

Advance Myanmar

Impact Report: Reversing the Military Coup

January - December 2024

Introduction

2024 was a year of sweeping change in Myanmar, with the military losing ever more territory across the country. In areas free of military control, new local administrations have been set up and expanded to provide services to local people, especially in areas dominated by ethnic resistance organisations, including in Chin, Karenni and Karen State. This is rapidly changing the reality of power in Myanmar.

At the same time, the Burmese military is continuing its warfare on the civilian population, using its airpower to attack schools, hospitals, homes, places of worship and camps for displaced people. This has exacerbated the humanitarian crisis in the country, with over four million people now being internally displaced, creating the largest humanitarian crisis ever in Myanmar. In September, Typhoon Yagi hit Myanmar, increasing the humanitarian need even more. Human rights defenders continue to be under attack, with risk of imprisonment, torture and death. There are more than 21,000 political prisoners in jail.

The people in Myanmar are making huge sacrifices to keep up the resistance against military rule. At great personal risk, they are refusing to let the Burmese military control them anymore.

Advance Myanmar has focused our support on local civil society organisations, spread out across the country. We have done this through core grants, so local partners themselves can prioritise their funds: be it for advocacy, research, documentation of human rights violations or the provision of humanitarian aid. Often, organisations we support do a multitude of those things, and much more. We are in awe of how much local civil society organisations are managing to do, under the constant threat of airstrikes and attacks by Burmese military and under severe funding constraints, acutely exacerbated in the beginning of 2025 with the USAID freeze.

Where we have been able, we have supported local humanitarian relief efforts, and we are continuing to support human rights defenders under threat.

“I am grateful to Advance Myanmar for their generous support when we were in need. Especially when I had to run and hide with the clothes I wore on the day when the police came to my family’s house. It was not easy to run with my mother in her late 80s. Your support not only covered our safe house and expenses for more than six months, but also medical expenses for my mom.”

Female lecturer educating students in the Civil Disobedience Movement

Our Support

Our support can be divided into three areas: core support to civil society organisations, humanitarian aid and support to human rights defenders. For their safety, we have not disclosed the names of some of the organisations we support.

Our partners are: Burmese Rohingya Organisation UK (BROUK), Chin Human Rights Organisation (CHRO), Institute for Muslim Affairs in Myanmar (IMAM), Kachin Human Rights Watch (KHRW), Karen Environmental and Social Action Network (KESAN), Karen Peace Support Network (KPSN), Karenni Human Rights Group (KnHRG), Karenni Mobile Health Clinic (KnMHC), Phan Foundation, Ta'ang Women's Organisation (TWO), Youth for Rohingya Development (YRD), local Rohingya organisation, local Sagaing organisation, local Magway organisation, activist network, political prisoners support organisation, LGBT+ network (names withheld for security reasons).



Core Support to Civil Society Organisations

During 2024, we strengthened our support to partner organisations, supporting ten civil society organisations with core grants. We supported organisations active in, or focusing on, Karen, Karenni, Shan, Kachin, Chin and Rakhine State. The organisations include ethnic civil society organisations, women's rights organisations and religious minority organisations. We also supported some partners with funding to cover the costs of internet access, website development and administration of email lists, on top of the core support.

“We are really thankful for your funding for our organisational development, for staff salaries and for equipment we need to do our work.”

Kachin Human Rights Watch

During 2024, our partner organisations have:

- Engaged in advocacy and campaigning.
- Provided information to journalists, embassies and the UN, including the UN Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar (IIMM).
- Conducted research and provided analysis about the situation in Myanmar.
- Coordinated and engaged in activities with the wider movement for democracy and human rights in Myanmar.
- Documented human rights violations.
- Provided life-saving humanitarian support, including food, shelter and medicine to their communities.
- Supported political prisoners.

Offering core support empowers local organisations to decide their own priorities. Too many grants available to partners in Myanmar come with strict limitations and are often project based. Through our support, the civil society organisations have the freedom to allocate their own resources, to pay salaries and buy equipment that other donors won't fund. We are repeatedly told by our partners that this sets our funding apart from the majority of funding they can access. For example, one partner told us:

“It is a big opportunity for us to receive the flexible funding Advance Myanmar provides. The funding from Advance Myanmar allows us to fill the gaps left by other donors, and spend the money on very essential needs of our organisation. Only Advance Myanmar has offered us technical support and have helped us set up a website. Advance Myanmar has allowed us to spend funding on purchasing computers for our staff, set up a solar panel system and a generator to be able to access electricity regularly, so that we can reach out with information about abuses taking place in Karenni State in just a few hours after we have collected the information.”

