

Understanding Hybrid Governance in Post-Coup Myanmar (Part 1):

Command, Administration and Service Delivery in New and Evolving Areas of Resistance

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Executive Summary

- The SACs attempt to remilitarise local administration after the February 2021 coup led to the collapse of Myanmar government administrative and service delivery functions, especially in rural areas of lowland and Dry Zone regions. This vacuum has prompted a variety of new governance actors - often linked to resistance forces - to assume roles in administration and service delivery.
- The functions fulfilled by non-state social actors vary considerably across contexts and often build on networks, organisations and practices that existed prior to the coup. These include justice and dispute resolution along with education and health service delivery.
- Across contexts armed resistance forces are playing varied roles in civilian administrative structures at village, township and regional levels. The blurring of functions varies depending on regional context, with some attempts to separate the spheres of armed resistance and governance across the townships and regions examined.
- In most areas of Sagaing Region and Chin State SAC departments are no longer functioning outside of the urban core of townships. This has fragmented how people, especially in rural areas, experience education and health systems at a sub-township level. In this vacuum, most governance decisions are taken at a local level and new public services including schools, clinics and legal services are being run by local People's Administrative Bodies (PABs) in collaboration with parahita (welfare) groups and volunteers along with striking civil servants. Young people under 35 are disproportionately represented in resistance and governance bodies, though tribal elders also have a significant role in Chin State.
- In contrast, in most of Rakhine State public services such as loan services, maternal and elder cash support programmes and health services are largely uninterrupted as the Arakan Army and its political wing, the United League of Arakan (ULA) has, for now, accommodated existing SAC services by collaborating with local SAC bureaucrats for their political project.
- Justice provision varies across contexts. In Chin State most village-level conflict settlement in southern Chin State is carried out through mediation by ambassadors or negotiators. In Rakhine, since the coup the ULA has established its own court system that run parallel to SAC courts and processes, and emphasise local norms rather than Myanmar court procedures. NUG attempts to establish justice mechanisms at a township level in Sagaing region is interrupted by the instability created by ongoing conflict and the resultant limitations on administrative coordination between local PDFs and PABs
- The National Unity Government (NUG) varies in its influence. In some contexts, local administrators are following NUG guidelines for the conduct of wartime policing, justice and service delivery. However, staff in non-SAC governance including schools and clinics are largely self-financing and report receiving minimal material aid from the NUG.

- In northern areas of Sagaing Region there is a strong degree of command coordination between local PDFs and the KIA, enabling a degree of NUG accountability. In the southern townships of Sagaing Region the coordination between local PDFs is more diffuse and informal and resistance forces in these areas are more independent of each other and NUG oversight. There is no discernable regional-level body coordinating armed resistance and administrative systems in Sagaing Region, in contrast to Chin and Rakhine States. In a context of regular aerial bombardment and ground assault by SAC forces, the expansive military and informational role of local PDF members in Sagaing Region has blurred the lines between civilian administration and armed resistance. This has led resistance forces to be enlisted into a range of PAB committees at a village level.
- In Chin State, governance and coordination of anti-SAC resistance in Chin State, including communication with the NUG and its Ministry of Defence, occurs via a state-level committee which includes representatives of armed resistance groups, civil society and politicians elected in November 2020. Local resistance forces play only an informal role in governance below the township level. Instead, tribal elders and civilian structures which were already integrated into conflict resolution at a sub-township level prior to the coup have become more important following the collapse of SAC administration below the township-level. Several interviewees involved in administration explained this as a conscious choice to distinguish between arms carriers and civilian decision-making.
- In Rakhine State governance is shaped by coordinated decision-making of regional commanders of Arakan Army (AA) and political representatives of the ULA, its political wing. Regional administration bodies comprised of AA and ULA representative serve as the supervisory authority for local governance. They provide guidelines and directives to all subordinate administration units while exercising judicial authority as well. The ULA partly accommodates and coopts the pre-existing GAD apparatus. ULA-endorsed GAD administrators continue to facilitate access to and delivery of SAC state initiatives including distribution of cash transfer programmes for new mothers and the elderly. They also support departmental functions including collection of fees and taxes.
- The evolving governance and social role played by non-state resistance forces post-coup highlight the need for substantive technical, financial, and in-kind support to civilian actors seeking to deliver essential public goods to conflict-impacted communities.
- International donors must seek ways to engage with these groups and practices in ways that support the delivery of much needed services, whilst also strengthening governance structures that define the appropriate wartime role of armed actors in civilian administration.
- The NUG and international partners should seek to identify realistic roles they can play in different contexts, especially how best they can support the delivery of services and respond to humanitarian needs in different contexts. Support could vary from setting guidelines around service delivery to provision of

resources and support to local actors already engaged in filling social gaps, potentially through the brokerage of international donor aid.

- Engagement with wartime structures of social governance must be tailored to the context. In some areas it may be feasible for domestic and international partners to support training and resourcing of non-SAC social service and governance systems via an expansion of existing funding partnerships with ethnic civil society groups. Many of these groups already have direct relationships with non-SAC health, education and governance actors in specific regions or townships, which could be expanded and deepened with additional support.

Introduction

Informed by deep engagement with grassroots experiences of hybrid governance in four regional theatres of contestation in Myanmar between May and July 2022, this brief provides a conceptual and empirical framing to understand evolving governance and grassroots experiences of life after the coup.

This brief has two main aims. The first is to provide a conceptual and empirical overview of issues of command and governance following the coup in areas of ongoing and new contestation. It does so by focusing on the relationship between structures of armed resistance to the SAC and civilian governance as experienced by ordinary people since the February 2021 coup. The second aim is to understand how service delivery has shifted in areas of evolving and new resistance, particularly the logics and authorities governing justice, education and community support mechanisms.

This brief is the first of two papers examining hybrid governance in post-coup Myanmar, focusing largely on rural areas where limited research has been conducted since February 2021. The second paper will examine in greater depth how livelihoods have been shaped in the four theatres of conflict and contestation included in this study – focusing especially on business, taxation, farming and the underlying logics of communal reciprocity.

This brief makes two main contributions relevant to domestic (including Myanmar civil society and National Unity Government) and international actors seeking to deliver urgent humanitarian aid and support inclusive governance structures in post-coup Myanmar. The first is that the role of armed actors in administration at village, township and regional levels is varied and contested. While in some contexts armed actors are playing a crucial role in civilian administration there are also attempts to separate the spheres of military action and governance across the townships and regions examined. Models of administration and the actors involved are thus evolving, with logics varying slightly from the village, township and regional levels depending on regional context.

The second key finding is the remarkable mobilization of social actors to fill critical social and governance gaps following the coup, especially at a sub-township level. These functions vary considerably across contexts and often build on networks, organisations and practices that existed prior to the coup. Their evolving role post-coup highlight the need for substantive technical, financial and in-kind support to civilian actors seeking to deliver essential public goods to conflict-impacted communities.

The brief proceeds in four parts. Section One provides a methodological and conceptual overview to the research, surveying some existing literature on post-coup mixed administration. Section Two examines dynamics of military command and civilian governance, splitting analysis between areas of marked by contestation that started even prior to the coup (Rakhine and parts of Chin/northern Sagaing) and new regions of resistance (Chin State and Sagaing Region). Section Three reviews justice and dispute resolution along with education and health service delivery in

the regions studied, and draws out key findings for how authority is conceived in contemporary Myanmar. Section Four analyses policy implications and offers recommendations for supporting local governance and service delivery.

Research Approach

Methodology and approach

The analytical insights from this brief are grounded in more than 40 interviews conducted with a range of stakeholders by a team of six researchers embedded in each local context. Interviewees included community elders, civil society leaders, charitable organization volunteers, members of ethnic armed organisations and resistance groups (including local members of Chin and People's Defence Forces) along with in-depth engagement with a cross-section of everyday people such as traders, mothers and farmers. The primary focus of research was dynamics as they are being experienced at a village and sub-township level and the ways these intersect with higher levels of command and governance.

