

HUMANITARIAN AID

CRISIS REPORT

2021 – 2024



အမျိုးသမီးများအဖွဲ့ချုပ် (မြန်မာနိုင်ငံ)

Women's League of Burma (WLB)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Women's League of Burma (WLB) presents this report to address the humanitarian crisis faced by internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Burma/Myanmar, particularly emphasizing the unique challenges faced by women and marginalized groups in the aftermath of the military coup in February 2021. The ongoing conflict has led to a significant increase in the number of IDPs, with estimates indicating that over **1.3 million people** have been forcibly displaced due to military offensives and violence.

Displaced women and girls are particularly vulnerable to sexual and gender-based violence, which is exacerbated by a lack of access to essential services such as healthcare and legal protection. The shortage of sexual and reproductive health services has resulted in increased maternal health complications, including hemorrhages, miscarriages, and pregnancy-induced hypertension. Food insecurity further compounds these issues, with women often sacrificing their own nutrition to ensure that their families have enough to eat.

WLB has actively responded to these urgent needs by providing essential support services, including food, sanitation kits, and healthcare to over **47,000 IDPs** and various human rights activists. Despite these efforts, humanitarian assistance is severely constrained by security challenges, as aid workers face constant risks of arrest and surveillance by military forces. The transportation of aid is heavily restricted, and the threat of violence has made it difficult to stockpile supplies or maintain a steady flow of assistance to those in need.

Additionally, the documentation of human rights violations has become increasingly perilous. WLB members encounter significant challenges in recording abuses committed by both the military junta and resistance forces, as fear of retribution deters survivors from coming forward. The breakdown of the judicial system has left many feeling hopeless about the prospects for justice, further complicating the provision of support services to victims of violence.

Overall, this report underscores the urgent need for sustained humanitarian assistance and protection for vulnerable populations in Burma/Myanmar, particularly as the country continues to grapple with the devastating impacts of conflict and displacement.

HUMANITARIAN OVERVIEW OF THE COUP

Burma/Myanmar's ethnic nationalities have endured over 70 years of civil war and have been resisting the military junta's unlawful 2021 coup in pursuit of a peaceful and federal democratic union. Since independence, the military has attempted to "Bamarnize" ethnic minority groups, undermining their self-determination and freedom. This systematic oppression has led to intensified fighting between the military junta and forces such as the People's Defense Forces (PDFs) and Ethnic Revolutionary Organizations (EROs) in Kayah/Karenni State, Kachin State, Karen State, Shan State, Chin State, Magway Division, and Sagaing Division. Approximately 9,300 clashes have occurred since the coup, resulting in the displacement of over 2.6 million people across the country, according to UNOCHA. However, civil society groups believe these figures are underestimated. For instance, UNOCHA reports 183,100 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Kayin State as of April 2024, while the Karen Peace Support Network (KPSN) estimates 752,669 IDPs in the same region. Similarly, in Kayah State, UNOCHA reports 126,000 IDPs, whereas the Karenni National Women's Organization (KNWO) counts around 350,000 IDPs. Such discrepancies suggest that the scale of displacement is far worse than official reports indicate.

As a result of widespread conflict, civilians, particularly women and ethnic minorities, are in dire need of humanitarian assistance. However, the military junta has intentionally blocked the delivery of essential aid. Roads have been obstructed, and civilians risk arrest if seen transporting large amounts of food, medicines, and other basic necessities. For example, the junta restricted aid responses to Cyclone Mocha, which devastated regions including Rakhine State, Chin State, Kachin State, Magway Division, Sagaing Division, and the eastern border areas of Bangladesh's Chattogram Division in May 2023. The cyclone affected more than **5.4 million people**, with **700 civilians suffering serious injuries** and **148 people losing their lives**. The majority of those affected were from marginalized communities, particularly women and children who faced heightened vulnerabilities due to the limited humanitarian response. In another instance in December 2022, **more than 20,000 people** were displaced following indiscriminate airstrikes in Lay Kay Kaw, Doooplaya District, Kayin State. Women, particularly pregnant women and mothers, faced extreme challenges as the military blocked, seized, and destroyed aid and medical supplies at checkpoints, leaving them and their children without the essential support they needed.