Karenni Human Rights Group

Humanitarian Aid



By relentlessly attacking civilians, mainly through airstrikes and drone attacks, the Burmese military has caused the worst humanitarian crisis ever in Myanmar. The military not only indiscriminately attacks civilians, but also continues to block aid deliveries to areas outside their control, doubling their punishment of the people. Aid from the UN institutions and larger international organisations is still largely channelled through central Myanmar, which means crucial humanitarian aid does not reach the people most in need of such support.

People, often children, are fleeing bombs and have their houses and schools burnt down. The only groups with access to the worst affected areas are local civil society organisations and community groups. When Advance Myanmar can support emergency humanitarian aid, we do so exclusively through these groups and organisations. Under extremely difficult circumstances, they manage to bring food, medicine and build shelter for their communities. They bring injured people and women with complicated pregnancies

to hospitals. They provide education to refugees and they even make sure backpack health workers have boots to be able to trek through the jungle to reach the people most in need. Their work under such horrendous circumstances is heroic and lifesaving.

Humanitarian aid delivered through support from Advance Myanmar in 2024 included:

- 8,300 Rohingya, who had to flee fighting between the Arakan Army and the Burmese military in northern Rakhine State, receiving emergency food, medicines and clothes.
- An ambulance car in Karen State that has been used to transport civilians injured by Burmese military airstrikes and women with complicated pregnancies whose babies couldn't be delivered at a local clinic. It has also been used to transport medicines into Karen State from the Thai border.
- Emergency rice delivery to displaced people in Shan State who were afraid to leave their area because of Burmese military airstrikes and fighting between different ethnic armed groups. Because of Advance Myanmar support, they could stay where they were in relative safety, while the fighting was ongoing.
- 442 households in Sagaing region, heavily affected by ongoing attacks by the Burmese military, receiving emergency food, mainly rice and cooking oil.
- Essential food support distribution in Depeyin township in Sagaing region. Thousands of people had been forced to flee their homes because of heavy fighting between resistance groups and the Burmese military.
- 70 displaced people, constituting 14 households, in Magway region receiving rice, cooking oil, salt and beans to last them for three months. 14 temporary shelters were also constructed for the displaced people.
- Displaced people in Myawaddy receiving clothes.
- 674 Rohingya child refugees, both boys and girls, receiving textbooks in Cox's Bazar refugee camp in a school run by a local Rohingya organisation. Children in the refugee camp do not have formal access to education, so this support made a big difference to them.
- Emergency rice delivery to newly displaced people in Karenni State in October. The support was provided to 125 households reaching a total of 535 people.

“There are not only orphan students but also very poor students in our schools. The students are so happy after receiving the textbooks to use for the whole year and for their homework. They will use the textbooks to get their knowledge and education.”

Youth for Rohingya Development

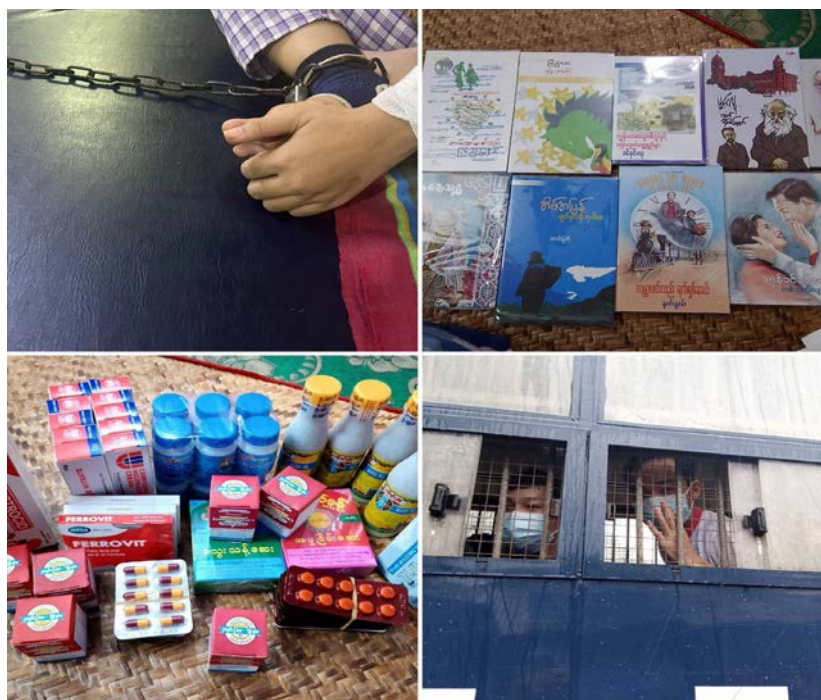
Support to Human Rights Defenders

During 2024, Advance Myanmar initiated support to a network of former political prisoners in Myanmar, who are supporting current political prisoners. They support the families of political prisoners with cash grants so they can send additional food to the prisoners, and get legal help. The group also sends medical care packages and books to 36 prisons across Myanmar through a network of local coordinators. The prisoners are in dire need of medicines as there is no adequate medical care in prison, and the books are a great way to support prisoners' mental health. The group also supports hospital costs of political prisoners who are so unwell that they need to be admitted to hospitals outside the prisons, where they are shackled to the hospital beds. They have also paid for funerals for political prisoners who have died in prison.

