

ACTIVITIES REPORT (2021)

Creating safe spaces, capacity, and resilience for Human Right Defenders inside Myanmar and at the borders

ORGANIZATIONS

- New Myanmar Foundation (NMF)
- Overseas Irrawaddy Association (OIA)
- The Burma Fund (TBF)

Note: This internal report was circulated only for the information among the partners and stakeholders.

Report Date: January 7, 2022

Since the military coup in last February, these three organizations have been striving for restoration of democracy and human rights in Burma, collaborating with and supporting all other organizations and individuals working for the same aim.

Since that time, the NMF has supported and provided assistance to the youths for the peaceful demonstrations in Yangon and other places. In return, its office was raided and put under seal in the last week of March; and many leaders and members were arrested and imprisoned. It pushed the NMF to move to the Thai Burma border.

PROVISION OF SAFE HOUSES AND REFUGE

Since April, safe houses have been provided inside Burma, at the border and in Maesot for the human rights defenders (HRDs) running for their lives. These activities were commenced using their own organizations' funds and contributions from overseas Burmese. Safe Houses for HRDs in Yangon have been provided until October.

More than 20 HRDs in Yangon were provided refuges based on requirement. Moreover, 10 HRDs at risk each from Magway Region, Tanintharyi Region, Mandalay Region were also provided assistance for their safe accommodation and food while they were hiding away from their houses. The program will be extended to other regions and states.

In Laykaekaw, two safe houses were established in April; and HRDs including CDM members, parliamentarians, politicians and activists fleeing from persecution were accommodated. The transport cost for the HRDs to come there was also provided. Up until late December, over 100 HRDs had been accommodated.

Safe houses in Maesot also were opened for the HRDs where they could live for months while preparing for asylum seeking process or relocation in Thailand. Moreover, transport

costs were provided to them depending on availability of funding. More than 100 HRDs have been accommodated as of the end of December.

The security and health issues of them were also taken care of . The people infected with Covid 19 were taken care properly to get required quarantine and medical treatment. One family member of the HRD suffering from a stroke also was helped to get medical treatment at Maesot hospital with the assistance of 150,000 Baht from Amnesty International Sweden.

ASSISTANCE TO POLITICAL PRISONERS

Prison visits to some political prisoners in Insein prison have been continued. Moreover, the families of the political prisoners were introduced to the lawyers to have pro bono legal aid. Nearly twenty political prisoners including CDM members, youth leaders, CSO leaders, political leaders and parliamentarians were provided prison visits, basic food, medications and other requirements by our coordinators in Yangon. Regular communication with families and lawyers also were performed.

We also provided support to four political prisoners in Mandalay and another two prisoners in Kayin State. Moreover, one famous political prisoner was helped to have monthly funding for the whole prison term.

In addition, poor political prisoners imprisoned far away from the family were introduced to the local social support networks to get prison visits and support. Furthermore, the children of poor political prisoners were assisted to have shelter, food and basic requirements and protection.

Up until now, we are using our own funds and donations from overseas Burmese to provide support to the political prisoners. It is critical to continue and expand the support to daily increasing political prisoners and their families so we are seeking to find ways for regular fund raising.

SUPPORT & CAPACITY BUILDING TO HRDs AND ACTIVISTS

The overseas Burmese were encouraged to contribute funding and assistance for restoration of democracy and human rights. All donations were funneled to the activists around Burma.

The prominent HRDs under threat were helped to have access to the international donors in order to get emergency grants which will help them to overcome the current threat they are facing. Moreover, some financial support to the parliamentarians is under process which will materialize soon.

In addition, the parliamentarians inside were assisted to have some on-line training on subjects like federalism with the assistance from Burma Centre Prague. The CDMers, HRDs and CSO leaders from India, Thailand and Myanmar also were provided “Digital Security Training” for 3 times with the support of SafeNet and Asia Democracy Network. A series of “Digital Security Training ” and “Youth Leadership Training “which were required

to have resilience in this crisis situation were conducted from July to November 2021. A workshop for “Violence against women “was conducted in December with more than 20 women participants in honor of 16 days activism for women.

SUPPORT TO BURMESE MIGRANT WORKERS IN MAESOT

In July, there was a big wave of COVID 19 in Maesot where lockdowns of living quarters and factories were common. Many Burmese migrant workers lost incomes and in isolation. Dry food and sanitation materials worth 400 Baht were supplied to each of the 1000 families under lockdown. Moreover, free funerals were provided to the poor or those without family connections. Furthermore, a program to provide vocational training to the girls and women so they will be fully qualified for jobs at the garment factories has been about to commence. At least 20 women will get jobs on a monthly basis.

In addition, assistance such as seeds and land rents were provided to twenty-five smallholders farmers through Asia Democracy Network so that they can get food security status at least for their families. Survey on the situation of the Burmese farmers has been conducted so that the international organizations and donors can understand how they can support these vulnerable groups effectively.