The military's obstruction of international assistance to impacted communities reflects its ongoing targeting of innocent civilians, particularly ethnic minorities and women, who are disproportionately affected by armed conflict and natural disasters. This strategy was evident in May 2022 when the AHA Center attempted to deliver humanitarian aid, but was forced to coordinate through the military, allowing the junta to control distribution. As a result, aid did not reach internally displaced persons (IDPs) in areas of intense conflict and strong resistance, depriving them of essential goods like food, medical supplies, and hygiene products, which led to preventable deaths and suffering, especially among women and children. The military's weaponization of humanitarian assistance has also hindered international organizations' ability to

reach remote communities, where ethnic women face heightened risks, including gender-based violence and exploitation due to the lack of resources. Meanwhile, aid provided by UN agencies like UNHCR and WFP has been misappropriated, often benefiting military-aligned civil servants or appearing in local markets. This misuse of resources has worsened the crisis, leaving ethnic minority women to bear the brunt of the humanitarian disaster.

Furthermore, the military junta has treated civilians, including women and girls, as military enemies—subjecting them to arbitrary arrests, torture, killings, and sexual violence. Indiscriminate airstrikes and bombings have been carried out, particularly in ethnic minority regions, where women and children are often forced to flee or hide. The junta has also forcibly recruited villagers as porters and human shields, with women and girls particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation and gender-based violence in these situations. Schools, churches, and homes have been targeted in these offensives, severely affecting children’s education and displacing entire communities. **According to the Institute for Strategy and Policy (ISP) Myanmar, not less than 14,317 battles** took place between the military and resistance forces in regions like Chin State, Karenni State, Karen State, and the Tanintharyi and Sagaing regions as of April 2024. **In Karenni State alone, the military junta carried out more than 1,636 airstrikes** since the coup. These airstrikes and ground offensives have destroyed **52 religious buildings, 2,616 houses, 16 hospitals and clinics, and 24 schools**, further intensifying the hardships faced by women, children, and the elderly. Ethnic women, in particular, have lost critical support networks and access to health services, further marginalizing them in the face of ongoing conflict. Despite these severe human rights violations, the military junta has never been held accountable. This impunity has allowed the junta to continue perpetrating acts of violence and suppression against civilians, particularly in ethnic minority areas where women and girls are systematically targeted. The junta’s deliberate strategy of targeting and punishing women—whether through displacement, denial of aid, or direct violence—reflects the entrenched gender inequalities that have worsened since the coup.

Poverty has escalated dramatically across the country since the military attempted coup, particularly affecting ethnic minority women, who already faced limited economic opportunities. The economic collapse worsened in July 2023 when the junta printed **20,000 banknotes**, causing basic commodity prices to skyrocket. Many people, especially young women, have been forced to flee the country in search of work. Without proper documentation, many have tragically fallen victim to human trafficking, with girls and young women being trafficked across borders or coerced into exploitative labor. In some cases, drug addiction has emerged as a negative coping mechanism, further endangering the lives of these women and girls.

GENDER AND SEXUAL BASED VIOLENCE

IMPACTS OF THE COUP

The military junta in Burma/Myanmar has perpetuated a patriarchal system deeply rooted in the country's sociocultural traditions and belief systems, systematically oppressing women and gender-diverse people. This system draws heavily on the concept of *hpon*, which translates to "glory" or "power" and is believed to be an innate quality possessed only by men. This belief grants men a perceived spiritual and social superiority over women. Such discriminatory values reinforce patriarchal hierarchies within society, positioning men as the heads of households and leaders in communities, while women are confined to domestic roles and perceived as needing male protection. Cultural norms in Burma/Myanmar further exacerbate gender inequality, assessing women's worth based on socially constructed values of decency and chastity. These norms stigmatize survivors of sexual violence, who are often blamed or viewed as "damaged" if they lose their virginity or engage in sexual activity outside of marriage. This deeply ingrained culture of victim-blaming significantly deters women and girls from reporting incidents of sexual violence, contributing to the ongoing cycle of abuse and oppression.

The military junta has fostered a culture of militarization and hyper-masculinity that exploits these patriarchal beliefs. Sexual violence has long been used as a weapon of war by the military, and the current conflict is no exception. Ethnic women and gender-diverse individuals have been subjected to widespread sexual violations, including rape, murder, and being used as human shields in conflict areas. The military's use of sexual violence serves to terrorize communities, weaken resistance efforts, and enforce domination. According to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP), since the coup in 2021, more than 27,196 individuals have been arrested, including 5,624 women, 22 people identifying as LGBT, and 743 children. From February 2021 to August 12, 2024, a total of 5,498 people were killed, including 1,095 women, 695 children, and 1 LGBT individual. Of the women who were killed:

- 290 died due to airstrikes,
- 415 from artillery shelling,
- 118 in detention centers,
- 13 were raped and then murdered,
- 46 were burned alive,
- 26 were killed during demonstrations, and
- 17 died under unknown circumstances.