Regionally, local research was focused in two areas: townships with pre-existing resistance where dynamics of military and civilian governance have evolved considerably since the coup; and townships where new forms and organisations of resistance have emerged following the coup and are involved in social governance.

In order to protect the identity of respondents and reduce the potential risks to communities and resistance forces of detailed description of localities and townships being misused, analysis was done at the regional and sub-regional level. Moreover, in order to manage risks to researchers the functioning of SAC administrative and service delivery structures were examined indirectly, through the experience of respondents, rather than via direct interviews with SAC officials.

Conceptual framework

In both areas of pre-existing contestation and new resistance, pre-coup dynamics of hybridity have evolved rapidly since February 2021. Hybridity is conceptualised in conflict and peacebuilding literature as a situation where a mixture of informal and formal institutions, norms and actors coexist to shape governance outcomes.¹ Prior to the coup, ordinary Myanmar people experienced a diverse array of actors involved in managing social needs, including through administration, justice and social service provision. These ranged from local welfare groups and businesspeople supplementing public goods and responding to welfare needs in lowland areas to ethnic armed organisations operating health, justice and education systems in periphery and borderland regions under their control.² Depending on context these non-state actors operated in parallel, in partnership, and sometimes in direct competition with Myanmar Government administrative structures as part of larger struggles over authority and legitimacy.³

1 On hybridity see Miranda Forsyth, Lia Kent, Sinclair Dinnen, Joanne Wallis & Srinjoy Bose (2017) Hybridity in peacebuilding and development: a critical approach, *Third World Thematics: A TWQ Journal*, 2:4, 407-421.

2 See Jolliffe, K. 2014. 'Ethnic Conflict and Social Services in Myanmar's Contested Regions'. Yangon, The Asia Foundation

3 On hybrid governance in comparative perspective see Mampilly, Z. 2011. *Rebel Rulers: Insurgent Governance and Civilian Life during War*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. For pre-coup conceptualisation of hybrid governance in contested areas of Myanmar see Brenner, D. 2019. *Rebel Politics: A Political Sociology of Armed Struggle in Myanmar's Borderlands*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press and McCarthy, G & Farrelly, N. 2020. Peri-conflict peace: brokerage, development and illiberal ceasefires in Myanmar's borderlands, *Conflict, Security & Development*, 20:1, 141-163.

Since the coup, the collapse of SAC administrative and service delivery functions in rural areas of lowland and Dry Zone regions of Myanmar has prompted a variety of new governance actors - often linked to resistance forces - to assume roles in administration and service delivery. Meanwhile many existing groups have expanded their roles.⁴ Depending on context, regional and national-level authorities interact with, provide guidance to, and, in some cases, directly command this diverse range of pre-existing and new authorities at sub-township and especially village level. The most prominent formal governance actor in townships of Sagaing Region examined in this research is the National Unity Government (NUG). As earlier research by Matthew Arnold and Kim Jolliffe has highlighted, NUG has provided recommendations to People Defence Forces for the conduct of administration in areas within which they operate, including regarding policing, justice and service delivery.⁵ In addition, in areas of new resistance such as rural areas of the Dry Zone, ethnic armed organisations such as the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO) play crucial roles both in providing military support and command to local and regional People's Defence Forces. At times, they also provide informal advice on the structuring of territorial and social administration in areas of new resistance.

This paper expands existing research by focusing on how everyday people experience governance at the township-level and below in a context of overlapping forms of administration and authority. We examine three key sectors which have so far received little focus at a township-level and below since the coup: justice and dispute resolution, health and social services, and education provision. In the second paper we examine how livelihoods have evolved in these areas, focusing especially on local regulation of taxation and trade, along with structural shifts towards an economy based on reciprocity.

The coexistence of different authorities has implications for the lived reality of governance and social life for millions of people. It also has major consequences for how domestic actors (including the NUG and the broader democracy movement) and international actors seeking to respond to urgent humanitarian needs and support governance in the post-coup context should envisage and create partnerships in the years ahead. Section Two examines these dynamics, focusing first on areas of emerging resistance and governance in Sagaing Region and Chin State and then on the evolution of parallel governance in Rakhine State.

⁴ See Arnold, M. 2021. "Myanmar's Shadow War: The Role of Local Administrators in the SAC Military Regime". November.

⁵ See Arnold, M. and Jolliffe, K. 2022. "Gaining Ground: Local Administration by Resistance Actors in Myanmar" for a conceptual framework for understanding contested political authority and background on the importance of political authority in asymmetrical warfare.

Section 1.

Emerging and Evolving Authority Structures Post-Coup

Emerging governance in areas of new resistance

In townships where new armed resistance has emerged since the coup, grassroots experiences of hybrid governance has been shaped by the evolving relationship between localised armed struggle, improvised war-time administrative systems and the extent of oversight and command by higher-level governance and armed actors. In the contexts of Sagaing Region and Chin State, the NUG, formed by Myanmar's deposed lawmakers and democratic resistance forces following the first February 2021 coup, is a significant authority above the township-level. In response to the SACs attempt to remilitarise local administration after the coup, diverse resistance-affiliated committees quickly sprung up around the country to resource and sustain the struggle for democracy. New administrative bodies also quickly emerged in areas of anti-junta resistance, including in parts of Sagaing Region and Chin State not previously under the administration of ethnic armed organisations.⁶ By July 2021, GAD functions at village levels in these contexts had largely ceased as many SAC appointed administrators resigned from their positions or fled to SAC controlled villages and urban areas.⁷ As a result, by mid-2022, in large parts of Sagaing Region and Chin State the GAD was functioning only in urban areas and Pyu Saw Htii (pro-SAC militia) villages, with administrative positions held largely by military personnel with oversight by regional Tatmadaw commanders.

In September 2021, following the repeated violent suppression of peaceful protesters and subsequent organic intensification of armed resistance to the coup across the Dry Zone, the NUG declared the formation of a People's Defence Force under the Ministry of Defence. As noted by Arnold (2021), these dynamics have subsequently shaped the relationship between civilian governance and military authorities in large parts of the country in the larger context of asymmetric conflict in which the SAC is disproportionately better armed than the anti-SAC resistance. Especially in northern and southern Sagaing Region and in Chin State administrative structures guided by the logics and directives of the NUG have been erected since the coup - often with the functional involvement of armed resistance forces.⁸

In Sagaing Region and Chin State new non-SAC administrative formations follow a similar logic to the system of GAD district, township, village tract and village level bureaucracy which existed prior to the coup. At the township level, Public Administration Bodies (PABs, Pa.A.Pha in Burmese) have become the umbrella for a series of committees which vary by context but which have structures at township, village tract and village level. These include village-based security forces which lead village protection and coordinate attacks on Tatmadaw forces in partnership with township-level People Defence Forces (local PDFs, Pa.Ka.Pha in Burmese).

In areas of research in Sagaing and Chin State, as of mid-2022 the PABs and local PDFs are governing the vast majority of rural villages, with the role of the latter varying by region. In contrast, the SAC largely controls the urban core and some peri-urban areas of townships both in Chin State and Sagaing Region. In resistance-

⁶ See Arnold and Jolliffe 2022 for discussion of NUG directives around local administration since the coup.

⁷ Many former SAC administrators in villages in Sagaing Region reportedly fled to villages run by pro-SAC militias (Pyu Saw Htii) where they have become paid military informants against pro-democracy resistance forces.

⁸ For discussion see Naw Shaw Ei Ei Tun and Jolliffe, K. 2022. "Self-determination under an interim constitutional framework: Local administration in ethnic areas of Myanmar". Working Paper.

administered villages, both the local PDF and PAB are the key actors in village level governance including security along with justice and services related to health and education. In the majority of villages examined, village-level PABs follow the guidance of township-level PABs with more direct lines of communication to the NUG which issued its own guidance on local administration in April 2022. These PAB township-level officials help to communicate the localized rules and regulations relevant to the contexts. A major element of hierarchical oversight is the governance of village security provision by People's Security Groups (PSGs, Pa La Pha in Burmese) under the supervision of PABs led to varying degrees by local resistance forces, raising questions about the fusion and distinction between civilian and resistance command structures.

