – ensuring Myanmar people’s calls are heard.

Finally, we would also like to thank those who have supported Progressive Voice’s work, including the production of this briefing paper. It is hoped that the voices of those on the ground and their agency is fully respected and recognized towards a solution to the multi-dimensional political, human rights and humanitarian crisis in Myanmar.
Scene of the village burned by the junta soldiers in Myaung Township, Sagaing Region. [Credit: Ko Nway Oo (Myaung)]
Introduction

The brutal attempted coup d’etat launched by the Myanmar military has had devastating and far-reaching consequences for the people of Myanmar, which are leaving indelible scars on the lives of civilians across the country. The Myanmar military was unprepared for the mammoth and unrelenting nationwide protests, strikes, boycotts, acts of civil disobedience, armed resistance and ethnic resistance in response to their unlawful attempted power-grab and denial of the result of the national election in November 2020. This rejection of the Myanmar military has been nationwide, including a strong crystallization of resistance within the heartland of the Bamar majority population in Sagaing, Magwe and Mandalay Regions. These regions have been hit hard by the military junta’s scorched earth campaign, experiencing devastating airstrikes and massacres of civilians. The fallout from these attacks has been burning to the ground of tens of thousands of civilian houses (nationwide estimate range from 11,000 to over 19,000, with an estimated 9,000 to 17,000 houses destroyed in Sagaing and Magwe Regions alone at the beginning of 2021),1 mass displacement and humanitarian catastrophe on a scale never before experienced in these regions.2

While incidents of grave crimes have been reported within the media, much remains to be understood about the extent and breadth of humanitarian needs, responses and challenges on the ground in Sagaing, Magwe and Mandalay Regions. Historically, these regions have never been devastated by the Myanmar military’s fierce attacks. This is in contrast to the experiences of ethnic communities, particularly in Karen, Rahkine, Shan, Chin, Karenni and Kachin States, where the same military has carried out full-scale attacks for decades, resulting in protracted displacement of hundreds of thousands of people. From this dark history and experience, ethnic communities, particularly in Chin, Kachin, Shan, Karenni and Karen States, have built local community structures and developed solutions to address the decades of humanitarian crises. Despite not having a long history of humanitarian crises and responses in Bamar majority populated areas of Sagaing, Magwe and Mandalay Regions, there has still been the development of robust local responses in the relatively short period since the attempted coup and escalating violence in the region.

This briefing paper offers a snapshot of the immense humanitarian challenges and local responses on the ground in Sagaing, Magwe and Mandalay Regions since 1 February 2021. The findings presented in this briefing paper are based on interviews with nine local humanitarian aid providers and desk research including news, reports by human rights organizations and local partner organizations, as well as the UN and humanitarian organization sources. The interviews for this briefing paper were conducted online through safe channels, because in-person field research carries heightened risks for researchers and interviewees. This paper

---


2 Both protracted and newly displaced since the attempted coup on 1 February, 2021 is over 1.2 million resulting from conflict and violence. “Myanmar Emergency Update (as of 1 August 2022),” UNHCR, 5 August 2022. Available at https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/myanmar-emergency-update-1-august-2022
sheds light on the situation for those internally displaced in the three regions, and advocates for a solidarity approach to humanitarian assistance – one that places local humanitarian organizations at the center of the solution to the humanitarian crisis, that focuses on channeling funds directly and flexibly to these organizations, and that includes support for the extension and strengthening of cross-border channels.

The United Nations, international donor countries and international humanitarian organizations must focus on supporting local humanitarian structures and providing aid in solidarity with Myanmar’s people. Providing humanitarian aid through or in partnership with the military junta will only exacerbate conflict and human suffering, while failing to reach those in need in accordance with international humanitarian principles, particularly the principles of ‘do no harm,’ humanity and impartiality. The Myanmar military, both historically and after 1 February 2021, uses humanitarian aid as a weapon; they repeatedly block, confiscate, destroy and manipulate the distribution of aid for their political and strategic advantage. The military junta is brazenly using aid as leverage and a bargaining chip to further their legitimacy on the international stage.

The military remains the root-cause of suffering, decades-long conflict in ethnic areas and the protracted human rights and humanitarian crises in Myanmar, and thus they cannot be the means to providing a solution to the Myanmar crisis. As such, the international community must realize their commitment to localizing aid, and adapt the provision of humanitarian assistance to support and be in solidarity with the people of Myanmar and their legitimate governance actors and structures, including the National Unity Government (NUG), Ethnic Revolutionary Organizations (EROs) and local administrations. This must also place the protection of human rights and human security, the principle of ‘do no harm,’ impartiality and the agency of local humanitarian organizations at the center of their engagements in Myanmar.

---

Since the early days of the attempted coup d'état, the resistance fortified nationwide, with a stronghold in Sagaing, Magwe and Mandalay Regions, with the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM), Strike Committees, medical professionals, youth, women and LGBTQI+ community persistently showing up in force to resist the junta's failed power grab through protests, strikes, non-cooperation and boycotts of military products. In response, the military resorted to extreme violence in an attempt to quell the hundreds of thousands who took to the streets to protest. These defiant actions continue to this day, utilizing flash mob protests, boycotts, and silent protests to show defiance — showing that the junta has failed to execute a power-grab or enforce control on the population.

As protests grew, the junta rapidly escalated violence, and self-defense forces began to form in villages as a last resort in response to grievous acts committed by the junta against civilians. These self-defense forces, which became known as the Peoples’ Defense Forces (PDFs), formed organically and sporadically across Myanmar to protect civilians from the junta’s merciless violence. The people of Myanmar were left with no other option than to take up arms, after repeated outcries and calls to the international community for assistance, such as the deployment of the responsibility to protect (R2P) and UN Security Council sanctions, were ignored. On 7 September 2021, the NUG declared the people’s defensive war, lending support and working with some of the over 259 PDFs formed, as well as 401 guerrilla forces and 250 township-based forces. The PDFs can be generally understood as those that operate under the NUG. The other forces, sometimes referred to as Local Defense Forces (LDFs), operate independently of the NUG and are localized to their communities, organically established in defense of their communities. Some LDFs are engaging or receiving training from the long-established EROs.