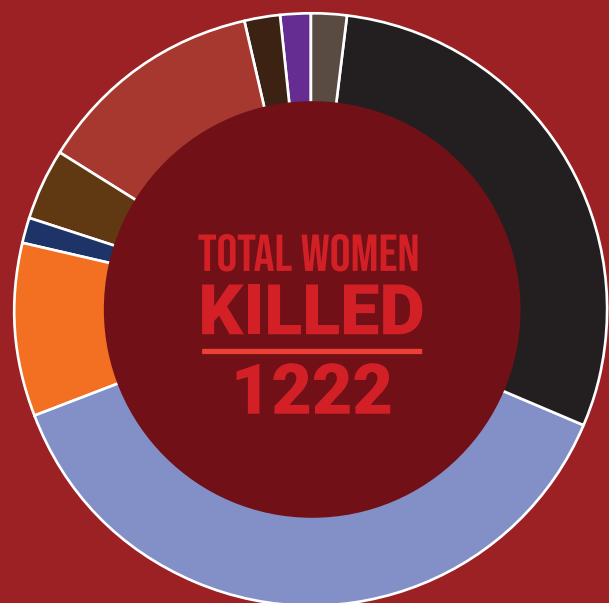
These figures not only represent a horrifying toll on women and girls but also reflect the military's deliberate use of gender-based violence as a tool of oppression and control. The vulnerability of women, girls, and gender-diverse people has been magnified during the conflict, with sexual violence and exploitation becoming commonplace in ethnic minority regions.

According to AAPP, the number of human rights violations in Burma from 1st February 2021 – 15 October 2024.

		FEMALE	MALE	LGBT	CHILD
Released	6453	1617	4828	8	
Fatality/Killed	5498	1095	4402	1	695
Still_ Detained	20743	4007	16722	14	
Sentenced	9326	1530	7791	5	
Death Penalty in Detention	124	16	108		
Arrest	27196	5624	21550	22	743

TYPES OF FEMICIDE

26	Protest Crackdown
360	Airstrike
460	Artillery
116	Detainment
16	Detainment / Human Shield Rape
49	Set Fire alive
151	Shot/Shot in head
27	Vehicle ramming/Physical disability/Mental illness/Landmine/Fell to death
17	Unknown



There has been a long-standing lack of significant action against military soldiers who have committed rape and other forms of sexual violence. Even when legal proceedings are initiated, it remains difficult to determine if soldiers are held accountable under proper laws and procedures, as cases are often wrapped in the secrecy of military courts, which lack transparency. For example, in numerous cases of sexual violence, such as in the Kachin and Rakhine States, perpetrators have either gone unpunished or were provided with small financial settlements, effectively avoiding accountability. In many instances, the military threatens victims, survivors, and their families into silence, offering minimal compensation to resolve cases. The military junta's dominance in the legal system, the lack of international intervention, and societal acceptance of gender-based violence allow them to operate with impunity. This impunity, particularly in cases of sexual violence, disproportionately affects women and girls, leaving them vulnerable and perpetuating the cycle of violence, as they are denied justice and protection from future harm.

Women and girls have long sought refuge and safety from the military junta's widespread and systematic perpetration of sexual violence against civilians. This systemic violence has caused profound psychological trauma, including anxiety and PTSD, and physical harm, as they live in constant fear of assault. For instance, in the Tanintharyi Region, when women travel, they are subjected to invasive body searches, sometimes forced to expose their breasts, while men are made to remove their pants at military checkpoints. These searches are not only physically invasive but serve as deliberate acts of control and humiliation, illustrating the military's gender-based abuse. The constant fear of being violated exacerbates the psychological impact, creating a state of perpetual trauma for women who are already living in a dangerous environment. This, combined with the broader climate of military dominance and gender violence, leaves women and girls disproportionately vulnerable and without recourse for justice or protection.

Displaced women and girls face heightened threats of sexual and gender-based violence from opportunistic resistance forces and community members. The lack of privacy and physical security in displacement camps exacerbates these risks, particularly for children and girls. Women, already burdened by concerns for their children's safety, must contend with the constant threat of violence while in camps and during displacement. Gender-based violence is further intensified by stressors such as food insecurity, overcrowding, and economic uncertainty. Domestic violence is also more prevalent in these situations, as the extreme pressure of displacement magnifies tensions within families. The Women's League of Burma (WLB) has documented increased rates of domestic violence in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps, compounding the trauma that women and girls endure in their fight to survive. Despite ongoing efforts to raise awareness about gender-based violence, collaboration with service providers remains challenging, hindered by limited resources, inaccessibility, and a lack of accountability from local authorities.