The logics and operations of resistance administration in non-SAC villages are an adaptation of GAD structures that existed prior to the coup. Indeed, in several villages examined for this research former Myanmar Government village administrators had joined local PDFs and then become involved in non-SAC administrative structures. At a village level in Sagaing Region, for instance, policing and law enforcement functions are performed by local militias, in some cases loosely organised into PSGs following guidelines provided by the NUG. These formal bodies co-exist with locally specific formations of education boards, health committees and forest and natural resource management committees.

Armed resistance and emergent governance in Sagaing Region

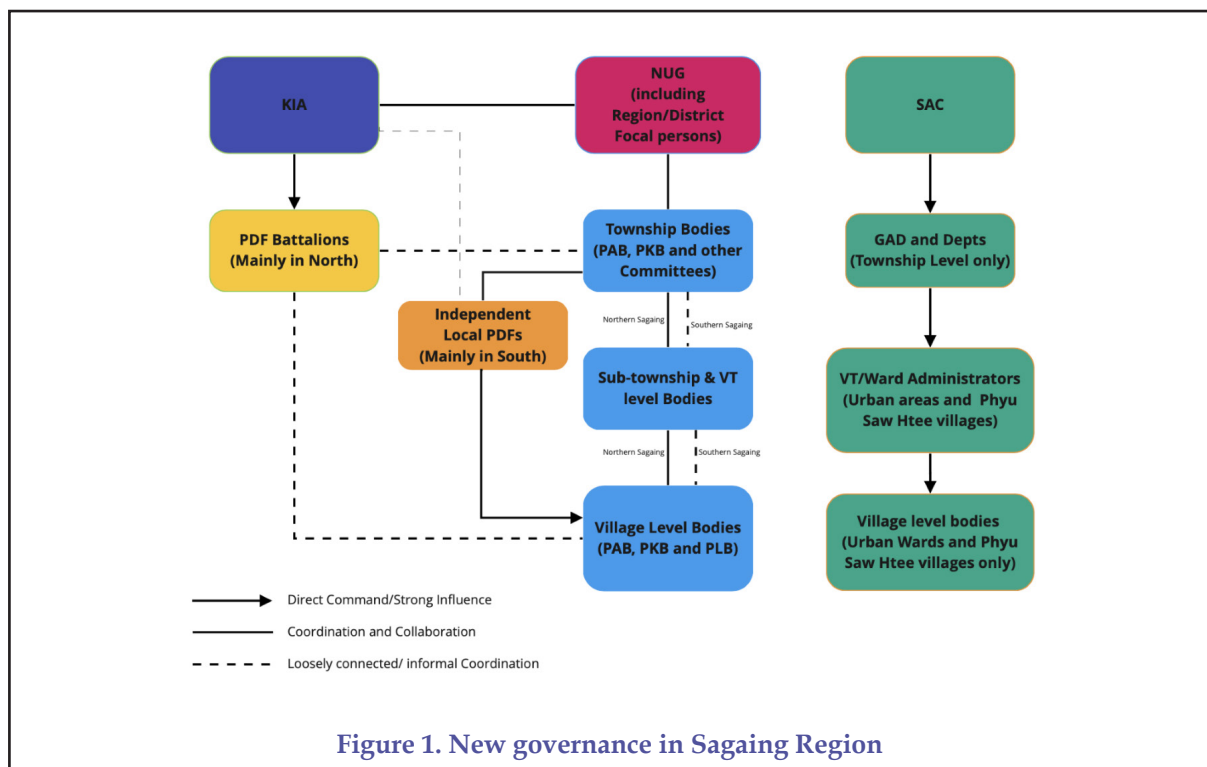
There are some regional differences between north and south Sagaing in terms of military command, the operation of sub-township administrative structures and coordination with the NUG. In large parts of Sagaing Region where SAC structures are largely not functioning local PDFs have assumed a leading role in local governance and administration. In these areas local PDF groups have either been brought loosely under the command of the NUG's Defence Ministry, or in some areas of northern Sagaing are under the command of PDF battalions directed by the Kachin Independence Army (KIA). Local PDFs are influential in the new governance bodies established since the coup, with the NUG largely playing an oversight and guidance role at a township level and above.

The result is that most village administrative and governance decisions are taken at a local level, partly reflecting the extraordinarily rapid and improvised development of administrative structures amid intensifying attacks by the SAC and Tatmadaw on grassroots resistance efforts.

In the regions examined, local PDFs in Sagaing Region were formed in the months after the coup with the purpose of preventing theft and robbery when the military seized power. Later, the role of some PDFs expanded from night watch and protection of villagers to proactive attacks on SAC forces. As the SAC began to rely on increasingly violent means of suppressing dissent in the months after the February 2021 coup, and local administrators began to resign their positions or flee retribution for informing on village resistance forces, PDFs have begun to assume administrative functions in structures established at township-level and below consistent with NUG directives.⁹

⁹ See Arnold, 2021, *ibid.*

As depicted in Figure One, Sagaing PDFs are either loosely under the command of the NUG or in the case of northern Sagaing Region resistance forces are operating under the close command of the KIA. Administratively, PDFs are technically integrated into township-level mechanisms comprised of distinct administrative bodies and civil policing agencies led by different people. In practice, however, in southern areas of Sagaing Region where wartime resistance and administrative systems have been erected rapidly with limited resourcing, members of local PDFs play an influential role both in township level committees and in the administration and policing of village life. As a result, in these areas resistance and governance actors are often overlapping at both the township and sub-township level. Though the NUG has assigned coordinators at a district and regional level, there is no discernable regional-level body coordinating armed resistance and administrative systems in Sagaing Region. As explained further on, this is distinct from Chin and Rakhine States, highlighting the improvised and largely localised nature of wartime governance in a context of minimal pre-coup coordination and limited resourcing and external support since the coup.



PDF members perform diverse functions at a village and township-level amid intensifying attacks from Tatmadaw forces and SAC-affiliated militias (Pyu Saw Htii). In a context of regular aerial bombardment and ground assault by SAC forces, the military roles of PDFs include helping to provide security of villages and schools, relocating villagers ahead of SAC military operations and coordinating guerrilla attacks upon SAC troops often using tu mee (handmade rifles) and land mines. Local PDF members also play critical roles in intelligence, including information collection and dissemination with other resistance forces. In northern areas of Sagaing Regions, where many PDFs are integrated into battalion structures under the KIA, information collected at a sub-township level is then shared with superiors within battalion command structures to inform planning of defensive and offensive missions. Given that the SAC has cut off telecommunications services in

much of Sagaing Region since early 2022 village PDFs representatives have become even more crucial to information flow including relaying messages from one village to another.

Out of necessity the expansive military and informational role of local PDF members has blurred the lines between civilian administration and armed resistance. Given the intensity of conflict experienced throughout the region and the limited enthusiasm of civilians to become involved in wartime administration, PDF members often find themselves enlisted to play a range of roles in PAB administrative committees at a village level. A village PDF leader from northern Sagaing explained their crucial role in an interview: “Pa.Ka.Pha (local PDF) is like salt in the dishes. Salt is needed everywhere. Life would not be possible without it.” Young people are disproportionately represented in local administrative functions in non-SAC areas, both in policies and various socially-oriented committees. As a community member from southern Sagaing Region explained:

“The new administrative system is led by young people. The elderly groups and older generation are reluctant to take responsibilities in the current context. Thus, there are only a limited number of young leaders, and end up assigning them for dual roles in PAP [PAB in English] and PKP [local PDF in English]”.

