

# Advance Myanmar

## Impact Report: Resisting the Military Coup

January - December 2023

### Introduction

During 2023, the humanitarian crisis in Myanmar deepened, driven by ongoing attacks by the Burmese military, targeting villages and civilians chiefly through airstrikes. It is estimated that more than 3 million people have now been displaced since the attempted military coup three years ago.

As well as a humanitarian crisis, Myanmar is facing a human rights crisis driven by the military's oppression of civil society, targeting activists, journalists, family members or anyone they perceive as being against them.

In May, Cyclone Mocha struck Northwestern Myanmar, causing further devastation among an already suffering population. The cyclone made landfall in many areas which had been under severe attacks since the attempted coup and where the Burmese military is no longer in direct control. The military blocked international aid agencies, including the UN, from delivering aid to many areas.

Throughout 2023, Advance Myanmar has worked hard to support partners in Myanmar. We have given core support to civil society organisations, enabling them to focus their work as they see fit, whether that has been to advocate for change, document human rights violations or provide humanitarian support to vulnerable communities and internally displaced people (IDPs).

We have supported human rights defenders directly, helping them hide, flee and continue their work. We have provided humanitarian support across the country, from Sagaing Region in the north, Rakhine State in the west, Karenni State in the east to Taninthayi region in the South.

***“Your support will make a difference in the lives of my family,  
and we are truly grateful for your unwavering kindness.”***

**Journalist supported by Advance Myanmar during 2023**

## Our Support

Our support can be divided into three areas: humanitarian aid, support to human rights defenders and core support to civil society organisations.

### Core support to civil society organisations

During 2023, we focused our support on core funding for civil society organisations in locations across Myanmar. There were two reasons for this: the emergency asks for human rights defenders reduced, as the coup carried on and many activists have already fled, and organisations have relocated to new areas, and by offering core support, it allows the organisations to decide how to prioritise the money. They can use the funds for what they deem is most urgent, or for what they cannot access funding from other donors. It ties in with how Advance Myanmar wants to operate: as a partner, not a donor, and where the partners are in charge of their own work. In total, we have supported nine partner organisations, spread across the country, with core support. For their safety, we have decided not to disclose their names here.

Our partners range from human rights organisations, focusing on advocacy, to networks of groups and providers of humanitarian support. Since the attempted military coup, most organisations have engaged in some form of humanitarian support. Our partners have used the funding for advocacy and campaigning, for support to IDPs and refugees, and to support their staff and their organisations.

***“Thank you very much for all the support you have provided. We would not be able to implement our activities and carry on this important work without your help and support.”***

**Advance Myanmar partner**

### Humanitarian aid

Thanks to Advance Myanmar support:

- IDPs in Taninthayi region received emergency food.
- IDPs in Karenni State received emergency food and medical aid.
- 2,500 mosquito nets were distributed to IDPs in Karenni State to halt the spread of malaria, dengue fever and related diseases.
- An underground hospital in the jungle kept operating, treating victims of Burmese military attacks at great risk to their own lives. They also provided emergency food to IDPs.
- Targeted emergency support reached some of the worst affected communities in Magway and Sagaing regions, Chin and Rakhine States, after Cyclone Mocha in May.

### Support to human rights defenders

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.
- Helped human rights defenders flee and relocate to other countries so they can continue their work, highlighting the abuses of the military and reporting it to the world
- Supported local, remote communities with internet connections and satellite internet so they can communicate with each other and the outside world. Internet has been blacked out in many parts of Myanmar since the attempted coup which increases the danger they are in.

# 2023 Snapshot



## Sagaing and Magway Regions

The military has relentlessly targeted Sagaing and Magway regions in upper and central Burma since the attempted military coup. They have been met with local resistance on a scale never seen before in central Burma. Over one million people have been displaced across both regions – with over 800,000 alone displaced in Sagaing.

On top of this, both regions were severely affected by Cyclone Mocha in May. In Magway, Advance Myanmar supported 27 villages that were the most affected by the cyclone. The local administration in those villages, which are all outside the control of the Burmese military, used the funds to buy food, materials for temporary shelters and for repairing buildings.



In Sagaing, roads and bridges were destroyed or swept away by the cyclone. Advance Myanmar helped fund repairs to essential infrastructure for villagers.



## Rakhine State

The military blocked humanitarian aid to Rohingya in Rakhine State after Cyclone Mocha. Local community groups made sure that emergency aid, including rice and tarpaulin for shelters, reached some of the worst affected communities. They also installed new water pumps in affected villages.



## Karenni State

Our partner distributed 2,500 mosquito nets to IDPs, prioritising pregnant women, children under five and the elderly, to stem the spread of diseases during the rainy season.



***“Due to the onset of rainy season and the number of people who are living in the forest to avoid the war, diseases that are transmitted through mosquitoes, such as malaria and seasonal flu, are increasing. Because of that, we decided to purchase mosquito nets with the aim of reducing the above-mentioned diseases among those IDPs.”***

**AM partner in Karenni State**

Advance Myanmar has also supported the delivery of emergency food and medicine to IDPs in Karenni State.

## **Karen State**

One of our partners in Karen State runs local radio stations and has distributed hundreds of radio receivers, making sure that local communities have access to up to date and accurate information.

They also gathered information on the situation for displaced villagers and human rights violations by the Burmese military and airstrikes, and passed this information on to the international community and media.



A radio station in Karen State



A school destroyed by an airstrike

## **Shan State**

Our longstanding partner in Shan State works for women’s rights and documents abuses by the Burmese military. They work with the local community to document human rights violations and to advocate for justice and accountability.