Although the People's Defense Forces (PDFs) were initially formed to protect civilians, women and girls in resistance-held areas have limited avenues for redress against sexual and gender-based violence. Many of these areas still rely on customary law, which often upholds patriarchal structures and fails to deliver justice for survivors. In some cases, perpetrators are merely ordered to apologize, pay compensation to the

survivor's family, or pledge not to commit further acts of violence. In the worst instances, survivors are forced to marry their perpetrators, reinforcing the harmful notion that a woman's worth is tied to her marital status and sexual purity. This practice compounds the trauma of sexual violence and traps survivors in an ongoing cycle of abuse. Many women are reluctant to report incidents due to pressure from wealthy or influential community members, fear for their safety, and the likelihood of being ostracized by their communities. PDFs are rarely held accountable for human rights violations due to weak legal protections and the absence of proper procedures, often threatening survivors and civil society groups at gunpoint to discourage reporting. This lack of judicial recourse reinforces a culture in which sexual and gender-based violence is normalized and accepted. However, in some ethnic areas, ethnic resistance organizations have begun to develop judicial and protection mechanisms to address sexual violence cases, offering a glimpse of hope for survivors, though significant challenges remain in ensuring these systems are effectively implemented.

OTHER GENDERED IMPACTS OF DISPLACEMENT

The military junta obstruction of aid has severely limited the supply of goods and services addressing gender-specific health concerns, particularly in ethnic minority areas. Displaced women, children (especially girls), and the elderly are disproportionately affected by the lack of sufficient humanitarian aid, particularly in relation to sexual and reproductive health services. Since the coup, the lack of adequate clinic facilities, medical supplies, and medicines has gravely impacted antenatal and postnatal care. Pregnant women and new mothers have experienced increased cases of hemorrhages, miscarriages, pregnancy-induced hypertension, and anemia. The stress and trauma of displacement have also contributed to maternal depression, further complicating the already dire health situation for women in these areas. Without access to proper healthcare, the consequences for women's physical and mental health are profound and far-reaching.

Food insecurity has worsened due to a lack of livelihoods, high commodity prices, and security risks associated with travel. This scarcity has particularly increased the vulnerability of women and girls, who often reduce both the quantity and quality of their food intake during crises. Gendered social expectations pressure women to sacrifice their own nutrition to ensure that their families, especially children, are fed first. As a result, women are more vulnerable to macro and micronutrient deficiencies, particularly concerning during their reproductive years. Breastfeeding mothers face significant challenges in meeting their dietary needs, leading to early mortality rates for newborns. In Karenni State, it is believed that 8 out of 10 babies die, largely due to their mothers' inability to produce sufficient nutrition, compounded by poor healthcare access, hygiene, and the overall humanitarian crisis. This staggering mortality rate underscores the devastating impact of the coup on maternal and infant health, highlighting the urgent need for intervention.

The lack of access to healthcare has led to a troubling increase in hysterectomies

among displaced women and girls, often due to untreated infections resulting from unsanitary conditions and inadequate medical attention. Women and girls, along with the elderly, are also experiencing menstrual disorders caused by stress, poor nutrition, and the absence of menstrual hygiene products or medical care. Combining these health issues, many displaced persons live in soil bunkers during conflict, resulting in higher rates of illness such as paralysis, flu, and infections like diarrhea and ringworm due to the lack of clean water. For women, the absence of clean water presents additional risks, including reproductive tract infections and other hygiene-related complications. These factors together illustrate the critical need for basic healthcare, sanitation, and clean water access to prevent further deterioration of health among displaced populations.

The failed military coup has devastated children's access to education, with the collapse of the formal education system and ongoing displacement and conflict. Girls are especially vulnerable, with many dropping out of school due to displacement, increasing their risk of early marriage, trafficking, and unsafe migration as negative coping mechanisms. This reflects a broader pattern of gender inequality, where girls' education is often deprioritized in times of crisis. The long-term consequences are severe, as a lack of education perpetuates cycles of poverty and gender-based violence, further entrenching the marginalization of women. There is an urgent need for teaching materials, school kits, and qualified teachers to provide education in displaced settings. However, ongoing conflict and resource constraints have made the implementation of education programs difficult, leaving girls particularly disadvantaged in these areas.