In the townships examined there is some variation between north and south Sagaing Region in the blending of military and administrative functions. In northern areas of Sagaing Region there is a strong degree of command coordination between local PDFs and the KIA as resistance forces are organised into a regional battalion structure commanded by the KIA. While the role of the KIA does not extend to management of administration at a township-level and below in these areas, there does appear to be stronger coordination occurring between township administrative bodies, including NUG oversight mechanisms, in northern Sagaing Region relative to areas of southern Sagaing Region. Whether these patterns are the result of the KIA sharing its experiences in organising local governance with resistance forces under its command in northern Sagaing Region is unclear. What is evident, however, is that the role of the KIA in coordinating PDFs battalions in northern Sagaing Region for military operations have enabled the NUG to assume a more formal role at a township level and above, perhaps as a result of PDF structures formalised at a township-level and above in this area. In contrast, in the southern townships of Sagaing Region the coordination between local PDFs in terms of military command is more diffuse and informal. As a result, resistance forces in these areas are more independent of each other and systems of administration at a township level and below less integrated into NUG oversight mechanisms than in northern areas of Sagaing Region.

Evolving governance in Chin State

In contrast to the Dry Zone, local PDFs have been less integrated into administrative structures in Chin State since the coup. Relative to Sagaing Region local resistance forces are less overtly involved in village administration bodies and are not engaged as actively in policing and justice mechanisms at a village level (see Case-study 3). This is partly a consequence of the existing command logics and administrative approaches of the Chin Defence Forces (CDF). CDF commenced mobilisation in

Chin State earlier than areas of the Dry Zone following the coup, with a number of militias including Chin National Front (a signatory to the 2015 Nation-wide Ceasefire Agreement) and Zomi Revolutionary Army already militarily organised prior to February 2021. However, the bulk of resistance forces in Chin State have emerged since the coup with limited direct involvement of pre-existing armed groups and at times in direct conflict with them.¹⁰ CDF battalion structures formed since February 2021 are largely based around tribal identities and networks unified around a shared commitment to a meaningfully autonomous Chinland within a federal democratic Myanmar. Given the explicitly ethno-federal aspirations of CDF and its structures of battalion coordination and command largely autonomous of the NUG, it is distinguishable from the PDF battalions and local resistance forces of Sagaing Region.

The differing origins, command structures and aspirations of the CDF, combined with the already fairly limited reach of the Union ministries throughout much of Chin State prior to the coup, has produced civilian administrative structures distinct from those in Sagaing Region. In particular, tribal elders and structures in these areas - which were already integrated into conflict resolution at a sub-township level prior to the coup - have become more important in governance following the collapse of SAC administration in these areas below the township-level. Moreover, practices and structures of self-organisation that had developed in rural areas of Chin State prior to the coup have simply been reinforced since February 2021.

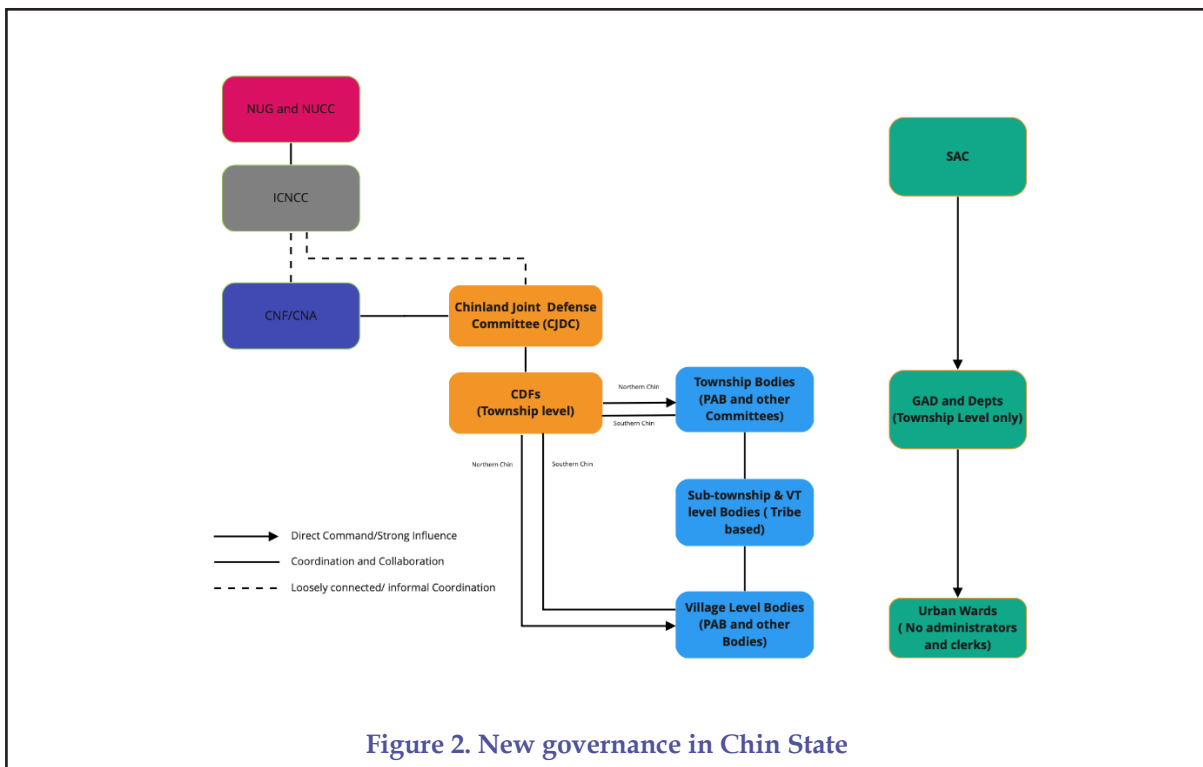


Figure 2. New governance in Chin State

Figure Two depicts structures and flows of command, coordination and loose influence in Chin State as it shapes administration and governance following the coup. Similar to Sagaing Region, GAD functions are operational only in urban areas of townships where SAC forces retain territorial control. Village administrators

¹⁰ See for example tensions between the Zomi Revolutionary Army and PDFs in Chin State since the coup. Khin Yi Yi Zaw. 2021. "Chin PDF group accuses Zomi Revolutionary Army of killing leader". Myanmar Now. 8 December.

throughout much of Chin State resigned their positions after the coup. As will be discussed further in paper two, township GAD offices have been handling approvals of trading activity that requires transportation of goods via SAC-controlled territory such as rice and other foodstuffs.

Hierarchically, governance and strategic coordination of anti-SAC resistance in Chin State including communication with the NUG and its Ministry of Defence occurs via a state-level committee: Interim Chin National Coordination Committee (ICNCC). ICNCC includes representatives from the Chin National Front/ Army, the Chinland Joint Defense Committee (an alliance of more than a dozen resistance forces formed after the coup), Chin civil society groups along with politicians elected in November 2020. Military operations of local CDF are coordinated through a state-level committee comprised of commanders from respective townships. Administratively, public administrative bodies at a township level and below are mainly initiated and established by the CDF.

In general, armed actors in Chin State play a less formal role in governance below the township level than PDFs in Sagaing Region. There is some regional variation with PABs in southern Chin townships such as Mindat and Kanpetlet largely governing autonomously of resistance forces at township-level and below. In these areas, several interviewees involved in administration after the coup emphasised that the minimal involvement of resistance forces in local governance was a conscious choice to distinguish between arms carriers and civilian decision-making. In townships of northern Chin State such as Htantalan and Tonzang, in contrast, CDFs appeared to be more actively involved in local administration. While the structure of PABs differ among regions of Chin State, committees have been formed in many villages to coordinate education and health services, finance, defenses and public security, livelihood, agriculture, and food security. Elections for village leaders have been held in many village tracts since the coup. The role of a village leader is mainly in administration, dispute settlement or resolutions, education, health, security, and also collaboration with other village leaders and higher-level civilian and resistance leaders. In most villages examined, councils have been formed which support the broader administrative efforts at a local level.