The group advocates for political prisoners in Myanmar, highlighting the appalling treatment, including torture, and the lack of medical care in prison, which sometimes kills the prisoners.

We also supported a group of activists in Myanmar who are still staging protests in Yangon and other areas, despite the severe and acute risk of arrest and imprisonment. Through their actions, they show that despite

the military's crackdown on the movement in the main cities in Myanmar, resistance to the coup remains. We have also offered smaller one-off grants to human rights defenders under immediate attack or who are experiencing hardship because of their work as human rights defenders.



We have:

- Helped activists avoid arrest by providing funding for safehouses and safer communication tools, including access to burner phones and VPNs, and for safer transport options.
- Supported around 100 political prisoners and their families monthly, so the political prisoners can receive additional food in prison, as well as medicines, access to books for their mental health, and to be able to pay for medical care in hospitals outside prison when their conditions have been acute.
- Supported funeral costs of political prisoners who have died.
- Helped activists who were under immediate threat of arrest to relocate to safety.
- Supported access to internet in remote places, which helps activists and organisations communicate with each other and the outside world, and share information about impending attacks by the Burmese military. It has also helped students take exams remotely.
- Supported local journalists who had to flee with costs for livelihoods and transport.
- Supported safehouse and transportation for an activist from an LGBT+ network, and two family members. The activist has been on the run from the military for years. The LGBT+ network also supported a leading member of their group who is in prison, with food and medicine parcels sent to the prison.

“The funding was instrumental in meeting the needs of activists in Myanmar, enabling them to continue amplifying the civil resistance movement and nonviolent actions. It facilitated the safe relocation of activists facing threats from the military and significantly mitigated digital security risks.

“As a result, activists were able to enhance their personal safety, which allowed them to participate more actively and effectively in civil resistance and nonviolent actions. Their efficiency and capabilities improved significantly once their safety was ensured, directly contributing to the resilience and impact of the movement.”

AM partner in Myanmar

Stories from the Ground

Core Grants – enabling local organisations to prioritise local needs

One of the local organisations that Advance Myanmar supports in Karenni State, Karenni Mobile Health Clinic, utilised their core grant to support people in their area in innovative ways. It shows the strength of core grants, and how the local organisations know best the needs in their community, and how they can better allocate funds according to need than any donor in a distant country can. It allows them to adapt to the rapidly changing situation on the ground. It is also more cost effective, rather than forcing organisations to fit into a donor-made model. Below is their story.

Initially, the funds were allocated to provide cash assistance to villagers in Demawso Township for agricultural purposes, specifically for the purchase of seeds such as corn, paddy, and nuts. Given that many internally displaced people and members of the host community rely on agriculture for sustenance in this region, it was essential to provide financial support for seed procurement.

Discussions were held with the committee, which included the village chief, local administrative representatives, and the IDP camp committee, leading to the decision to offer cash assistance. As a result, cash assistance was distributed to 11 villages, benefiting 645 households, comprising 1,477 males, 1,434 females, and 28 individuals with disabilities.

Furthermore, the funds were utilised to purchase boots for staff members, particularly those working in the field, as they are required to undertake monthly mobile trips to the designated villages to deliver medical care. Due to various challenges such as road blockages, inclement weather, and the need to navigate around military checkpoints, these staff members often have to travel on foot to reach their intended destinations.

The funds received were allocated to conduct a one-month training program for village health volunteers, organized in response to community needs. The training sessions were held in two locations. Young individuals from the communities served by our organisation were selected to participate in these courses. Upon completion of the training, some participants will reintegrate into their communities to deliver essential health services, while others will return to their roles at our clinics. The expenses associated with this training included provisions for food, travel, training materials, per diem for trainers, and fuel for the generator. A total of 19 males and 44 females successfully completed the training.

Furthermore, the funds were utilised to expand the meeting hall at our headquarters. This expansion was designed to provide temporary storage for medications before their dispatch to Karenni State. Additionally, the newly expanded area will function as a patient lounge for emergency cases, allowing individuals discharged from the hospital to rest briefly before returning home.

Lastly, the remaining funds were allocated for the purchase of latrine supplies for internally displaced people. This supply included toilet bowls, pipes, brushes, water buckets, water cups, and soap, along with cups for soap. The latrine supplies were distributed to newly displaced IDPs from Loikaw Township who are currently residing in an IDP camp in Demawso Township. Additionally, funds were used to purchase generator fuel to ensure daily office operations, as there is no electricity in Karenni State, necessitating the use of a generator for charging, printing, and copying tasks.