The military junta has conducted an all-out war against the people of Myanmar, and a litany of barbaric acts to suppress people’s aspirations for federal democracy and liberty. Using data gathered by Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project

---


(ACLED), ALTSEAN–Burma estimates that as of 29 July 2022, 14,070 armed clashes and attacks have been recorded and the junta has killed as many as 2,138 people. The actual numbers could be far higher than what has been recorded, as those killed in conflict areas may not have been recorded in the fatality list. In contravention of international law, the junta has committed multiple massacres of civilians, indiscriminate shelling and deliberate targeting of civilians through airstrikes from fighter jets and helicopter gunships, razing and burning of villages, firing artillery shells and mortars into villages, hospitals, schools and places of worship. They have targeted hospitals, schools, at least 132 places of worship, perpetrated sexual and gender-based violence and torture, used civilians as human shields, and conducted arbitrary arrests, detention, torture and extrajudicial killings of pro-democracy activists, including children.

The military junta has shutdown, severely restricted or cut internet and telephone reception in 54 townships across the country to control information flow and terrorize people. The junta has also targeted aid workers and medical professionals, including torture, killing and burning remains of at least 40 civilians and two Save the Children places of worship.
A village in Yay Lal Kyun, Yaysagyo Township, Magwe Region was burned down by the junta soldiers on 15 and 16 August 2022. [Credit: Yay Lal Kyun News]
workers on Christmas Eve 2021 in Karen State. Simultaneously, the junta has blocked, destroyed and manipulated humanitarian aid for their own advantage, denying the affected civilian populations access to lifesaving aid. Some have sought refuge in neighboring countries, such as Thailand and India, but many are pushed back or detained in contravention of international law – against the principle of non-refoulement.

The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Tom Andrews, affirms that war crimes and crimes against humanity are being committed every day by the junta, who continue to wage war with complete impunity.

Echoing this, the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar, has reported that “crimes against humanity continue to be systematically committed in Myanmar. The Special Advisory Council for Myanmar, comprised of former Myanmar mandate holders, have determined that brutal and violent acts described above and throughout this paper amount to the acts of a terrorist organization under international legal definitions and Myanmar’s domestic terrorism laws.

The onslaught of attacks by the Myanmar military against civilians in Sagaing, Magwe and Mandalay Regions have been some of the most brutal and grievous since the attempted coup, and on a scale that is unprecedented in these Regions’ histories. This is no coincidence; these regions were centers of anti-military resistance after February 2021, and prior to that the people in these regions voted overwhelmingly in favor of the National League for Democracy (NLD) over the military’s proxy party, the Union Solidarity and Development Party, during both the 2015 and 2020 elections.


See Nowhere to Run (note 27)


For the military junta, these regions – Myanmar’s “Dry Zone” – form religious, cultural and historical significance in the Bamar-Buddhist majority’s collective mentality, as the birthplace of the last Bamar dynasty and the heartland of Buddhist education. Thus, for these three regions to continue to strongly reject the Myanmar military, who believes they are the protector of Bamar-Buddhist hegemony, challenges the military’s claims to power and authority.

The military has faced operational challenges in these areas, with only a few pre-existing military bases and difficulties controlling the main road and river routes. The military has been unable to effectively combat the PDFs in Myanmar’s Dry Zone, who employ decentralized guerrilla warfare. In an attempt to overcome these operational challenges, the military has formed and utilized pro-military militia forces called Pyu Saw Htee and Thway Thout Ah Phwe to assist during clashes with PDFs and to help in the persecution of civilians, activists and politicians.

While the focus of this paper is limited in scope to Myanmar’s Dry Zone, many of the same experiences described in this paper are mirrored in the Regions of Tanintharyi, Bago and Yangon as well as the ethnic areas of Myanmar, particularly Karen, Karenni, Chin, Shan, Rakhine, Kachin and Mon States. Over seven decades of war, ethnic areas have faced a barrage of artillery shelling and bombing, as well as massacres, looting and razing of villages, use of civilians as human shields, sexual and gender-based violence, and the cutting off of aid – with the added systemic discrimination and forced assimilation under the military’s Bamar-Buddhist hegemonic agenda. Ethnic communities have been subjected to atrocity crimes committed by the Myanmar military, who have enjoyed blanket impunity despite repeated calls and appeals from civil society to the international community to take concrete actions to hold the Myanmar military accountable for these crimes including the crime of genocide against the Rohingya in 2017. This historic impotence by the international community has emboldened the Myanmar military to further commit atrocity crimes with total impunity, and has provided the base for the cruel and horrific violence that plagues the people of Myanmar today.

Four Cuts (Phyet-Lay-Phyet)

The Myanmar military’s response to the resistance is reminiscent of their Four Cuts or Phyet-Lay-Phyet strategy, which inflicts brutal collective punishment on communities to counter resistance forces. While there are different interpretations of the exact definition of the four cuts strategy, it is largely accepted as a strategy of cutting off food and/or humanitarian aid, funds, intelligence (including internet and telephone reception) and recruits from a community in an effort to sever resources to EROs and PDFs.

In deploying the Four Cuts strategy, the Myanmar military launches indiscriminate airstrikes and artillery, including shelling schools, homes, hospitals, churches and communal spaces, also targeting civilians as a form of collective punishment, all the while expelling villagers from ERO and PDF controlled areas in an attempt to divide communities and resistance fighters. The Myanmar military’s “clearance operations” are emblematic examples of the Four Cuts strategy, where the military “clears” whole villages, burning, pillaging, torturing, killing and destroying livelihoods under the pretext of combating terrorism, as in the case of genocide against the Rohingya in 2017. The military have deployed similar strategies in the Dry Zone, with devastating consequences for the people. Both the junta and their proxy militias have perpetrated sexual and gender-based violence during raids of villages including the rape of a woman living with a mental illness in Mandalay Region.

For months the Myanmar military junta has systematically imposed internet shutdowns or severely interrupted services, depriving local people of information and restricting their ability to seek and receive assistance. These shutdowns have been particularly severe in large swaths of Magwe and Sagaing Regions where internet, mobile and landline connections have been blocked since late 2021, with only intermittent access throughout the day.
Internet blackouts and limited 2G network availability has affected more than 5 million people in Sagaing Region, 600,000 people in Magwe Region and nearly 482,000 in Mandalay Region. Telecommunication companies have been ordered by the junta to shut down their services in certain areas, allowing the military to commit their atrocity crimes in the darkness of information blackout.