Evolving social governance in Rakhine State

Since early 2021 military and civilian administration in Rakhine State has become more hybridised, though in ways distinct from that seen in areas of new resistance in the Dry Zone or Chin State. Due to the tentative yet ongoing ceasefire reached in December 2020 between the Arakan Army and the Tatmadaw, local governance in Rakhine State is shaped by the relatively uninterrupted functioning of the Union of Myanmar administrative apparatus at a village level. Yet the logics and networks underpinning governance at a sub-township level are deeply interlinked with the administrative logics, military command and political aspirations of the AA and its political wing, the ULA.

As depicted in Figure Three, governance in much of Rakhine State is organized into five tiers connecting a council with regional administration bodies (congruent with military command regions), zone administrators (sub-township), village

tract administration committees and village administration committees. The top tier, referred to as Regional Governing Authorities, are presided by regional commanders of AA and political representatives of ULA. Civil society groups and Rakhine political parties engage closely with the ULA but have no formal role in this committee. This governing authority serves as the ultimate supervisory body for local governance providing policy guidelines and directives to all subordinate administration units while exercising judiciary authority as well. Although it varies by sub-regions or zones, it is comprised of thematic departments including a taxation department, forestry department and a Muslim relation department.

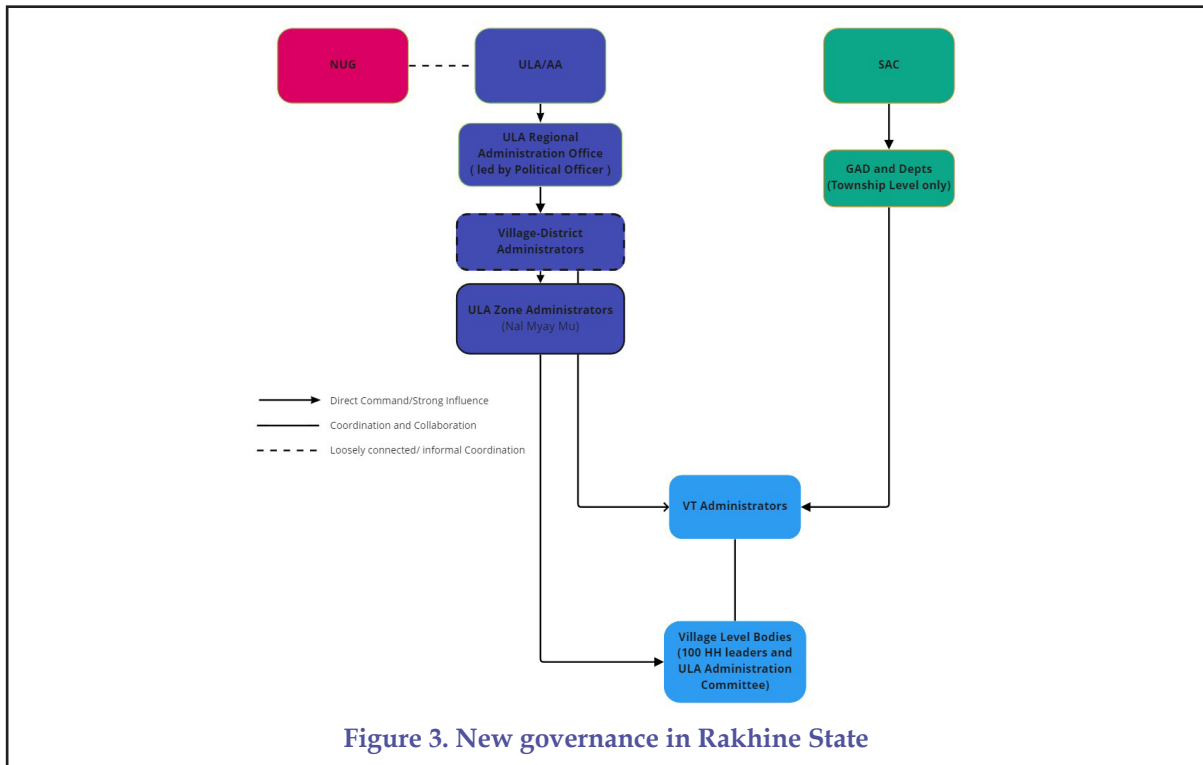


Figure 3. New governance in Rakhine State

Below this level of functionality, which is similar to Chin State and parts of the Dry Sone, the ULA/AA approach to administration after the coup is unique amongst the regions examined. This is because it largely accommodates and partly coopts the pre-existing GAD apparatus which continues to function after the coup unlike other areas of Myanmar. Most, if not all, village tract administrators elected prior to the coup have been accommodated into ULA governance structures with the exceptions of some townships in southern Rakhine State. As a result of the ceasefire reached between the Tatmadaw and ULA/AA and the unpopularity of the previous National League for Democracy (NLD) government in Rakhine State prior to the coup, few Rakhine civil servants have joined the civil disobedience movements in support of the ousted civilian government. Instead, the ULA/AA has worked to build close relationships with village administrators who were elected prior to the coup. The researcher observed that the village tract administrators elected under the GAD's ward/village tract election rules remain in position as VTAs of SAC.

Simultaneously, many serve according to both SAC and ULA directives in contrast to areas of new resistance since the coup.¹¹ As of late 2021 village administrators

¹¹ At the time of writing, the bulk of village tracts in the research area operated on behalf of both the GAD and the ULA. However, in a minority of contexts examined two administrators operated at a village tract level - one

and in some cases village committees have been directly reporting to ULA's zone administrators. These dynamics have reinforced the ULA's influence over local social life since early 2021, often using the resources of the SAC to do so. It has also provided a degree of continuity for ordinary people in their interactions with local administrators after almost a decade of ongoing conflict with the Tatmadaw.

Functionally, village tract administrators supervise and collaborate with village administrators, arbitrate in disputes and legal cases submitted by village administrators, and take over collection of taxes levied by the GAD. In rural contexts GAD-appointed VT and township administrators are playing critical roles in supporting departmental functions including collection of fees for fishing licenses, taxes on extracting sand and stone and collection of loan repayments. As will be examined further in paper two, the ULA continues to permit collection of many of these taxes but is increasingly seeking a share of revenues raised by GAD officers. More importantly, they facilitate access to and delivery of SAC state initiatives including distribution of cash transfer programmes for new mothers and the elderly. Since most, if not all, village tract administrators were elected by their constituents prior to the military coup and endorsed by ULA for establishing its new governance, they brought some form of legitimacy and representativeness or political cushion into the new governance. Their unique status seems to enable them to communicate with both ULA's supervisory authorities and with SAC's especially for public services such as school and healthcare.

VTAs work directly with village administration committees comprised of village administrators and community leaders selected by their constituent communities. These groups are tasked with daily village administrative work which include dispute resolution and village development, fulfilling functions similar to People's Security Groups in Sagaing Region. Since they are positioned closest to the community, they are at the frontline of new governance and can influence local lives through regulatory actions and disputes resolution. They are also crucial to the continued mobilisation of Rakhine society by the ULA/AA, using SAC and Myanmar Government resources including central government social programmes to reinforce the larger ideal of the "Way of Rakita" towards Arakan autonomy. In the context of intensifying tensions in mid-2022 between AA/ULA and the SAC, the system of co-administration was seen by many Rakhine interviewees as a mutually agreeable though potentially temporary settlement between two otherwise conflicting authorities. A member of a local parahita (welfare) group summarised this collaborative administrative stalemate:

"ULA cannot provide public services in the current condition, so ULA encourages the SAC-appointed staff to collaborate with ULA. ULA allows these staff to report to SAC and asks them to report to ULA."

In the following section we survey the differences between the three regions - Sagaing Region, Chin State and Rakhine State - across justice and dispute resolution; and social services including education and health care.

serving the ULA and the other appointed by the GAD. As this is a minority of cases Figure Three presents the most common scenario of fused rather than parallel administrators.

