

Advance Myanmar

Project report: Surviving through the military coup

1 October 2021-31 December 2022

Being there when it counts

A bombed-out hospital. Children fleeing airstrikes and hiding in the jungle. Aid-workers, travelling in a caravan of motorcycles by the cover of darkness to reach families desperate for food and medicine, risking being arrested or even shot by the Myanmar military. An activist, desperate to leave with their family to receive emergency medical treatment in another country.

This is the reality for people in Myanmar since the attempted military coup in February 2021. The doctors and the patients of the hospital, the children hiding, the displaced people and the local aid workers, the activists; they have all needed support over the last year. Advance Myanmar has been able to provide that support:

- We have funded a new surgery room for the hospital that the military bombed.
- We have ensured that the children hiding in the jungle got food and shelter.
- We provided money so the aid workers could deliver food and medicine to displaced people.
- We helped the activist flee together with their family.

All through the last year, we have been there, able to support activists and people needing humanitarian aid. Because of the way we operate, Advance Myanmar can provide support quickly and cost-effectively, working directly with the people on the ground affected by the military coup.

Introduction

“We really appreciate your support during this crucial time. We will arrange to help all the people who are really in need, especially in Kachin and northern Shan state.”

Advance Myanmar partner, March 2022

It is nearly two years since the attempted military coup in Myanmar began on 1 February 2021. The military continues to attack civilians across the country, bombing from the skies, arresting activists and their families, using torture and sexual violence as part of a systematic campaign of terror. As of the end of December 2022, over one million people have been displaced from their homes, nearly 2,700 killed and over 16,700 arrested. The military are using airstrikes to indiscriminately bomb civilians, schools, hospitals and places of worship.

A large part of Advance Myanmar’s support over this year has been directed towards humanitarian aid, supporting local grassroots organisations with funds for food, medicines and shelters for targeted populations and internally displaced people (IDPs), especially in ethnic areas.

“The Burmese troops are stationed in the villages (...) since January 2022 till now. In X village, Burmese soldiers have destroyed the villagers’ home, property, taken away rice, clothes, other home materials, killing and eating the animals. The villagers are saddened by the loss of their belongings. Before the military troops entered X village, the Burmese military troops did the same in the Y village. This situation is getting worse in Myanmar.”

Advance Myanmar partner, February 2022

We have also had to increase our support to activists to go into hiding, many having to move from safe house to safe house to avoid arrest. Several of the people Advance Myanmar has worked with have fled Myanmar altogether, needing support to re-start their lives in new countries. Some, sadly, have been arrested.

It has become increasingly hard to reach activists in Myanmar with support but we are still finding ways. The military are doing everything they can to stop people accessing support.

Our mission at Advance Myanmar is to be different from other donors, working closely with our partners and responding to their needs. The local organisations are the experts, and we do everything we can to be as flexible as we can. The below quote from one of our partners shows we are succeeding in that mission:

“Because of your support and strong cooperation, we are able to use funds for communication and security costs, which help us to operate more securely; and via your approval, we were also able to support the IDPs who are in need of emergency support. Thank you very much for your flexibility and active cooperation throughout this grant period.”

Advance Myanmar partner, October 2022



OUR SUPPORT

1 October 2021-31 December 2022

Our support can be divided into three areas: humanitarian aid, activist support and grassroots organisation support. Because of the increasing attacks on civilians, a large portion of our support during the reporting period has been directed towards humanitarian aid.

We can see that Advance Myanmar's support has had a real impact on the ground, and we are reaching people that other donors do not. Sometimes, we have been able to provide the first international aid since the beginning of the attempted coup to displaced people. Our way of supporting activists is flexible and cost-effective, reaching people in need often within days of the request if we have the funds.

Because of Advance Myanmar's support:

- Journalists have avoided being arrested and potentially tortured. They have been able to hide and flee, and to keep reporting about the crimes committed by the military and the need of people on the ground.
- Activists have stayed hidden from the military and police, which means they have been able to continue to oppose the military coup.
- Families trapped in the jungle, displaced by military attacks and threat of attacks on their villages, have received food, medicine and shelter, helping them survive and stay dry during the rainy season.
- Internally displaced people and the general population have been able to access healthcare in Karenni State, due to our support for the rebuilding of an operating theatre after the military bombed a hospital. We also funded medical equipment, food, and medicines.
- Civil society organisations have been able to stay safe and avoided being arrested through enhanced security.
- Civil society organisations have been able to document violations of international law committed by the military using equipment and safe communication tools that Advance Myanmar has funded.
- Prominent activists have avoided arrest by being able to flee Myanmar and relocate to other countries. This has enabled them to continue their work against the military coup.
- Prominent activists have been supported with costs for emergency healthcare, livelihood and accommodation, support they would not have been able to receive from anywhere else.
- Internally displaced people across many ethnic states and areas have received shelter, food and medicine. We have reached people in Karenni, Karen, Shan, Kachin and Chin State, as well as the Sagaing region. This has ensured their survival during very difficult times.