The military's artillery shelling, landmines, and offensives have resulted in widespread casualties and injuries. With inadequate medical resources, civilians are left to suffer from infections and preventable deaths. One striking example is the case of a pregnant woman who lost her life after being shot in the Tanintharyi Division, due to a lack of proper medical care. Women and children are particularly vulnerable, with many losing limbs or dying in the attacks. Elderly people face unique challenges, as they are often unable to flee during conflict, making them especially vulnerable. In many instances, when the military burns down villages, elderly people who remain behind perish, unable to escape. The destruction of homes also has severe social consequences, especially for women, who not only lose their homes but also their community support networks, deepening their isolation and vulnerability in the face of ongoing violence.

WLB'S EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM AND PRIORITIES

In August 2021, the Women's League of Burma (WLB) formed an Emergency Response Team with four key priorities to provide emergency assistance to civilians impacted by the ongoing conflict, particularly women and ethnic minority communities.

- 1 | Support for Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) Participants**
WLB provides crucial support to individuals who have rejected the military coup and joined the CDM. These individuals face significant financial challenges as well as serious safety and security risks. WLB's assistance helps ensure their survival amid these hardships.
- 2 | Assistance to Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)**
WLB assists IDPs whose homes have been burned down, subjected to air raids, looted, or who have suffered torture at the hands of the military junta. Many of these displaced individuals belong to ethnic minority groups, with women, children, and the elderly bearing the brunt of these atrocities. WLB provides them with essential aid such as shelter, food, and medical assistance.
- 3 | Support for Human Rights Activists and Women Human Rights Defenders**
Human Rights Activists and Women Human Rights Defenders are particularly at risk under the military regime. WLB offers them vital support, including relocation assistance, transportation, shelter, food, and legal aid. It also helps political prisoners by facilitating family meetings and providing legal representation.
- 4 | COVID-19 Prevention and Medical Support**
WLB has integrated COVID-19 response efforts into its emergency work, providing aid to prevent the spread of the virus and offering critical medical supplies. These efforts are crucial in areas where the healthcare system has collapsed, and where displaced women face additional health challenges due to a lack of medical services.

WLB'S REACH AND IMPACT

With the collaboration of its 12 member organizations, WLB has provided support to a wide range of individuals impacted by the conflict, including:

- **1,367 human rights activists**
- **1,278 Women Human Rights activists**
- **3,852 members of the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM)**
- **47,265 internally displaced persons (IDPs)** from various regions,

including Shan State, Karen State, Kachin State, Chin State, Kayah/Karenni State, Sagaing Division, Mandalay Division, Bago Division, Ayeyarwady Division, and the Dawei region.

By focusing on ethnic minorities and marginalized groups, particularly women, WLB's emergency response highlights the organization's commitment to addressing the gendered impacts of the conflict. Its efforts ensure that those most affected by violence and displacement, especially women and children, receive the critical support they need.

WLB provides essential support to Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) participants and activists, with a strong emphasis on addressing the unique vulnerabilities faced by women and marginalized groups. This includes relocation assistance—covering transportation, shelter, and food—for those fleeing persecution. WLB also extends vital support to women political prisoners, ensuring they have access to legal aid and facilitating family visits to bring much-needed food and supplies to them inside prisons. These efforts help alleviate the compounded challenges women face under political repression, particularly in navigating the risks of detention and imprisonment.

WLB is uniquely positioned to address the urgent needs of displaced ethnic communities, particularly vulnerable groups such as women, girls, and the elderly, who are disproportionately affected by the conflict. Our operations span across townships and IDP camps in regions like Dawei, Karenni, Southern Shan, Karen, Nay Pyi Taw, Kachin, Upper Sagaing, and along the Chin-Sagaing border. To effectively reach these areas, international organizations collaborate with local civil society groups like WLB, which has built strong trust within the communities. We work alongside a wide network of organizations, alliances, human rights activists, and social workers to provide vital resources, including shelter, food, warm clothing, blankets, rainproof roofing materials, solar lamps, water pipes, and emergency medical supplies. WLB's member organizations have established focal persons in various villages, prioritizing women, girls, and gender-diverse individuals to ensure that their specific needs are met while empowering them to take on leadership roles. This gender-sensitive approach reflects our commitment to uplifting and protecting marginalized groups in times of crisis, addressing their unique challenges, and ensuring that our humanitarian response is inclusive and effective.