Section 2.

Community Experiences of Hybrid Governance

Across all three regions dynamics of hybridity linked to the role of armed groups in resistance and administration shape experiences of justice, provision of education and access to a variety of essential social services after the coup. Central to these variations are tensions regarding the appropriate role of armed resistance actors in wartime governance, including the degree of civilian oversight and the need to moderate the more extreme uses of violence in a context of escalating assaults by SAC forces. These dynamics and debates are crucial for domestic resistance and international partners to understand as they highlight the urgent need to support nascent systems of non-SAC social governance. They also have implications for how best to structure humanitarian engagement in ways that support inclusive and accountable systems of governance over the medium term.

Justice and legal dispute resolution

The functioning of non-SAC justice systems differs significantly across the three regions studied, reflecting their distinct conflict and administrative histories and trajectories since the coup. In Chin State, dispute resolutions are made in reference to both legal precedent and traditional practices (see Case-study 1 on local dispute resolution). Reflecting the role of tribal leaders along with young, educated people in village administration since early 2021, in townships of both north and south Chin State, non-CDF actors also play a crucial role in dispute resolution.

Case Study 1: Local Dispute Settlement in Chin State

In Chin State, CDF, PAB, and village leaders play important roles in dispute settlement. Common disputes are related to land between individuals or villages due to practices of rotation farming and agriculture or petty crimes, such as theft cases. In these cases, the village leader and village committee seek to settle disputes by seeking reports from both parties about the history of land use or the incident in question. In villages examined most cases were resolved through the process of local mediation, aided by all parties swearing an oath grounded in Chin custom. However, for some land disputes Chin elders are consulted on land ownership and village history. If cases are not solved at the village level, they are then referred to township bodies, where an authorized judge appointed by the township-level PAB conducts a hearing and parties are asked to swear an oath and give evidence. In cases where village leaders and PAB township officials have been unable to resolve a dispute, perhaps due to it involving parties from different townships or Chin tribal groups, representatives of CDF and CNA would then be consulted on how best to approach dispute resolution.

There is some variation across townships in Chin State. Most village-level conflict settlement in southern Chin State carried out through mediation by ambassadors or negotiators “Aung Ta Man”. PAB and tribal leaders assign a respectable person or elder from the community as the designated Aung Ta Man for a dispute, who is required to help negotiate with interested parties and attempt to reach a just outcome based on local norms. The majority of cases are resolved at the village level, where tribe leaders and other local PAB members are involved in the hearing or dispute settlement process along with the semi-formalised role of negotiator. In some townships in northern Chin state, local CDF members may also be involved in resolving local disputes alongside a negotiator. When cases require mediation

beyond the village, however, township-level administrative bodies and CDF representatives will coordinate the appointment of a judge to hear the case. As discussed in case-study two, however, the extent to which members of the CDF should be involved in the justice system - especially with regard to the judgment and punishment of alleged informants (dalan) - highlights broader questions about civilian oversight of armed force's role in local governance during wartime.

Case Study 2: Handling Dalan Issues in Chin state

In Chin State, as across much of Myanmar, a major tension since the coup has been how to judge and punish people who inform SAC officials and security personnel about resistance activities and plans. Assassinations of civilian informants (dalan), including a teacher in Yangon, have intensified questions nationally about whether the NUG endorses the punishment of dalan and the degree to which it has command control over the actions of PDFs and local police/security militias in areas of anti-SAC resistance. In Chin State this issue has become a major source of debate within the governing bodies involving the Chin Defence Force - providing a vivid insight into the distinction between different areas of new resistance.

Chin State has its own customary laws and regulations among different tribes, which have been used for decades and are informed by customary knowledge. Although murder cases are usually rare in Chin State, numerous cases have occurred since the coup in which alleged dalan (informants) have been violently punished and in some cases executed. One of the most prominent local cases occurred in mid-2021, when a Chin trader was arrested by resistance groups and later killed. It emerged shortly after that he had been accused of being an informant (dalan) as others discovered images on his phone of attending the military events in Bagan in central Myanmar. Within a few weeks the case began to attract the attention of the broader Chin community on social media, becoming a focal point for debate about how alleged informants (dalan) should be tried and punished. Through various viral Facebook posts along with offline discussions among Chin community leaders, a new consensus emerged that local resistance forces were not justified in punishing Chin people with death regardless of their crime. The armed group responsible for the murder of the alleged informant was subsequently questioned by Chin community leaders who considered his execution to be unacceptable, especially as he was a member of a different tribal group to that which the local resistance force belonged. The community leaders encouraged the resistance force to seek other possible solutions apart from execution in the future and the group committed not to engage in unilateral execution so as to preserve relations between different Chin tribes. Since the case, people who were suspected or accused of being dalan by local resistance forces and then found guilty via village or township-level processes have been sentenced with expulsion from Chin communities rather than execution. Meanwhile, the tribal structure of Chin society has been reinforced, placing some form of ethnic-based hierarchy around the militarised resistance efforts led largely by young Chin people.

In contrast to the more traditionally-grounded mediation of justice in Chin State, since the coup the ULA has established its own court system throughout much of Rakhine State that run parallel to SAC courts and processes.¹² These justice mechanisms seek to resolve cases ranging from petty disputes to criminal and civil cases through mechanisms established at a village, sub-township and regional level for mediation. Interviewers indicated that ULA courts and administrative bodies are

¹² For initial analysis of ULA creation of parallel legal processes see Kyaw Lynn. 2022. "The Nature of Parallel Governance and Its Impact on Arakan Politics". The Hague, Transnational Institute. 22 February.

informed both by existing Myanmar laws and customary practices.

The ULA dispenses justice through judges who swear allegiance to the organisation and its political aspirations for an autonomous Rakhine State. Intriguingly though the legal foundation of court proceedings are largely existing Myanmar Government criminal and civil legislation. Despite the legal basis of court proceedings being basically identical to SAC courts in a technical sense, to hasten the resolution of cases a mobile court system has been put in place which uses local norms rather than Myanmar court procedures. Disputes, criminal and civil cases alike are first heard by village administration committees which seek to resolve cases in accordance with local customs. Defendants and plaintiffs then appeal to superior administration bodies or courts if they are not satisfied with the ruling of a village committee.

Reflecting this more accessible and responsive format of dispute resolution, arbitration proceedings were viewed by several interviewees as faster and fairer than typical Myanmar court processes as they felt judges better understood the specificities of Rakhine culture and were more respectful in their treatment of all parties. The accessibility of the ULA justice system has encouraged widespread engagement with ULA administrative systems and strengthened its political authority throughout Rakhine State since the AA's December 2020 ceasefire with the Tatmadaw.

In Sagaing, in contrast, the non-SAC judicial system seems to be much more underdeveloped. Viable dispute resolution mechanisms exist only at the village level which seem to be influenced by local resistance leaders or security personnel. Several respondents noted that NUG is trying to establish justice mechanisms at a township level in Sagaing region. However, the practical functioning of NUG's court system is interrupted by the instability created by ongoing conflict and displacement and the resultant loosening of administrative coordination between local PDFs across villages and townships. Unlike in Chin and Rakhine, the limited participation of village elders within administration and the more significant role of resistance forces often of a younger generation seems to be weakening the role of civilians in local dispute resolution and administration. As demonstrated by case study 3, this only reinforces the role of village and sub-township resistance forces in leading local PABs, further blurring civilian and military functions of dispute resolution, civil administration and defence.

Case Study 3: Local Dispute Settlement in Sagaing Region

In Sagaing, members of local PABs and PDFs play critical roles in conflict resolution with occasional input from legal professionals. Normally cases involve relatively minor disputes and quarrels that are resolvable within villages. In such cases, village PABs handle disputes by negotiating between two parties and in some cases ordering some form of petty punishment such as payment of fines, work on community projects such as cleaning of villages and repairing drainage ditches, or in some cases overnight confinement. Local lawyers were also consulted by village and township PAB officials in some cases encountered, most notably a case involving guardianship of children following divorce.