## Tanintharyi Region

In 2023, we supported a new group of IDPs in the southernmost part of Myanmar. A total of 180 people from 40 families were supported with rice, onions and cooking oil.

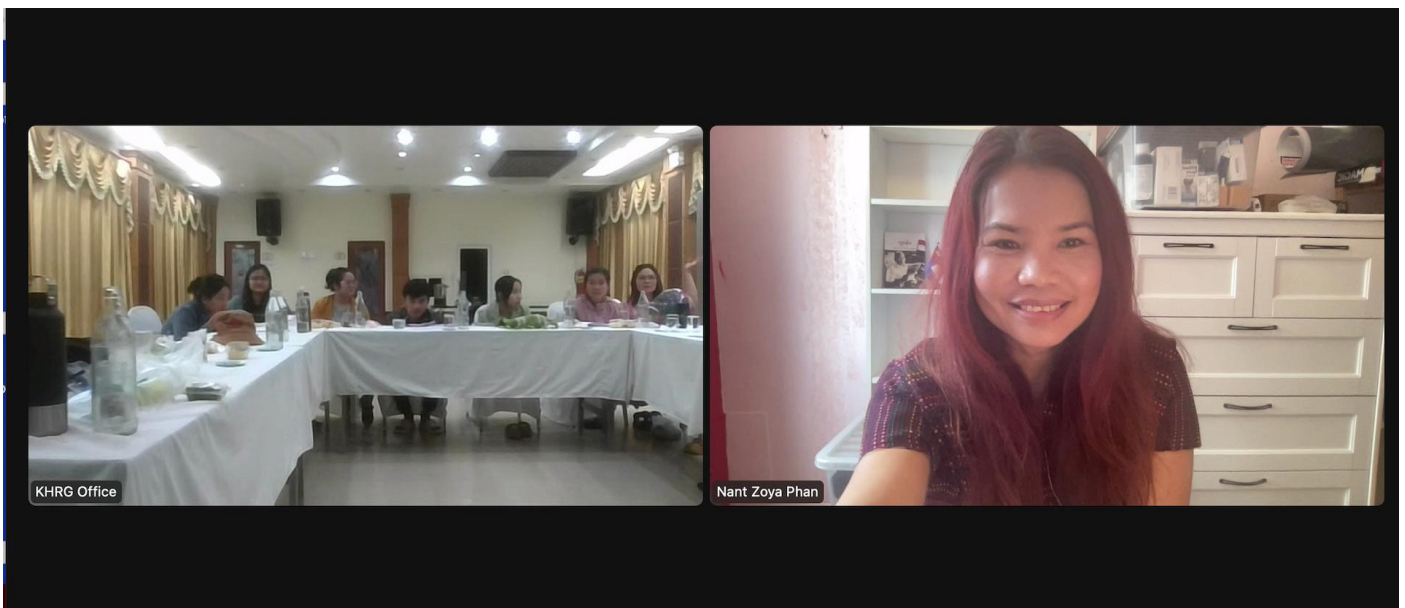
## Undisclosed Location

We have supported a network of LGBT+ activists in undisclosed locations in Myanmar. Due to the severe threat this community is under, both because of their anti-coup activities and because of just being LGBT+ activists in a very traditional, patriarchal society, they have needed support with safe houses, cost of food and electricity and transport between different locations. They have also supported imprisoned members of the network, helping them with court costs and providing food and medicines to jailed activists.

## Support for Grassroots Campaigning

Advance Myanmar works closely with civil society organisations, supporting them in their advocacy work.

During 2023, we held workshops for organisations, helped proofread reports and assisted in drafting statements and media releases, as well as sharing the work of our partners with international stakeholders. This work helps organisations in Myanmar, who do excellent work documenting human rights abuses all over the country, reach out to a wider audience and influence international policy on Myanmar.



## Financial report

During this time, we have distributed a total of £236,733, divided as follows:

Core support to partners:	£151,783
Humanitarian aid:	£70,900
Human Rights Defenders:	£14,050

# 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

### Moving forward: the need to scale up humanitarian aid through local groups

With an estimated 3 million people in Myanmar displaced, we are seeing the biggest humanitarian crisis ever. This is not being met with a corresponding sense of urgency by donors. International organisations and the UN are still channelling the bulk of their humanitarian support through central Myanmar, relying on Memorandums of Understandings with the Burmese military, which then decides where the aid can be distributed. The Burmese military, who created this unprecedented humanitarian need in the first place, thus have a veto on who receives humanitarian aid, meaning that some of the people most in need, in areas outside of the Burmese military's control, receive no aid at all. This is indefensible.

There is another, more cost-effective way of delivering international aid and that is through local civil society organisations and community-based groups, often working cross-border from neighbouring countries. They have the capacity to distribute aid, and access to the most vulnerable populations. Unfortunately, due to onerous application processes and reporting demands, the organisations best placed to distribute aid at the lowest possible cost have no way of accessing funds and means people are denied life-saving aid because of red tape.

Advance Myanmar urges donors, including governments, to provide a much larger part of their humanitarian aid through civil society organisations and community groups and to allow for aid to be distributed cross-border. For decades, community-based groups in Myanmar have reached populations larger international organisations simply don't, and it is time that international donors recognise the skill, knowledge and capacity of local organisations and support their life-saving work.

## Advance Myanmar

Advance Myanmar is run by five part-time staff. We work hard to manage the charity and our projects, bringing in funding, supporting partners in Myanmar, communicating with our supporters and funders, and offering psychological and organisational support to our partners. We want our partners to feel like they can reach out to us at any time and that they can have continuous support from us in their work.

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