WLB has been providing support to approximately 200 survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) each year across these regions. This includes establishing safehouses, offering healthcare services, providing counseling, and ensuring access to legal support. Recognizing that displaced settings often heighten risks of GBV, WLB's member organizations actively provide awareness raising activities about women's rights and gender-based violence within IDP camps and villages. Through these activities, WLB empowers women, girls, and gender-diverse people to recognize and assert their rights, while also fostering safer environments for them amidst ongoing displacement and conflict. Despite the formidable challenges posed by continuous conflict, WLB's widespread efforts ensure that women, girls, and LGBT individuals across different regions receive critical care, protection, and advocacy. By centering the needs and voices of the most marginalized, WLB is advancing a gender-sensitive and ethnically inclusive approach to humanitarian aid, ensuring that no one is left behind in the struggle for safety, dignity, and rights.

Emergency Response by WLB and Its Member Organizations Across States and Regions

Region & WLB's member organizations	Number of survivors supported	Type of services provided to survivors
Tanintharyi Region Dawei <i>Tavoyan Women's Union (TWU)</i>	15-20	<i>Accommodation, transportation, food, healthcare, and mental health counseling</i>
Kachin State and Northern Shan State <i>Kachin Women's Association Thailand (KWAT)</i>	49	<i>food and medicine</i>
Karenni State, Southern Shan State and Napyitaw <i>Karenni Women's Organization (KNWO)</i>	49	<i>Safehouses, judicial and mediation support, healthcare, and security</i>
Sagaing Region <i>Kuki Women's Human Rights Organization (KWHRO)</i>	19	<i>3 safehouses, healthcare, counseling, vocational training, and legal aid</i>
Sagaing Region, including Palae, Kani, Sarlingyi, Shwe Bo <i>Women's Justice (WJ)</i>	29	<i>Counseling and legal assistance</i>

WLB provides vital support to address the sexual and reproductive health needs of displaced women, girls, and LGBT individuals. This includes distributing food and sanitation kits, baby clothes, milk for newborns, vitamins for mothers, as well as delivery kits and cash assistance for pregnant women. For instance, WLB has provided 130,000 MMK in cash assistance to internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Thayetchaung and Launglon townships in Tanintharyi Division, enabling them to purchase shelter materials and medical supplies, particularly for women, girls, and gender-diverse people. WLB also conducts awareness-raising activities and organizes panel discussions on sexual and reproductive health in IDP camps and host communities. These sessions aim to empower women and girls by providing information and distributing essential supplies like condoms, menstrual pads, and contraceptive pills. Additionally, WLB supports open and mobile clinics to provide emergency health services and refers pregnant women to hospitals and midwives when needed. The organization also supplies antiretroviral therapy (ART) for emergency cases and covers medical costs for pregnant women. In Karenni State, WLB has set up clinics in IDP camps to offer healthcare support to elderly displaced persons suffering from chronic diseases.

Food insecurity remains a significant concern for displaced communities, especially for women and girls who often face heightened vulnerabilities. WLB members provide basic food items such as rice, oil, salt, beans, onions, garlic, and potatoes, along with cash assistance to help displaced families meet their nutritional needs. In Karenni State, it is estimated that only 2 out of 10 people receive enough food. KyWO has provided food assistance to 12,094 women and girls and 10,971 men across 54 locations in Karenni State. Similarly, KWAT has supported 1,450 households in Kachin State and 120 households in Northern Shan State. By providing food and resources to displaced individuals, especially women, girls, and LGBT people, WLB and its member organizations ensure that gender-specific needs are addressed and that vulnerable communities receive the assistance they urgently need.

FEB - DEC 2021

10535

JAN - DEC 2022

35498

JAN - DEC 2023

7729

JAN - JULY 2024

10535

TOTAL | 69284

*Kachin State | Karenni State/ Kayah State | Chin State | Mon State | Shan State
Sagaing Division | Tanintharyi Division | Bago Division | Yangon Division*

CHALLENGES

SECURITY CHALLENGES IN AID PROVISION

Delivering humanitarian assistance in Burma/Myanmar poses significant security challenges for WLB's members, who must navigate multiple junta checkpoints. The transportation of aid is severely restricted, putting aid workers at constant risk of arrest. Shop owners are often interrogated and placed under heavy suspicion by the military junta forces to ensure they do not supply goods and services to civil society organizations. At these checkpoints, the driver's name, licenses, and everyone's phones are routinely checked. In certain junta-allied areas, WLB members are monitored and required to provide personal information. If aid workers are suspected of assisting internally displaced persons (IDPs), they face potential arrest and harm, and civilians may be taken hostage without legal protection.