In the majority of villages examined for this project local PDFs play the most central role in negotiating the resolution of inter-community disputes. Where cases involve members of two villages, sub-township level PAB or township level PAB may coordinate with local PDFs to handle the case. For example, in Kani township in southern Sagaing Region two PDF groups mediated a case involving a sexual assault after a woman brought the case to a PAB official in her village. Subsequently the PAB and PDF members from that village communicated with PAB and PDFs from the village of the accused. Following mediation, the case was settled with payment of compensation of 40 Lakhs from the perpetrator to the victim. There is clearly a degree of improvisation underpinning the non-SAC justice system in Sagaing State. However, it is evident that coordination between resistance forces and administrative bodies at sub-township level is helping to mediate disputes and ensure access to a form of justice amid the wartime contexts of Sagaing Region.

Health and social services

Differing dynamics of contention with the SAC and variations in structures of wartime resistance and administration across regions is reflected in the operation of health and social services since the coup. As noted earlier, in most areas of Sagaing Region and Chin State SAC departments are no longer functioning outside of the urban core of townships. This has fragmented how people, especially in rural areas, experience education and health systems at a sub-township level. In contrast, in most of Rakhine State public services remain primarily uninterrupted as ULA has, for now, accommodated existing SAC services by collaborating and ensuring the loyalty of SAC street-level bureaucrats to the ULA/AA's political project. In these areas ULA facilitates and provides advice on delivery of and access to services provided by SAC, with SAC civil servants at a township-level and below informing ULA about their activities in the same way they do their SAC superiors (see Case Study 4). Therefore, ordinary people in these ULA/SAC co-administered areas are still receiving public services such as loan services, maternal and elder cash support programmes and health services.

Case Study 4: ULA-SAC Co-Administration of Services

In Rakhine, ULA controls most parts of the rural areas, especially in Northern Rakhine. In these areas it sets up the administrative mechanism based on the existing system and specific to the local context. In the current context, the ULA administration could not provide service provisions, such as maternal and childcare support, older people's pension, health, and education services, etc. Therefore, the ULA administration allows the SAC's service provision mechanism in rural areas, but departmental staff and administrators have to make dual reporting reports to ULA and SAC at village, township levels and above. ULA administration will closely monitor the service provision process and may provide advice relevant to the local context. In some parts of ULA-controlled areas, ULA authorities have been able to influence SAC education offices to ensure the continuation of school operations in ULA-controlled areas. The schools use the existing government curriculum but allow the use of the Arakan flag and singing of the Arakan national anthem as a way to recognize the authority of ULA.

In contrast, in Sagaing Region and Chin State where SAC administrative structures have largely collapsed below the township level, Myanmar government services such as primary health care are available only in urban towns controlled by the Tatmadaw. As a result of boycotts of SAC services, and security and detainment risks associated with clashes with resistance forces and traveling to SAC areas, few people from rural areas are accessing SAC services. In this vacuum, new public services are being offered at the local and village levels by local PABs in collaboration with parahita (welfare) groups, local volunteers along with striking civil servants, medics and teachers participating in the civil disobedience movement (CDM).

In Chin State some townships have more advanced health facilities like rural hospitals run by local resistance groups, while others rely on mobile health services provided by CDM medical staff. The coordination between different CDF groups across townships occurs via the CJDC, enabling effective service provision and sharing of resources across townships. For example, as some townships have a larger concentration of health professionals, local administrators, and resistance forces coordinate for these staff to shift to areas where and when specific health services are in need. Regional-level health coordination appears to be less developed in Sagaing Region, perhaps reflecting how the intense SAC assault on the region from early to mid-2022 has impacted the capacity of CDM medical staff in these areas to travel between townships. Despite this, below the township-level CDM staff and local PDFs play critical roles in providing medical treatment and supplies to populations unable or unwilling to access primary and secondary care at SAC medical facilities.

The service provision mechanisms of resistance groups in Sagaing Region and Chin State are constantly threatened by the SAC's frequent military operations, indiscriminate air strikes and burning of villages at the time of research. Meanwhile, medical supplies are regularly in shortage due to logistical challenges caused by the Tatmadaw's infamous 'Four Cuts' counter insurgency strategy which the SAC has used to attempt to cut-off resistance forces' access to food, recruits, intelligence, and sanctuary via collective punishment of civilians. SAC assaults on civilian areas have disrupted agricultural practices and local business activities, with frequent

armed clashes resulting in a collapse of demand for cash crops. As will be discussed in brief two, the result has been a shift to a subsistence and reciprocity economy in some contested areas. In the deteriorating context and given no or limited external humanitarian assistance, communities in Sagaing Region and Chin State have struggled to accommodate large numbers of displaced people. As a result, displaced communities rely on local charity support for survival. As examined in brief two, the main sources of support are currently diaspora financial contributions and local in-kind resources in Chin State, whereas communities in Sagaing Region largely depend on local contributions and self-finance mechanisms.

Education provision

Educationally, Ministry of Education and Sport (MoES) schools are operating throughout most of Rakhine State as of mid-2022. However, SAC schools and township MoES offices in large parts of Chin State and Sagaing Region were shuttered throughout 2021 following the emergence of the CDM movement and later during the Delta outbreak of COVID-19.

Since the early months of 2022 NUG-affiliated and other non-SAC schools have been established and are operating on a predictable schedule in most villages in Sagaing Region and Chin State examined for this project. NUG-affiliated schools are run by township education boards supported by funds raised by local resistance forces and individual funders in some cases with supplementary support from the NUG (see Case Study 5). There is substantial variation between townships regarding the proportion of schools that are operating, with upwards of 80 percent of pre-coup schools functioning in areas of southern Sagaing, albeit operated by volunteer teachers with the support of PABs and PDFs. In contexts of active conflict, however, especially near highways where villages have tended to be the first targets of SAC forces, few schools are operating due to the risk posed to teachers.

Teachers who teach in areas of active resistance tend to be CDM staff or volunteers from the village who passed 10th grade students or who were studying at university prior to the coup. Building on mechanisms of teacher support which existed prior to the coup, communities organize funds for educational costs such as stationery for teaching or books for students along with managing some matters related with the school.

As discussed further in paper two, teachers are paid at subsistence level out of communal funds with salaries supplemented by a range of in-kind assistance from their village in coordination with PAB authorities. Though in some contexts schools received special patronage from successful businesspeople, most rely on donations from the local community for the bulk of their contributions. Though some schools examined as part of this research may be affiliated with NUG and operate according to its guidelines, most appear to be largely self-financed. In northern Sagaing Region, for example, village school staff reported having received only chalk from the NUG. Meanwhile, the vast bulk of staff throughout the region had not received any kind of support from NUG-networks at all. Reflecting the necessary blending of military and civilian affairs amid insecurity, the local PDF takes the lead in securing schools from Tatmadaw attacks and coordinating students to take flight to a safe zone.

Case Study 5: Education Service Provision in southern Sagaing Region

In a township in southern Sagaing Region schools were reopened starting in April 2022, and there are around 80 schools reopened as of June 2022. Most are far away from the major highway road where SAC troops can reach easily. In most villages, the community re-organized the school committee with PAB's support to reflect the changing roles of administrators and local volunteer groups after the coup. After this re-arrangement schools were reopened with the assistance of volunteer teachers. Community and CDM teachers are crucial to staffing schools, though they receive support in terms of resourcing and curriculum from three education services: Education Network of local PDFs, Education Centre (formed by local welfare groups after the coup) and NUG's education board. In some villages, these networks and CDM teachers arrange to provide the training for local volunteers to assign the required teacher positions. In the beginning, these three groups are competing against each other and trying to reopen the school under their banner. A respondent from Myaung township noted:

"It is like a football match; they try to reopen the schools under their banners and win the score".