ADVOCACY FOR BURMESE REFUGEES & STRENGTHENING NETWORKS

In July 2021, there was a hearing on the situation of Burmese refugees in Thailand by the National Human Rights Commission of Thailand where Dr Sann Aung submitted a presentation on the current situation of refugees in the camps and the new asylum seekers. Recommendations underlining basic human rights of the refugees were also submitted.

The leaders also participated in the internal workshops and webinars where the experiences of Burmese democratic movement and the role of youths were shared in the open discussion.

SUPPORT TO BURMESE REFUGEES AT THAI BURMA BORDER NEAR MAESOT

In mid-December of 2021, a military offensive to the Laykaekaw and surrounding areas pushed the local people and the HRDs taking refuge there to flee the areas and become IDPs and refugees in Thailand. Since the beginning of the episode, food and other basic requirements were provided. Everyday 1000 prepared meal packages and two thousand water bottles have been provided to the IDPs and the refugees in the camps and spreading outside.

There are about 15,000 refugees and IDPs in 6 camps along the Thaungyin river. Moreover, there are thousands of them loosely spreading along the river banks. They have been supported with daily food and water bottles as much as accessible. As of January 7th, 2022, more than 17,000 lunch boxes and 18,000 water bottles and hundreds of women sanitation kits had been delivered. Moreover, we facilitated in assisting 300 mosquito nets and 300

tarpaulins donated by IRC for the IDPs and refugees dispersed across the river. Moreover, we facilitated to get 20 mobile toilets from Nipon foundation; and 12 removable toilets, 3 water tanks, medicines, 20 tents and 30 First Aid boxes from IRC for the Nwarchan refugee camp in Maekawking village. We also facilitated to get 120 blankets and 50 mats from KWO for the IDPs and refugees.

Moreover, over 50 HRDs were helped taking refuge in Maesot and about 130 HRDs were provided financial assistance of 2000 THB for accommodation and food cost. However, the battles in Laykaekaw have flared up again and more refugees are expected to flee to Thailand.

On the other hand, warm clothes for IDPs were also distributed to Kayin State, Kayah State, Sagaing Region. We are seeking to get fundings for these crucial areas where hundreds of thousands of people have been fleeing from their homes and hiding in remote areas in order to avoid the atrocities of the military.

RECOMMENDATIONS

International organizations, donors and embassies are requested to take lead and prompt actions in response to the current situation including

- providing urgently required humanitarian assistance to the refugees and cross border assistance to the IDPs in a timely manner.
- supporting financial assistance to the HRDs hiding inside the country from persecution.
- doing consultation with local community-based organizations (CBOs), right-based organizations and stakeholders; and working together with them
- taking initiatives for special assistance programs in support of the most vulnerable groups including children, women, persons with disability (PWDs) and elderly
- providing assistance to and working together with the organizations striving for restoration of democracy and human rights in Burma.

Temporary IDPs and refugee camps along Thai Burma border near Maesot as of January 7, 2022				
No	Name	Region	no: of refugees	Situation
1	Cattle Farm (Mae Kau Kin)		5,000	still open
2	Unity camp near Bo Sa Lone Camp		400	still open
3	Daung Ma Lay Gate	Phalu	450	still open
4	Ma Thein Gate	Phalu	650	still open
5	A Kawt Gate	Phat Tayar Kan	450	still open
6	Kayin Nga Pu Gate	Kaing Taw	400	still open

7	5 Bhat-10 Baht Gate	Kaing Taw	1,500	still open
8	Kyaukkhet		1,800	
9	Ya Thaye Goo		1,000	
10	Kyaukkhet Road- along Myawaddy		3,000	
Total refugees (estimate)			14,650	

Appendix – Activities Photos

Providing financial support to HRDs including parliamentarians, political leaders, CDM members, activists and youths recently arrived Maesot









Providing food and drinking water for 70 disabled and elderly people in Mae Htaw Thale Monastery – January 2, 2021

Providing food and drinking water to the refugees in Maekauking village- Jan 4, 2021.



Donating food and drinking water to the IDPs near Phalulay area – Dec 25, 2021

Donation of food and drinking water to the at IDPs in old casino in Phalulay area- December 25, 2021



Taking care of wounded person in IDP camp in Phalulay



Sending food and basic needs for IDPs



Discussion with Myanmar migrant farmers on their difficulties and farming conditions – November, 2021



Providing seed funds to Myanmar migrant farmers – December, 2021



Participating in Women's 16 Day Campaign in GBVCG– Nov 30, 2021



Eleven families of smallholder farmers in Mae Tao village were provided funding assistance – November, 2021

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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- 1) Volunteers and local partners
- 2) Individual donors around the world
- 3) Fortified Rights
- 4) Amnesty International
- 5) Asia Democracy Network
- 6) People Empowerment Foundation
- 7) Burma Center Prague
- 8) Freedom House
- 9) The Border Consortium (TBC)

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“In solidarity”