Those on the ground in Myanmar’s Dry Zone are unable to gather information of imminent attacks, contact family and friends, access online education, or search for help. This is coupled with the strict military checkpoints that prevent cars and trucks from carrying moderate quantities of goods, deprive people of essential food, medicine and access to transportation. Civil society organizations have stated that the “Internet shutdowns have fortified the military’s oppressive “Four Cuts” strategy.”

---

37 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid. Interview R1-03
41 Ibid.
Pyu Saw Htee and Thway Thout Ah Phwe

The Myanmar military is facing a strong resistance from the people, which has resulted in losing battles, increased defections and many casualties. To try and mitigate this, they have drawn from their old playbook of arming and training ultranationalist groups to act as violent militias.42 Pyu Saw Htee is largely made up of military veterans and Buddhist pro-military supporters, with its roots in Ma Ba Tha, an organization of ultranationalist Buddhists whom the military bred and nurtured, both financially and politically.43 Pyu Saw Htee operate secretly in plain-clothes, and have used their anonymity to terrorize civilians and ambush PDFs with the support of junta troops.44 While it is clear that the junta actually directs Pyu Saw Htee, it offers the junta a degree of plausible deniability to claim they are not responsible for the militia’s actions.

Thway Thout Ah Phwe is a pro-military proxy group that has conducted targeted killings on specific individuals, particularly in Mandalay city, abducting, murdering and dumping the bodies of prominent NLD supporters and pro-democracy activists.45 While the military has not openly acknowledged their connections to the Thway Thout, the group has publicly announced its “Operation Red” in late April 2022, pledging to exterminate NLD party members, NLD supporters, PDFs and the family members of NLD and PDF targets.46 In contrast to Pyu Saw Htee, Thway Thout operates far more covertly, with the goals of creating terror among local populations, quelling activism and acting as an undercover ally to the military junta.47

Within the context of Myanmar’s Dry Zone, the Myanmar military and Pyu Saw Htee use a scorched earth strategy in villages where resistance remains strong, conducting clearance operations through airstrikes, killing civilians on sight, committing massacres, looting homes, and burning rice and crops, livestock and homes. This is often conducted under the cover of an internet blackout, not only to cut the flow of intelligence and information, but for the junta and Phyu Saw Htee to conceal their crimes.48

45 Ibid.
Airstrikes are also used as a retaliatory measure when the military suffers large losses or casualties. In Kale, Sagaing Region, indiscriminate airstrikes from two helicopter gunships killed 20 civilians in late December 2021, triggering mass displacement.\textsuperscript{50} In an attack in Kale Township in June 2022, junta troops intentionally shelled a monastery where IDPs were sheltering, critically injuring a 10 year old boy.\textsuperscript{51}

On 4 January 2022, two Mi-35 attack helicopters launched six rockets at residents of Gahe, Sagaing Region. One rocket directly hit a house, killing three children and two adults.\textsuperscript{52} In early June 2022, an eight-year-old boy, his

---

\textsuperscript{49} “Myanmar Emergency Update,” UNHRC Regional Bureau for Asia and Pacific (RBAP), 1 June 2022. Available at https://reporting.unhcr.org/document/2501


mother and his grandfather were killed when artillery shells hit their home in Koe Taung Boet, Kanbalu Township, Sagaing Region. Tragically this is all too familiar. According to the Media Monitoring Committee, between 1 February 2021 and 6 April 2022 at least 239 children have been killed nationwide, including 47 killed in March 2022 alone. In a more recent report from June 2022, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Tom Andrews, determined that at least 382 children have been killed or maimed since the attempted coup.

Massacres

The junta massacres civilians carte blanche, without fear of persecutions, as they continue to enjoy impunity built on decades of inaction by the international community to hold the Myanmar military to account for historic atrocities, predominantly committed against ethnic communities, particularly Rohingya, Karen, Kachin, Ta’ang, Chin, and Shan.\textsuperscript{56} The massacres highlighted below represent a small handful of those committed by the military junta in Myanmar’s Dry Zone since the attempted coup. It should be noted that massacres have been perpetuated throughout Myanmar not just in the Dry Zone.

On 5 May 2022, troops entered a monastery in Oak Pho, Budalin Township, Sagaing Region where IDPs were sheltering from an earlier raid, then opened fire on IDPs as they ran for their lives. A total of nine IDPs were mercilessly killed at close range.\textsuperscript{57} On 8 June 2022, in a sadistic act, junta troops shot dead at least six people who were IDPs at Myat Saw Nyi Naung Monastery, Myinmu Township, Sagaing Region – telling 30 IDPs to run before opening fire, killing them for sport.\textsuperscript{58} The junta also burned IDPs’ motorcycles and 500 sacks of rice, intended to sustain IDPs who fled to the monastery after the junta attacked their village.

In Kani Township, Sagaing Region, the murdered bodies of at least 43 people were recovered throughout July 2021, including a child and a person with a disability. Graphic images were circulated in the news and social media, showing mutilated, bound, torture-marked and charred bodies – many left to rot in the sun or in shallow graves.\textsuperscript{59} The incident triggered 10,000 people to be displaced. In December 2021, junta soldiers stormed and raided Don Taw Village, Sagaing Region, captured bound and massacred 11 people, including five children, and then burned their remains.\textsuperscript{60}

At the end of February 2022, and under the cover of internet blackouts, military junta forces targeted Chin Pone Village, Yinmabin Township, Sagaing Region over three days with indiscriminate airstrikes from five Mi-25 combat helicopters, followed by a ground attack where approximately 80 children and nine teachers were held hostage after fleeing


to a nearby monastery. At least 13 bodies, some with signs of torture, were found after troops had raided and set fire to the village. Around 5,000 villagers from Chin Pone and surrounding villages fled for safety.

Near the end of June 2022, evidence affirming the brutality of the junta and continuing culture of impunity rife within the ranks of the Myanmar military surfaced from a lost cell phone of a junta soldier found by a villager in Ayadaw Township, Sagaing Region. A wealth of images and videos were found on the phone, depicting the torture and massacre of civilians, with soldiers decapitating and massacring civilians, nonchalantly posing next to dead bodies and boasting about killings. These acts are part of a larger pattern of grave atrocities committed by the Myanmar military, including their propensity for committing massacres.