Later, the NUG education minister facilitated the meeting with all three education services, suggested forming a coalition group with three representatives from three groups, and created a new committee with nine committee members. The rush of varying overlapping though in some areas competing authorities to help deliver crucial public goods highlights the role of service delivery in broader struggles for democracy in Myanmar. It also highlights the potential for the NUG to play a more active role in coordination and in arbitration of jurisdictional disputes.

Section 3.

Implications and Conclusion

The findings of this exploratory research suggest there are at least three distinct models of hybrid governance operating in different parts of Myanmar following the military's February 2021 coup. Depending on context the role of civilians relative to armed actors in administration varies greatly. Yet across thematic areas – from justice provision and dispute resolution to decision-making about and coordination of social governance – it is clear State Administrative Council structures are largely irrelevant to the lived experience of governance for many people in the rural areas of Sagaing Region and Chin State. Meanwhile, in Rakhine State the increasingly fragile ceasefire between the ULA/AA and Tatmadaw reached just prior to the coup has enabled the former to expand its functional scope of authority into new areas, including creating a new judicial system, often using the staff and resourcing of the SAC itself.

The irrelevance of the SAC in large parts of Chin State and Sagaing Region has prompted local social actors to fill the social governance and justice vacuum. Given these diverse actors the intensification of humanitarian crises at both a local and national level highlights opportunities for more creative engagement by domestic and international actors with local partners. As discussed in brief two (Sustaining Resistance, Governing Livelihoods), new dynamics of livelihood, reciprocity, taxation, and economic regulation are emerging in areas of non-SAC control that are crucial to sustaining the struggle against renewed dictatorship. Against this context, a major challenge for the NUG is identifying the most appropriate role it can play in different contexts and adapting modalities of support to local social actors accordingly. This is especially critical as the limited fiscal resources of the NUG limits the extent of material support it is able to provide to local resistance forces and social actors.

In the context of regular SAC bombardment and limited resourcing, resistance forces have found themselves assuming crucial roles in social governance structures whilst attempting to coordinate protection of civilians and resistance to the junta. Extraordinary mechanisms of community reciprocity and risk-sharing have emerged, often building on local pre-coup social welfare groups, which are helping to pool resources and ensure delivery of basic social services despite the collapse of governmental services throughout much of the country. Given the rapid nature with which non-SAC social actors and resistance forces have emerged, there is an unsurprising degree of blurriness in military and civilian roles, Armed actors in areas of new resistance such as Sagaing Region have assumed important local administrative functions. As resistance forces prove themselves able to sustain the struggle against the SAC militarily and socially over the medium-term, debates are now emerging about the models of civilian oversight and decision-making that should be enacted now with a view to form the basis for a more stable democratic political order in the years ahead. In Chin State both tribal authorities, local resistance forces and the Chin public at large are actively debating the role that armed groups should play in punishment of civilians accused of being SAC informants and the appropriate role of corporeal punishment in post-coup justice systems. Domestic and international actors should seek to support and resource governance models that aim to clarify the appropriate role of civilian and armed actors in wartime social governance.

The emergence of an array of new sub-township level governance actors since early 2021, and the expansion of existing social actors and committee into new functions offers opportunities to coordinate non-SAC resistance and governance networks and efforts at the township-level and above – including connecting local PDFs with the NUG and ethnic resistance organisations operating in adjacent areas. The NUG is providing guidelines for management of social services, especially schools, amid the wider context of wartime administration. The paucity of NUG resources reaching local resistance forces and social initiatives such as non-SAC schools highlights the strengths in the short-medium term of the decentralized model of fundraising and reciprocity which have become the basis both of resistance and governance in large areas of Chin and Sagaing Region since the coup. Yet the fairly weak governance structures connecting, coordinating and overseeing resistance forces in parts of Sagaing Region raises the risk of competition and potentially conflict between groups as they seek to gain support and raise resources from support beyond their specific area of operation and administrative dominance. Such tensions over how best to resist the junta are only likely to escalate as the Tatmadaw's Four Cuts strategies depletes the resources and morale of civilian populations in these areas.

Meanwhile, the relationship between ethnic-based aspirations and structures in Chin and Rakhine States and more organised and coherent wartime resistance relative to Sagaing Region raises questions for national democratic leadership. In particular, how should the NUG seek to coordinate resistance and governance efforts across contexts as part of larger democratic federal ambitions? The NUG should seek to identify realistic roles they can play in different contexts, especially how best it can support the delivery of services and respond to humanitarian needs in different contexts. If the NUG attempts to assume a direct role in service delivery across all regions there is a risk it is seen as competing rather than partnering with and supporting local resistance and social actors who are already delivering a range of services and are in dire need of support. The role of the NUG and modalities of support should thus be tailored by region and township, ranging from the setting of guidelines around service delivery through to provision of resources and support to like-minded local actors already engaged in filling social gaps potentially through the brokerage of international donor aid. In areas of Northern Sagaing, for instance, it may be feasible for the NUG to roll-out support to local social partners via the KIO and its health and education providers given the close links between the KIO/KIA and local resistance forces. In Chin State regional and township-level tribal structures may be helpful partners in identifying social organisations and governance actors in need of support. Tailoring its approach to ensure pre-existing social actors in each local context are resourced and supported offers a more feasible path to improved outcomes. Communication of this partnership approach offers a chance for the NUG to demonstrate its commitment to outcomes and will generate more realistic expectations amongst the public about the role of the NUG in social governance given its limited available resources and the highly localised nature of resistance and governance post-coup. It should resist pressures to replicate or model itself on the highly centralized Myanmar state and see this revolutionary moment as presenting a grand opportunity to test more decentralized modes of governance.

International and domestic donors have a significant role to play in supporting local social actors, potentially alongside the NUG. International donors must seek

ways to engage with these groups and practices in ways that support the delivery of much needed services whilst also strengthening governance structures that define the appropriate role of armed actors in civilian administration. The nature of donor support to humanitarian and service providers must also be grounded in deep understand of the regional context and specific social sector. One option for donors seeking to support social and humanitarian capacity is to expand existing partnerships between international donors and ethnic social service providers that deepened considerably during the decade of partial civilian rule (2011-2021). Ethnic armed groups such as the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO) and Karen National Union (KNU) have been coordinating health and education systems in contested areas of Myanmar for decades in partnership with local civil society actors. As the post-coup experience of Sagaing Region demonstrates, EAOs such as the KIO are coordinating militarily with local People's Defence Forces while also supporting the war-time governance structures of People's Administrative Bodies linked to the NUG. Expanding existing donor support to ethnic social providers and charging them with capacity building and resourcing in specific regions and townships of new resistance could be a simple way of supporting emerging governance and service delivery systems whilst working through existing operational and financial partnerships.

Another option would be to develop sector-specific resource and training partnerships with governance actors such as the NUG in Sagaing Region and regional bodies such as the ICNCC in Chin State. These partnerships would be most effective if regionally focused, perhaps operating at a district level and charged with improving the resourcing, technical support and oversight of education, health, and social service systems specific to the townships and sub-township areas in that context.

Whether support comes via existing EAO partnerships or more directly via governance actors such as the NUG, improved resourcing and technical support to social providers in areas of new resistance is crucial to strengthening structures of governance and mechanisms of coordination across contexts. As will be discussed further in Brief 2, local social actors tend to be highly reliant on local donors and community contributions both to sustain armed struggle and to deliver an effective form of wartime social governance. The result is strong responsiveness to local needs but also limited capacity to respond to needs and coordinate resources across villages and townships in the evolving conflict context and a strong blurring of resistance and administrative functions. Stronger international donor support tailored to local contexts, delivered either via existing EAO partnerships or through governance actors such as the NUG, could open new mechanisms for resourcing, communication and coordination across contexts in ways that deliver crucial humanitarian and social services and strengthen the differentiation between civilian administration and armed resistance.