The military junta's surveillance and restrictions make it extremely dangerous to retain receipts for purchased goods. WLB members are unable to stockpile supplies and must instead buy and store items piecemeal to avoid raising suspicion, complicating their ability to provide effective humanitarian aid.

To reach conflict-affected villages, WLB members often traverse forests and jungles to avoid landmines on roads and bridges. This detour delays the delivery of aid and compromises the freshness of transported produce.

Given the extensive precautions civil society organizations must take to evade the junta and its allies, donor requirements for humanitarian support have further complicated the already daunting challenges in meeting the needs of displaced persons. It is crucial for donors to ensure that their compliance requirements adhere to the principle of "do no harm" in international humanitarian assistance, meaning they should not endanger civil society organizations and displaced persons or put their lives at risk. These concerns include:

Registration Requirements: Given the nature of our work resisting and documenting the atrocities committed primarily by the military junta, it is impossible for our members to register with the military junta in Burma/Myanmar. As a result, we have had to move our operations underground.

Procurement Requirements: Requiring multiple quotes for supplies or a tendering process can significantly delay aid delivery in volatile contexts. Additionally, retaining written quotes or invoices presents serious security risks and strains WLB members' time and resources, drawing unnecessary attention to our aid workers and suppliers.

Documentation Retention: Keeping hard copies of documentation, including receipts and beneficiary lists, poses severe security risks for our personnel. Storing these documents could expose already vulnerable community members to additional security threats, potentially allowing the military junta to identify their locations and target them.

Beneficiary Signatures: Many displaced persons are reluctant to sign documents, fearing that the military junta will access their names and information. This requirement erodes trust between WLB members and the communities they support.

Funding Channels: WLB staff face difficulties in opening bank accounts due to a lack of legal documents. Yet some donors insist that international funding be channeled only through official organizational bank accounts, necessitating greater flexibility in money transfer systems.

Moreover, WLB is concerned about collaborating with international organizations and donors that have signed MOUs with the military junta, as this poses a risk of data breaches that could jeopardize the safety of WLB members and IDP beneficiaries.

SUFFICIENT HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE FOR REPEATED DISPLACEMENT

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) are facing repeated displacements as the conflict in Burma/Myanmar continues to escalate, leading to an increasing number of IDPs. Securing adequate support from donors to address these ongoing displacements has proven difficult. Without sufficient assistance, displaced community members may resort to violence and negative coping mechanisms, while the health of women and girls is likely to deteriorate due to preventable diseases and illnesses.

SUFFICIENT SUPPORT FOR ADDRESSING SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

WLB members have persistently documented cases of gender-based and sexual violence, providing vital support services as we navigate the complex security landscape to meet the needs of displaced persons and survivors. However, as the conflict evolves, we frequently have to shut down and reopen new safehouses in response to, or to evade, attacks by the military junta. Renting shelters to serve as safehouses for survivors necessitates significant financial resources, as property owners are often reluctant to rent out their homes, viewing it as a security threat. Furthermore, our focal persons and staff are often monitored by the military junta and local village administrators, hindering our ability to provide open and effective aid and support.

CHALLENGES IN DOCUMENTING HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

WLB members' efforts to document human rights violations committed by both the military junta and resistance forces are increasingly hampered by security risks and the expectations of survivors, victims, and their families. Many individuals fear retribution for providing information or seeking support services related to abuses perpetrated by armed groups. Additionally, with the breakdown of the judicial system,

survivors and their families often report a sense of hopelessness regarding the accountability of perpetrators.

WLB members face serious security threats not only from the military junta but also from various armed actors while documenting human rights violations. In some cases, WLB has been accused of undermining the revolution when exposing abuses committed by resistance groups. This environment leaves WLB members navigating the high expectations of survivors and their families while operating in a collapsed justice system. At the same time, they grapple with limited resources to address survivors' trauma and provide protection. The constant exposure to traumatic cases further exacerbates the emotional toll on WLB members, many of whom are also personally affected by the conflict.

As the conflict escalates, documentation becomes increasingly difficult, particularly as the military junta has been shutting down internet and mobile access in affected areas. This is especially concerning, as the erosion of protection measures likely results in an increase in gendered rights violations.