**Torching Villages**

Deliberate arson attacks on villages as a form of collective punishment is a hallmark of the Myanmar military. The military junta and military proxy militia Pyu Saw Htee jointly enter villages, destroying places of worship, looting and killing, and systematically burning them down. From February to April 2022, the junta burned 5,617 houses in Sagaing Region. Since the attempted coup, a total of 12,687 house were burned in Sagaing Region as of 31 May 2022. A local source wryly commented that there are no more villages in Sagaing Region left to burn down.

When the military razes villages, all means of local livelihood are also systematically destroyed, including cattle, pigs, stores of seed and fertilizer and even crops in the fields. This

---


67 Local HRD Source for Magwe Region.

68 Media Monitoring Collective Data. Available at https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=10160164677431473&set=pcb.10160164678221473

69 Local HRD Source for Sagaing Region
prevents people from being able to return to their land and reestablishing means of sustaining their livelihoods after the troops leave the area. In Magwe, monitoring organizations report that 4,384 houses have been set alight but a local source confirms that the number of burned houses in Magwe is much higher than public reports, and likely to be between 10,000 and 15,000. In Singu Township, Mandalay Region, junta and Pyu Saw Htee torched houses in Kyettuyway, Tamarkone and Meinmahlagyun Villages in mid-May 2022, a retaliatory attack after a Pyu Saw Htee member was killed.

The junta targets areas where the PDFs are based, burning houses as a form of collective punishment.52 The razing of villages is a tactic the military junta uses when it is unable to out-fight the local PDFs.53 On 3 March 2022, in Lel Yar Village, Magwe Region, junta and military proxy Pyu Saw Htee militias raided and torched 200 homes, completely destroying essential property including homes, livestock feed, a water pump, agricultural fields and food.54 One interviewee in Magwe Region, reported not being able to source clean drinking water and food, and people having experienced unhygienic living conditions causing disease

---

70 Ibid. Local HRD Source for Magwe Region.
after their village was burned down.\textsuperscript{75} One interviewee stated that in Khin-U and Yay-U Townships, all villages had been burned down, and everyone had been displaced.\textsuperscript{76}

The elderly, children, pregnant women and the disabled are the most vulnerable in these situations, unable to escape quickly. Horrifically, the junta has burned civilians alive or burned their bodies after executing them – including the chilling case in Mandalay of a man being thrown by junta troops onto a pile of burning tires.\textsuperscript{77} On 4 April 2022, junta troops entered Hle Hlaw Village, Gangaw Township, Magwe Region, and abducted 14-year-old Moe Moe Htwe and her father, U Aung Ye.\textsuperscript{78} She was brutally gang raped and killed by soldiers, and her and her father’s bodies were burned. The junta continues to wage this brutality every day against the people of Myanmar with impunity. One interviewee describes how junta soldiers entered a village in Myaung Township, Sagaing Region, on 3 July 2022, burned it to the ground and killed two cattle – with locals left to clean up the devastation.\textsuperscript{79}

\textsuperscript{75} Interview R1-07
\textsuperscript{76} Interview R1-03
\textsuperscript{79} Interview R1-09
New Humanitarian Challenges and Responses in Myanmar’s Dry Zone

Many local people in these Bamar-majority regions had never experienced such military attacks prior to the attempted coup, and thus do not have the pre-existing specialized social structures or mechanisms to deal with mass displacement — unlike many ethnic minority communities who have developed these systems, local capacity and expertise over decades of violence and cycles of displacement. Being the heart of Bamar majority population, these areas have traditionally served as a base for new recruits for the military. When confronted with advancing troops brandishing weapons in their villages, these communities are often stunned and unsure where to run. Interviewees shared how many IDPs, upon returning to their burned villages from which they were initially displaced, then experience secondary displacement when the junta soldiers returned to their villages. Many feel intense psychological trauma and grief at losing their livelihood, homes and loved ones, which they have spent their lives building.

Additionally, the topography and climate of Myanmar’s Dry Zone compounds their challenges, including difficulties in finding

---

80 Interview R1-04
81 Ibid.
natural cover from junta troops and Pyu Saw Htee on the flatlands where there are no pre-existing established IDP camps or humanitarian networks and few places to hide. Interviewees confirmed that those displaced have sought refuge in monasteries, surrounding forests, neighboring villages, and other places; however, none of these places provide adequate safety. As detailed above, the junta purposefully targets IDPs, hunting them out in places where they attempt to hide with both ground attacks and airstrikes.

“**There is no support from international community**”

The scale of this crisis and immense human suffering caused by the Myanmar military junta should be ringing alarm bells for a multilateral emergency response, coordinating an aid mission, swaths of targeted sanctions and political actors devising solutions – in the way the international community has responded to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. Yet, these actions have not been forthcoming, only serving to embolden the junta to continue to commit atrocities. The atrocities detailed above bear a striking resembles to those of the Rohingya genocide in 2017, and to the war crimes and crimes against humanity perpetrated in ethnic areas over the last three decades – for which the Myanmar military has yet to be held to account.

82 Interview R1-03
83 Interview R1-04

that the northwest Myanmar ‘remains hard-to-reach.’ 85 UN OCHA was only able to assist approximately 20,000 people in June in Chin State and Sagaing Region – where displacement is collectively over almost 500,000. 86 Multiple interviewees say that international support is not present in the areas they work, and they have not encountered them while conducting aid networking or on the ground – most prominently in Sagaing and Magwe Regions. 87

One interviewee, who has been displaced by the junta’s attacks in Shwebo Township, Sagaing Region, stated:

“People have nowhere to go when their rights are being violated; their houses were burned down; and many are being arrested and killed. Who will be accountable for all these crimes? Still, there is no support from international community. We want everyone to be aware of the situation on the ground here, and we are ready to cooperate.” 88

There have been an overwhelming number of massacres, airstrikes and arson attacks, and those highlighted in this paper represent the tip of the iceberg – as the Myanmar military continues their wanton destruction in different parts of the country, especially in ethnic regions.

