

Statement on Peace and Development in Burma

Date: April 10, 2012

With international donors preparing to significantly increase humanitarian and development assistance in order to promote peace in Burma, we are very concerned that cross-border aid to marginalized and vulnerable populations is being limited or cut at this crucial time.

Even while the cease-fire process is being carried out with separate ethnic armed groups, fighting is still taking place with the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO), resulting in fresh displacement of tens of thousands of people internally and outside the country. Even though some level of agreement has been reached with some ethnic armed groups, human rights violations are continuing in all ethnic areas under the new Army-backed government of U Thein Sein, including land confiscation, forced relocation, forced labour, extortion, and restriction of movement, rape and intimidation.

The aim of the government is clearly to establish cease-fire agreements with the ethnic groups to promote development first, rather than to promote peace in the country. Numerous mega-development projects being planned or implemented, mostly in the energy sector, are leading to human rights abuses against local villagers, particularly ethnic communities. These projects have been started without standards to prevent harmful environmental and social impacts, and will therefore cause more refugee and IDPs.

36 Community Based Organizations (CBOs) from Burma gathered at the Thai-Burma border on April 6-7 2012, to discuss these issues, and have come out with the following policy recommendations;

1. Humanitarian and development aid should be promoting peace, justice and reconciliation rather than dividing people and creating conflict.
2. Humanitarian and development aid must not be linked to the construction of special economic zones and business ventures, and must not be used to put pressure on refugees or IDPs to return home involuntarily or to provide labor for projects.
3. In future, any humanitarian and development aid process that intends to promote peace must be transparent and include all CBOs from all sectors in overall strategy planning, to ensure that peace is promoted amongst all sectors.
4. Donors should ensure that they “Do No Harm” and should not cut humanitarian support to ethnic communities in order to pressure ethnic groups during ceasefire processes.
5. Donors should continue to give urgently needed cross-border humanitarian aid in conflict affected areas.
6. Development aid should prioritize human development and grass-roots empowerment rather than infrastructure development.
7. Large-scale development projects should not be implemented in areas of Burma where conflict remains unresolved, as this will simply fuel further conflict.
8. Sanctions must not be lifted until genuine peace, based on political solutions, is established in Burma.
9. International Financial Institutes (IFIs) must be transparent, accountable and include all political stakeholders, CBOs from all sectors and local affected communities in any decision-making process for any kind of investment in mega development projects in Burma.
10. CBOs must be allowed to operate freely and without restriction in their respective communities.

Endorsing Organizations

1. Ethnic Community Development Forum (ECDF)
2. Forum for Community Organization-Burma (FCO-B)

3. Burma Rivers Network (BRN)
4. Backpack Health Worker Team (BPHWT)
5. Burma Medical Association (BMA)
6. National Health and Education Committee (NHEC)
7. All Arakan Students and Youth Congress (AASYC)
8. Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO)
9. Committee for Internally Displaced Karen People (CIDKP)
10. Kachin Development Network Group (KDNG)
11. Kachin Women's Association Thailand (KWAT)
12. Karen Environmental and Social Action Network (KESAN)
13. Karen Health Department and Welfare (KHDW)
14. Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG)
15. Karen Office of Relief and Development (KORD)
16. Karen Women Organization (KWO)
17. Karenni Education Department (KnED)
18. Karenni Mobile Medical Team (KMMT)
19. Karenni Social Welfare and Development Centre (KSWDC)
20. Karenni Women Organization (KNWO)
21. Karenni Youth Organization (KnYO)
22. Lahu National Development Organization (LNDO)
23. Mon Relief and Development Committee (MRDC)
24. Mae Tao Clinic (MTC)
25. Mon Youth Progressive Organization (MYPO)
26. Network for Environmental and Economic Development (NEED-Burma)
27. Network for Chin Community Development (NCCD)
28. Pa-Oh Youth Organization (PYO)
29. Shan Education Committee (SEC)
30. Shan Health Committee (SHC)
31. Shan Relief and Development Committee (SRDC)
32. Shan Sapawa Environmental Organization (Sapawa)
33. Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN)
34. Shan Youth Power (SYP)
35. Ta'ang Students and Youth Organization (TSYO)
36. Tin Tad Clinic (TTC-Shan)

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