Humanitarian aid

“I would like to extend our sincere gratitude to Advance Myanmar for making the life-saving of our IDPs easier during these hard times.”

Partner organisation, February 2022

We have provided humanitarian aid to many different parts of Myanmar over the past year, including areas that were previously unreached by international aid efforts. As the military junta is weaponizing aid and blocking aid to certain areas to punish the population, our approach of working with local organisations, who know their areas well and who can reach remote populations, has been successful.

Some of the most targeted areas of military attacks during the reporting timeframe have been Karenni and Karen State, and Sagaing region, and much of our humanitarian support has been going to these areas. Over Christmas and early in the year, Karenni and Karen State were heavily targeted, and the support from Advance Myanmar meant that displaced people and other vulnerable groups could have access to health care, food and shelter ahead of the rainy season.

We have:

- Provided funding for humanitarian aid in Chin, Karen, Karenni, Kachin and Shan State, as well as in Sagaing region.
- This has covered costs for shelters, food and medicines for both internally displaced people and vulnerable populations.
- Paid for a new surgery room at a hospital that had been bombed by the military in Karenni State. Karenni State has been under severe attack by the military and the need there has been huge.
- Funded medicine and medical equipment to mobile medics in hard to reach areas including Sagaing region and Karenni State.
- Helped local civil society organisations purchase tarpaulin for shelters for internally displaced people ahead of the rainy season.
- Funded treatment for a Rohingya refugee in Cox’s Bazar who was still suffering from an infected wound five years after being shot in the hip when fleeing from Myanmar in 2017.

“On behalf of the hospital, I would like to thank you for your help in very difficult times and supporting us in buying medicines, operation equipment and the construction of operation theatre. The contribution will be extremely helpful for Karenni people, including IDPs in Karenni State.”

Advance Myanmar partner, April 2022





Support for Activists and the Civil Disobedience Movement

“Your support is enabling us to make a bigger voice.”

Advance Myanmar partner, February 2022

Activists have lived under increasing threats during this last year, and we have supported them with safe houses, enhanced security, secure communications and travel. We have provided funding for activists who have had to flee Myanmar altogether and restart their and their families' lives in new countries. We have provided funding for drones that human rights organisations have been able to use to document military attacks and crimes, and we have funded organisations so that they can document violations of human rights. Activists have also been providing food and medicines for political prisoners.

We have:

- Funded safehouses, food, electricity and travel for activists to help them stay safe and continue their work.
- Provided food and medicines for political prisoners through a network of activists inside the country.
- Helped journalists flee and relocate to other countries so they can continue their work, highlighting the abuse of the military and reporting it to the world.
- Helped with health care and livelihood costs for prominent activists who have had nowhere else to turn.
- Funded security equipment for organisations so they can stay safe.
- Funded equipment, communication tools and travel to help civil society organisations document the military's crimes so they can inform the world of what is going on.
- Supported LGBTQ+ activists who are at increased risk of torture and sexual violence if they are detained or arrested.
- Provided funding to ex-political prisoners who have been released.

“Thank you very much. I appreciate your organisation helping our journalists.”

Advance Myanmar partner, March 2022

Grassroots support

We have continued to support partner organisations from before the coup, and we have extended our support to some of the groups who lost funding from other donors this year. As well as funding advocacy and media work at our partner organisations, we have worked closely with them to offer hands on support on reports, statements, media releases, briefings etc.

We have also funded a land rights documentation programme at one of our partner organisations. This programme is vital for the local population that this group supports to be able to document local land ownership and claim their rights as original owners of the land, when this is challenged by central authorities. It is an essential tool for them to be able to claim their human rights.

Financial report

During this time, we have distributed a total of just over £324,000, divided as follows:

Humanitarian Aid: £173,225

Activists and CDM: £95,426

Grassroots groups: £55,535

Geographic spread of support

We have provided support right across Myanmar, from cities like Yangon and Mandalay to some of the remotest parts of ethnic states, including Shan, Kachin, Karen, Karenni, and Chin State. We have supported activists who have had to relocate to other countries, and activists operating out of neighbouring countries.

The strength and resilience of partners and activists

Throughout this time, the people we have been able to support have expressed their sincere gratitude to Advance Myanmar and our donors. We have been able to help them quickly without asking for burdensome reports in order for them to be able to receive funds. They have been able to concentrate their work on what really matters: saving lives, their own and others. We are continuously in awe of our partners and what they are able to achieve during these extremely difficult circumstances.

More support is still needed

As the situation shifts in Myanmar and we are moving from short-term emergency response to a protracted conflict with vast humanitarian needs, more funding is needed for both humanitarian aid and for support for civil society organisations. Activists and journalists, who continue to risk their lives to oppose the military coup, to organise protests, document abuses and to bring news out of the country about the military's crimes, need our continued support.



Advance Myanmar

Advance Myanmar has six part-time staff that have worked on the implementation of the project. This includes, but is not limited to, project management, financial transfers, accountancy and audit, fundraising, contact with partners in Myanmar, psychological support, organisational leadership and communication with supporters.

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