87 Interview R1-03, R1-09
88 Ibid.
Complexities of Aid Distribution in Sagaing, Magwe and Mandalay Regions

While many horrific accounts of human tragedy have been shared about Sagaing, Magwe and Mandalay Regions in the news and on social media, by citizen journalists and civil society, much remains to be understood about the breadth of humanitarian needs, responses, and challenges on the ground. Interviewees have provided detailed accounts from the ground, and how they and their colleagues are providing and supporting those uprooted and displaced, left homeless and without a livelihood as a result of the military junta's grave acts of terror.

As outlined briefly in the background, the consequences from the junta's attacks have been immense. One interviewee describes the continued burning of villages, resulting in 100,000 people being displaced in Shwebo Township, Sagaing Region. In Magyi Thone Pin, Shwebo Township, villagers fled with only essential belongings after junta troops surrounded their village in mid-May. After a week of displacement, villagers face a bleak prospect of staying – with food running low, with no shelter only tree cover, their homes and livelihoods destroyed – or leave and risk violence at the hands of the junta. Some

89 Interview R1-03
IDPs have faced violence upon their return to their villages. One Interviewee described how local PDFs have to check for the presence of junta troops before villagers return, but this does not guarantee safety as junta troops could return without warning. People continue to face immense losses, unable to plant crops for next season and having no shelter during the monsoon season, their means of subsistence dashed. Even materials for temporary shelters cost at least 200,000 kyat (approximately $109 USD), and have to be sourced from outside the Dry Zone according to an interviewee. One interviewee from Shwebo Township, Sagaing Region says:

“The junta has banned and threatened people from helping IDPs fleeing around Shwebo Township, Sagaing Region, due to the junta's violence and arson [sic]. IDPs are in need of food, shelter and other supplies but people cannot help them openly. Some IDPs are trapped and the junta has restricted the access to them.”

UN OCHA estimates that 14.4 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance in Myanmar. Staggeringly, half of Myanmar's population (25 million people) is likely now living in poverty, over 250,000 people have been displaced since 1 February 2021, with a total of 1.1 million people displaced inside Myanmar and an additional 62,000 having crossed into neighboring countries according to UN OCHA – but based on local reporting and interviews this is a significant underestimate. Only $138.1 million USD of the $826 million USD required for 2022 (16.7%) has been raised, a shortfall of around $720 million USD. Yet, even if these budget requests were met, operationally, it will be difficult for the aid to reach the people in need if the UN continues to work only or largely through the military junta.

The junta continues to block, destroy, restrict and control the areas where UN agencies and international organizations can operate while attacking humanitarian aid and medical workers. For instance, aid from the World Food
Programme (WFP), UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and UN OCHA has been blocked and restricted.²⁹ On 3 April, a WFP convoy carrying basic food aid destined for Yaw and Kyaukhtu Townships in Magwe Region and Mindat Township in Chin State, was blocked and forced to return.²⁸ Despite the immense needs, UN OCHA has continuously noted challenges in accessing conflict areas, most recently stating in its 28 June 2022 update that “Most of the affected communities across the southeast remain difficult to reach,” citing “checkpoints and roadblocks” as among the challenges faced by humanitarian actors.³⁰ They further state that “delays and denials of Travel Authorizations (TAs), the volatile security situation and increased scrutiny of humanitarian supplies and personnel have” hampered timely delivery of aid.³¹

Under international humanitarian law, all parties to an armed conflict must allow and facilitate rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief to civilians in need of aid.³² UN agencies have not been given the requisite travel authorizations to go to conflict areas.³³ For instance, WFP was denied access to Myaing Gyi Ngu Village, Karen State in May 2021 and junta soldiers destroyed 80 bags of rice, barrels of cooking oil, other food and medical aid destined for Karenni State in June 2021.³⁴ Blocking humanitarian aid is a violation of the right to life, adequate healthcare, water and food, and could also amount to a war crime and violation of international humanitarian law under the Geneva Conventions.³⁵ The interviewees confirm that the junta has repeatedly and blatantly seized food, medicine and other aid if

---


³¹ “Authorities Block UN World Food Programme Convoy from Reaching IDPs,” Mizzima, 4 April 2022. Available at https://mizzima.com/article/authorities-block-un-world-food-programme-convoy-reaching-ids


³³ Ibid.


³⁶ Ibid.

it suspects it is intended for IDPs, a breach of international law carte blanche.\textsuperscript{108}

While some international aid is trickling through, it often cannot reach those in areas where it is most needed. For instance, WFP rice being resold at local markets or bartered for other necessities in Karenni and southern Shan State, with local humanitarian aid workers lamenting that this aid is being applied ineffectually, only in cities and towns not conflict zones.\textsuperscript{109} Junta troops at military checkpoints often confiscate aid, medicine, and the delivery of motorbikes intended to assist IDPs, thus applying direct funds is the best solution to assist those in areas where cross-border aid or aid through Yangon will be intercepted.\textsuperscript{110} The junta will only allow assistance to be provided in some areas that fall under their control, and in order to receive the assistance, the military’s administrative wing, the General Administration Department (GAD), in each township collects the names and details of families, making them vulnerable to further surveillance, extortion and control.

International humanitarian aid responses are failing to reach those in need in Sagaing, Magwe and Mandalay Regions, unable to adequately respond to the emergency situation on the ground. This is not a new phenomenon but a consistent pattern of the Myanmar military over decades of conflict and disasters. During the aftermath of Cyclone Nargis, which displaced nearly two million people and killed 140,000, the Myanmar military weaponized aid for their own benefit, prevented and slowed aid to affected communities and in some cases used aid to elicit votes in favor of the military-drafted constitution during the military orchestrated and controlled constitutional referendum in 2008.\textsuperscript{111}

Multiple interviewees for this paper expressed that international aid actors were not present in Dry Zone regions currently, with IDPs being supported financially and subsisting on aid provided by local humanitarian and civil society groups, diaspora communities, local administration forces of the revolution, NUG, neighbors, relatives and friends.\textsuperscript{112} Local humanitarian workers in Sagaing Region are buying from local farmers in order to limit their reliance of aid supplies from outside the region, while also helping local farmers, many of whom are struggling – so direct cash assistance is essential to support this work.\textsuperscript{113}

Interviewees relayed that IDPs are in acute need of food, medicine, shelter, clothing, vehicles to