Humanitarian Aid – from London to Northern Shan State in six days

Advance Myanmar was alerted to a village in Northern Shan State which had been almost completely destroyed by attacks by the Burmese military, and fighting between the Burmese military and ethnic armed groups. The people were desperate for help, and we were able to provide an emergency donation.

On the Monday, we transferred the funds to our local partner. On the Saturday, the people in the village had received bags of rice and bottles of cooking oil.

It took just six days. It involved two international transfers, one of which into Myanmar where the military is doing everything they can to block financial transfers to organisations and individuals that are delivering life-saving aid. From London to a remote village in Northern Myanmar, life-saving supplies purchased and delivered in six days. Without the emergency support, the displaced people would have had to leave their area to seek food, putting themselves in additional danger as fighting was going on around them.

Humanitarian Aid – Displaced Rohingya receiving emergency support

Some of the most intense fighting in Myanmar in 2024 was in Rakhine State, where the Arakan Army now controls all but three townships. Civilians were often trapped between the Burmese military and the Arakan Army, and especially Rohingya were targeted by both armies, as well as suffering from forced recruitment, restricted movement and a lack of essential services.

In late spring, Advance Myanmar was approached by a local organisation seeking emergency funding for two villages in Buthidaung township, northern Rakhine State. Through our support, they provided immediate relief aid, including clothing, food and medical supplies, to alleviate the suffering of the local populations. They further facilitated access to healthcare through mobile health clinics and tele-consultations, especially for women, children and the elderly.

Human Rights Defenders – defying the military, risking their lives

In August, Advance Myanmar was alerted to three female university lecturers in Mandalay, who were under immediate threat of arrest. With a small grant, we managed to help them get to safety. This is their story:

We left our jobs after the military coup to join the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM), the movement opposing the military takeover. We continued educating students that had joined the movement, allowing them to continue their education despite the military crackdown on universities, and away from military control.

In August, the military had located where we were living and moved to arrest us. Luckily, one of us was at the hospital with her elderly mother when the military raided her house. She and her mother needed to flee immediately, without any of their belongings, and the raid made it clear that we also needed to flee.

Thanks to Advance Myanmar support, we could travel to another place and rent a safehouse for six months. The funding also covered essential costs for food and medical care for the elderly mother. Because we could relocate, we could continue teaching and delivering lectures to our CDM students. So, the support is not only for us, it also supported the education of the youths in Myanmar.

Advocacy and Campaigning

Advance Myanmar works closely with civil society organisations, supporting them in their advocacy work. During 2024, we held workshops for organisations and MPs elected in 2020 who are now working underground. We 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: £330,778

Core Support to Civil Society Organisations: £223,500

Humanitarian Aid: £48,850

Human Rights Defenders: £58,428

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 can achieve during these extremely difficult circumstances.

“Thanks to Advance Myanmar, we could access funding from an external donor. As we are not a registered organisation in Myanmar, we would not have been able to receive funding on our own. Advance Myanmar has helped us grow as an organisation.”

AM Partner in Myanmar

Moving forward

The Burmese military suffered great defeats during 2024 and lost control of more areas across the country. They are still hanging onto control in major cities, such as Yangon, Mandalay and the capital Naypyidaw, but are largely unable to regain territory they have lost in ethnic states. They are struggling to recruit soldiers, which saw them introduce conscription laws in 2024, with many young people fleeing the country or joining the resistance forces as a consequence. The Burmese military is increasingly relying on their airpower, which they use indiscriminately on civilian targets, causing the humanitarian catastrophe now engulfing Myanmar. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, OCHA, in 2025 “civilians face extreme protection risks, acute food insecurity, the near collapse of critical public services, and economic shocks driving up inflation and resulting in loss of livelihoods.” OCHA has concluded that nearly 20 million people in Myanmar, 36%, out of a population of around 55 million, is in need of assistance in 2025.

Meanwhile, ethnic resistance organisations are gaining more control over their areas, implementing governance structures free from the Burmese military, building federalism from the ground up. These evolving governance structures need to be supported by the international community. The international community also needs to focus its aid delivery through local organisations rather than continue the dependence on aid routes controlled by the Burmese military. The international community should not allow

the military dictatorship to have a veto on who gets aid and who does not. We saw some shift in this regard during 2024, but it needs to be urgently upscaled. The international community needs to change its mindset to fit the new reality of Myanmar. This is crucial both in the short term – to reach those people most in need of humanitarian support – and in the long term, for the future and security of the people in Myanmar.

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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Registered Charity number: 1139662