CONCLUSION

The ongoing conflict and humanitarian crisis in Burma/Myanmar, particularly in ethnic minority regions, continues to severely impact civilians, with ethnic women and girls disproportionately affected. The military junta's deliberate obstruction of humanitarian aid, alongside the destruction of critical infrastructure like clinics, schools, and homes, has deepened the suffering of already vulnerable populations. Women and girls face heightened risks of gender-based violence, loss of livelihoods, and limited access to essential healthcare, exacerbating maternal health issues and increasing child mortality rates. The economic collapse and forced displacement have also driven many young women into dangerous situations, including human trafficking and drug abuse. Despite these dire circumstances, the military continues to act with impunity, perpetuating a cycle of violence and repression. Immediate international attention and action are required to address these systemic issues and provide much-needed relief to those affected, particularly ethnic women and children.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite the significant challenges, WLB firmly believes that providing humanitarian support and documenting human rights violations is crucial for fostering a transitional justice process. This process should encompass reparative strategies, truth-telling mechanisms, memorials, and educational initiatives for future generations. Importantly, these efforts must be survivor- and victim-centered to restore dignity and facilitate healing.

Given our deep trust in local communities and extensive networks, local women's organizations are ideally positioned to meet the needs of displaced persons and address incidents of sexual and gender-based violence. Therefore, our work requires urgent support. In particular, we recommend that international organizations:

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITIES

- **Cease Legitimizing the military junta:** Stop legitimizing the military junta and prevent the military from weaponizing aid by delivering humanitarian assistance through the SAC.
- **Pressure for Buffer Zones:** Urge the international community, ASEAN, and neighboring countries to pressure the military junta to establish buffer zones for individuals fleeing military attacks, ensuring they can live safely away from conflict zones.
- **Prioritize Local Organizations:** Recognize the critical role of local civil society and community-based organizations in delivering services and humanitarian

assistance. Prioritize humanitarian funding directly to these local efforts in various states, regions, and cross-border areas.

- **Seek Guidance from Local Governance:** Consult and coordinate with the National Unity Government and ethnic resistance organizations when providing humanitarian assistance.
- **Flexible Funding:** Provide flexible and appropriate funding to local civil society and community-based organizations that already have effective systems for delivering emergency aid.
- **Gender-Responsive Budgeting:** Ensure all funded projects include gender-responsive budgeting to adequately address the specific needs of women and marginalized groups.
- **Invest in Livelihood Opportunities:** Invest in vocational training and livelihood opportunities for women in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps, enabling them to rebuild their lives and contribute positively to their communities.
- **Ensure Humanitarian Assistance:** Provide sufficient humanitarian aid to conflict-affected IDPs and refugees, ensuring their voluntary, dignified, and safe return along the Burma/Myanmar border.
- **Support Survivor-Centered Justice Processes:** Facilitate the development of survivor-centered transitional justice processes that prioritize the needs and experiences of women and marginalized groups.
- **Coordinate with Local Organizations:** Recognize and coordinate with ethnic-based civil society organizations, women's organizations, and service providers to ensure their involvement in humanitarian assistance efforts, including planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

ASEAN COUNTRIES

- **Facilitate Cross-Border Humanitarian Aid:** Provide cross-border humanitarian assistance without restrictions.
- **Avoid Military Channels:** Ensure humanitarian assistance does not pass through the military junta.
- **Engage Local Governance:** Consult and coordinate with the National Unity Government and ethnic resistance organizations in delivering humanitarian aid.
- **Negotiate with Civil Society:** Collaborate with civil society organizations, women's organizations, and service providers to ensure timely and necessary humanitarian assistance reaches affected populations.

NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES

- **Provide Refugee Status:** Grant refugee status to those fleeing conflict, protecting their rights, and facilitating assistance from UNHCR, international NGOs, and humanitarian organizations without restrictions.
- **Sustain Humanitarian Assistance:** Continue to provide sufficient humanitarian aid to conflict-affected IDPs and refugees, ensuring their voluntary and dignified return and resettlement along the Myanmar border.
- **Support Cross-Border Aid:** Facilitate cross-border assistance, delineate liberated zones, and ensure security for affected populations.

HUMANITARIAN AID PROVIDERS: CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS, LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS, AND SERVICE PROVIDERS

- **Adhere to Human Rights Standards:** Deliver humanitarian aid in accordance with international human rights standards.
- **Strengthen Regional Assistance:** Effectively provide regional assistance through robust engagement with communities and other service providers.

WOMEN'S LEAGUE OF BURMA

The Women's League of Burma is an umbrella organization comprising 12 women's organizations of different ethnic and political backgrounds. WLB was founded on 9 December 1999.

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