\textsuperscript{108} Interview R1-09
\textsuperscript{109} “Authorities Block UN World Food Programme Convoy from Reaching IDPs,” Mizzima, 4 April 2022. Available at https://mizzima.com/article/authorities-block-un-world-food-programme-convoy-reaching-idps
\textsuperscript{110} Interview R1-01 and R1-02
\textsuperscript{113} Interview R1-09
get to and from IDP sites, and the restoration of full internet access.\textsuperscript{114} Supplying satellite phones or access to non-military controlled internet service providers is essential. An added challenge is extreme inflation of commodity prices and petrol costs, and commission fees on withdrawing cash.\textsuperscript{115} One interviewee in Sagaing Region pressed the need for cross-border aid through India with the support of the international community, to ensure aid safely reaches those in need.\textsuperscript{116}

Naw Htoo Htoo, the Program Director of Karen Human Rights Group has stated that when cross-border aid is effective, it reaches beyond ethnic and border regions.\textsuperscript{117} Cross-border aid has a flow-on effect to other regions outside immediate ethnic border regions, benefiting people throughout Myanmar. Cross-border aid continues to successfully reach conflict areas, historically in ethnic areas, which is not possible when aid is distributed in partnership with the Myanmar military. Local and border organizations have decades of experience, time-

\textsuperscript{114} Interview R1-02, R1-04, R1-06.


\textsuperscript{116} Interview R1-02

tested knowledge and networks to assess and fulfill the needs on the ground. These networks have deep connections and strong bonds with the communities they serve— which facilitates local humanitarian actors effectiveness in the delivery of the aid.

In addition to the calls for cross-border humanitarian channels, another interviewee has recommended that international donors apply direct assistance to the CDM Committees or local humanitarian organizations, to assist the CDM and their families who face persecution.\textsuperscript{118} UN OCHA, and other donors, as part of their humanitarian plans have allotted cash payments as a means of providing assistance to be given directly to local humanitarian actors and human rights defenders (HRDs)— which must be increased to allow for emergency, short term and medium term solutions.\textsuperscript{119}

The NUG has successfully applied 2.73 billion kyat (approximately $1.45 million USD) of donations into humanitarian assistance throughout Myanmar between April 2021 to April 2022, including approximately 412 million kyat ($218,000 USD) to local organizations, local administrations under the NUG’s oversight or organic community administrations and civilians in Sagaing Region, in coordination with local PDF groups within PDF-controlled territory.\textsuperscript{120} Mandalay Region has received 81 million kyat (approximately $44,000 USD) and Magwe Region has received 114 million kyat (approximately $62,000 USD).\textsuperscript{121}

Local civil society organizations are able to support those in Myanmar’s Dry Zone, for example LGBTQI+ networks that have been able to support LGBTQI+ displaced youth but rolling internet cuts have posed challenges.\textsuperscript{122} Additionally, local grassroots governance structures have been formed by the people outside of the junta’s control, providing a network for aid and donations.\textsuperscript{123} Responses from local community actors, civil society and humanitarian organizations have been effective in reaching those in dire need, despite the junta’s disruptions of the distribution of aid.\textsuperscript{124} There must be a meaningful commitment to the localization of aid using local frameworks, in recognition of the agency and effectiveness of local actors, as well as the nexus between distributing aid through the junta and the suffering it creates.\textsuperscript{125} The UN and international humanitarian aid organizations must back-up their support for the localization of aid with meaningful actions.

\textsuperscript{118} Interview R1-05
\textsuperscript{121} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{122} Interview R1-03
\textsuperscript{123} Interview R1-06
\textsuperscript{124} Interviews R1-01, R1-03, R1-06.
UN Fails to Meaningfully and Effectively Respond to the Myanmar Crisis

The UN Secretary General and Myanmar Envoys,126 the UN Security Council,127 the UN Human Rights Council,128 and the UN General Assembly129 have all urged the junta to allow humanitarian access to these regions but to no avail, and there have been no consequences for the junta’s non-compliance.130 UN actors have been repeatedly denied access in delivering humanitarian aid to central regions and ethnic areas, both in terms of being the agent to deliver the aid and working in partnership with the junta.131

Politically, the UN Security Council is stagnant on the Myanmar crisis, as UN member states remain impotent as China, Russia and India – who also continue to arm and fund the military and its atrocity crimes – block meaningful action against the military junta.132 Vehement calls from civil society for the UN Security Council to impose a global arms embargo and targeted sanctions against the junta, and to refer the situation of Myanmar to the International Criminal Court or establish an ad hoc tribunal, have gone unmet. The UN and international community have deflected responsibility on to ASEAN, which has failed to provide any solution to Myanmar’s multiple crises.

Despite repeated calls from Myanmar, regional and international civil society organizations, those working within the UN inside Myanmar and regionally have been slow and ineffectual in responding to the crisis or have risked complicity in the junta’s atrocities by signing Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) with the junta in the distribution of aid.133 The UN does not have a coordinated or holistic approach to handling

the crisis in Myanmar. Their limited actions reflect fragmented and disjointed leadership at the highest levels of the UN strata. For instance, Myanmar has repeatedly been without an in-country permanent Resident Coordinator for prolonged periods, and even in the midst of the current catastrophic crisis, the position has been left vacant for months at a time.\textsuperscript{134}

During more than four decades of cycles of conflict and displacement, many international humanitarian organizations and UN actors have not shifted from working with successive military regimes, even when this results in the junta weaponizing aid for their own strategic political and military gain. These organizations continue to apply the same model of humanitarian aid distribution and engagement in Myanmar, which results in their operations being taken advantage of by the military and causing irreparable harm to the people of Myanmar. This failure was starkly evident during the Rohingya genocide, where an independent UN-mandated Rosenthal Report determined the UN’s engagement in Myanmar from 2010 to 2018 was a “systemic failure,” “dysfunctional” and that UN actors were silent about ongoing atrocities being committed against the Rohingya so as not to risk their access to the then NLD-led government and Rakhine State.\textsuperscript{135}

The failures of the UN have contributed significantly to the current crisis in Myanmar. These systemic failures remain unresolved by the UN, and rather than tackling the known issues so as to not repeat its mistakes, these issues are being swept under the carpet.\textsuperscript{136} For example, the most recent UN Secretary-General’s follow up report to the Rosenthal Report paints a rosy picture of “new generation of UN Country Teams, under the leadership of an empowered, independent reinvigorated Resident Coordinator,” while Myanmar repeatedly remained without a Resident Coordinator.\textsuperscript{137}


\textsuperscript{135} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{137} Ibid.
ASEAN and the AHA Centre

ASEAN’s proposed solution to the Myanmar crisis is the Five-Point Consensus, devised at the ASEAN Leaders’ Meeting on 24 April 2021. Its name is misleading given the exclusion of major stakeholders, and complete disregard for the Myanmar peoples’ democratic will. Nevertheless, the “consensus” called for the cessation of violence, dialogue among conflict parties, mediation facilitated by an ASEAN Special Envoy, for the ASEAN Special Envoy to visit Myanmar to meet with all parties, and crucially the delivery of humanitarian aid through ASEAN. The junta leader Min Aung Hlaing had no intention of following through on the Five-Point Consensus, almost immediately backtracking on his word before the ink had dried on the consensus, saying the military would consider the proposals “after stabilizing the country.” The military’s escalation of violence since the adoption of the Five-Point Consensus is consistent with this position, as Min Aung Hlaing continues to blatantly ignore the agreement, committing heinous atrocity crimes across the country.

ASEAN is ineffective in responding to the junta’s non-compliance with the Five-Point Consensus, and yet the international community continues to defer to ASEAN – halting any meaningful solutions to the crisis in Myanmar. Rather, by allowing the military junta to join the regional grouping’s platforms and by allowing the military to continue defense ties with the region as well as its dialogue partners, ASEAN is risking complicity in military’s atrocity crimes. Instead of providing solutions, ASEAN has prevented the international community from taking proactive steps to stop the junta’s violence and has further emboldened the military. Civil society organizations have repeatedly called on ASEAN to move beyond the Five-Point Consensus, which after over a year has failed to yield results and is no longer relevant in the current context in Myanmar. Tied to the Five-Point Consensus is ASEAN’s commitment to provide aid through ASEAN’s disaster management and humanitarian wing, the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre), which was not designed to respond to conflict and certainly not a multidimensional crisis that have metastasized over seven decades.

139 Ibid.
Adelina Kamal, has made clear that the AHA Centre’s function is to address natural hazard-induced disasters, not man-made disasters.\textsuperscript{144} Kamal’s recommendations are to suspend the participation of the junta in all decision-making processes and activities, including the provision of aid.\textsuperscript{145} Civil society have further repeatedly called on ASEAN to join forces with the UN and partner with local organizations to deliver aid directly to the people, not with the military junta. Overall, an approach that centers on solidarity with the Spring Revolution, human rights and ‘do no harm’ as key guiding principles must be fostered.

On the contrary, the AHA Centre is further entrenching military’s role in the distribution of humanitarian aid. According to the AHA Centre’s standard operating procedures, the state receiving the humanitarian aid is able to “exercise the overall direction, control, coordination and supervision of the assistance” as a member of the Governing Board.\textsuperscript{146} With the junta-controlled Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement on the Governing Board of AHA Centre despite having no legitimacy and no control over the country, the junta is able to determine the areas where aid will be distributed.\textsuperscript{147} Initially, UN OCHA and the AHA Centre were preparing to conduct a needs assessments and delivery programs for humanitarian aid, as an outcome of the 6 May Consultative Meeting on the ASEAN Humanitarian Assistance to Myanmar.\textsuperscript{148} While it is unclear what role the UN OCHA and other UN agencies have had in implementation of the agreement from the Consultative Meeting, according to the NUG and EROs, the assessment has been conducted excluding these key actors and civil society from consultation.\textsuperscript{149} The current status of the assessments is unknown.

\textsuperscript{145} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{147} Ibid.

Solidarity Approach

According to the International Committee for the Red Cross/Red Crescent (ICRC), humanitarian assistance aims to save lives, alleviate suffering, and protect the dignity of the affected population – relying on four principles: humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence. Yet, in the context of Myanmar, international aid agencies and the UN have repeatedly failed to achieve all four principles time after time.

Often international humanitarian organizations place too much emphasis on neutrality over other important considerations, such as the ‘do no harm’ principle, protection of human rights, supporting democracy, solidarity with local communities and effectiveness of aid solutions. Hugo Slim, former Head of Policy and Humanitarian Diplomacy at the ICRC, articulates that in today’s wars, neutrality is not ethically desirable, practically possible, nor is it necessary in order to be a good humanitarian.¹⁵⁰ A humanitarian should not be neutral in the face of genocide or while communities are being bombed.¹⁵¹ When aid agencies cling to the dominant model of neutral humanitarianism it is at great cost of human suffering. In the context of Myanmar, they do so in defense of working with the junta, but there is nothing neutral or impartial about working with a brutal junta in the distribution of humanitarian aid, and doing so emboldens the junta to further weaponize aid.¹⁵² The decision to partner with the junta is also inherently politicized – it is impossible to be neutral. The junta manipulates humanitarian aid to their advantage, choosing where and when it is distributed – attempting to starve communities who resist them. This has been the case historically in ethnic areas, and is the current situation in Sagaing, Magwe and Mandalay Regions. People in these areas have been deliberately cut off from humanitarian assistance as part of the junta’s Four Cuts strategy which has resulted in their houses and villages being burned to the ground and their livelihoods being destroyed.

The most effective way to effectively provide humanitarian assistance in the context of Myanmar is through an approach focused on solidarity with the people of Myanmar in their fight against the illegitimate junta – a terrorist organization.¹⁵³ A solidarity approach is the “employment of humanitarian action within a political strategy on behalf of victims.”¹⁵⁴ Support for ethnic communities and local governance formed out of Myanmar’s inspirational Spring Revolution or from previously existing structures in ethnic regions under the governance of EROs must be recognized for the provision of essential services to people in need on the ground.¹⁵⁵ Ethnic community-


¹⁵¹ Ibid.


¹⁵³ Ibid.


based organizations have been undertaking this work effectively and successfully for decades, with the assistance of donors throughout the 1990s and onward.\textsuperscript{156} Aid agencies can achieve this through cross-border channeling and by directly applying funds to local humanitarian actors. Additionally, these local groups have financial systems, policies and procedures in place that can facilitate large aid grants – for which they have decades of experience to show their effectiveness. The technical knowledge among these groups and their ability to access and assist their own communities is invaluable to international actors. To effectuate this, international donors and actors need to foster and support connections and networks that are already growing organically, and help communities and systems in the Dry Zone connect with and learn from groups elsewhere, in particular those along the border areas.

Together with local communities, aid agencies should work through community-based humanitarian agencies that are best placed to serve their communities, access local populations and provide aid following principles of humanity and impartiality and save lives.\textsuperscript{157} The approach of working around local ethnic and community based organizations rather than working with them “represents a colonization of aid practices – a denial of locals’ agency.”\textsuperscript{158} To localize humanitarian aid, the UN and

156 Ibid.
157 Ibid.
international agencies must form meaningful and equal partnerships with local organizations and take a solidarity-based approach to addressing the humanitarian crisis that places the agency of locals at the center of the solution.\textsuperscript{159}

While positive actions have been taken to support local humanitarian actors by some international organizations and agencies, the support must be increased to match the rapidly expanding needs of IDPs during the monsoon season, as well as the need for food, medicine, adequate shelter, means of transportation to reach IDPs and sanitation supplies.

In order for international actors to fully implement the localization of aid, they need to remove barriers to accessing funds, including through the simplification of bureaucratic requirements. Many feel overwhelmed with cumbersome reporting obligations and delays in emergency funding that place an extra burden on local actors unnecessarily. Therefore, funds must be applied flexibly, in a timely manner, and without onerous reporting requirements. Dialogue with local groups and IDPs, in solidarity with them, is crucial to easing suffering and breaking the shackles of the junta’s oppression.


Conclusion

The findings presented in this briefing paper show that Sagaing, Magwe and Mandalay Regions desperately need immediate and urgent humanitarian assistance from the international community. Presently, the response to this crisis from the UN and ASEAN is nowhere near proportionate to the devastation on the ground, and they must change course to implement a coordinated humanitarian response that centralizes local actors as the solution to the humanitarian crisis.

In solidarity with communities on the ground, the international community and international aid agencies must shift the current humanitarian aid paradigm, and fully commit to localization of humanitarian aid in support of local humanitarian organizations and actors, through cross-border channeling and direct assistance. There is an existing foundation of strong, well-coordinated and expert border-based humanitarian and civil society organizations currently delivering humanitarian assistance. International actors need to access this existing local capacity to better assist the people of Myanmar, not just along the border in ethnic areas but extending into the central parts of Myanmar where there are extremely high levels of displacement and humanitarian need since the February 2021 attempted coup.

It is abundantly clear the solution to the crisis is not the military junta. They cannot be an aid partner, as they are the root-cause of this catastrophic multidimensional crisis. Myanmar’s humanitarian crisis will continue, until and unless, the junta is dismantled, and federal democracy is established. The resistance and resilience of the people of Myanmar is strong and their fight for a genuine federal democracy will continue, but it matters how the international community, donors, humanitarian agencies will come to support their struggle against the military. To date, their response leaves much to be desired. With these findings, this briefing paper offers the following recommendations to UN, ASEAN, international humanitarian organizations and donors as well as to the NUG and EROs.

“Only the village can be burned down, not the spirit!”

Recommendations

ASEAN and AHA Centre

- Move beyond the Five-Point Consensus, work in tandem with the UN to devise robust and durable solutions to the political and humanitarian crises in Myanmar, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, including the NUG, EROs, Myanmar civil society and local humanitarian organizations; and
- Suspend all humanitarian activities with the military junta, and distribute aid through local and community-based humanitarian organizations.

International Humanitarian Organizations and Donors

- Do not work in partnership with the military junta in the provision of humanitarian aid;
- Consult and coordinate with EROs, NUG, and in particular, local humanitarian organizations and ethnic and local civil society organizations for the provision of cross-border aid;
- Facilitate cross-border aid delivery by supporting and working in equal and meaningful partnership with local humanitarian organizations and civil society, in full respect of the agency of local communities;
- Apply funds directly and flexibly to local humanitarian organizations, so they are able to respond effectively to the humanitarian crisis on the ground, while also relaxing onerous reporting requirements to allow civil society and local humanitarian organizations to focus on the emergency situation at hand. Cross-border aid does not stop in ethnic border areas, with support and funding, it can reach communities in Myanmar’s Dry Zone;
- Employ a solidarity approach to the distribution of humanitarian aid – putting the welfare, human rights, human security and agency of displaced communities and local humanitarian actors at the center of solutions to the humanitarian crisis in Myanmar; and
- Move beyond ASEAN’s solutions and the Five-Point Consensus to address the humanitarian, human rights and political crisis in Myanmar and recognize and support the NUG.

United Nations

- Do not work in partnership with the military junta in the provision of humanitarian aid;
- Call on the international humanitarian community to consult and coordinate with the NUG and EROs to support the provision of humanitarian aid through local humanitarian aid organizations, civil society organizations and ethnic health and service provision organizations including through cross-border channels;
Conduct a full and independent inquiry into the actions of involvement of the United Nations in Myanmar, following on from the Rosenthal report and post 1 February 2021; and

Call on bordering countries, especially Thailand, India and Bangladesh, to open their borders for unhindered delivery of humanitarian aid into Myanmar.

UN Security Council

- Refer the situation of Myanmar to the International Criminal Court or establish an ad-hoc tribunal to investigate and prosecute grave atrocity crimes;
- Impose a global arms embargo on the Myanmar military;
- Impose targeted sanctions against the military leadership, military businesses and military-affiliated businesses as well as their web of arms dealers; and
- Impose sanctions on jet fuel to the Myanmar military;

Ethnic Revolutionary Organizations and the National Unity Government of Myanmar

- Move beyond ASEAN and its Five-Point Consensus, including the humanitarian aid provision by AHA Centre; and
- Hold consultations with local humanitarian and civil society organizations on matters related to the assessment, coordination and delivery of humanitarian aid assistance and ensure their equal partnership in the planning of aid programs.
Contact Information:

Progressive Voice

http://www.progressivevoicemyanmar.org/
https://www.facebook.com/progressivevoice
@PVamplify
info@progressive-voice.org