

**Key Messages to World Leaders, International Governments and the UN
Concerns and Requests Related to Humanitarian Situation in
Kachin and Northern Shan States, Myanmar**

The 25th ASEAN Summit is commencing from 11 to 13 November 2014, hosted by Myanmar in its capital, Naypyi Taw. Most prominent world leaders are gathering and discussing important matters affecting the ASEAN countries and, inevitably, the interconnected global arena. On this occasion, Joint Strategy Team for Kachin Humanitarian Response would like to urge the world leaders, international governments and the UN to pay attention to the following concerns and take immediate actions to fulfill the requests. We firmly believe that the world leaders, international governments and the UN will strongly support the protection of dignity and rights of the internally displaced persons.

The armed conflict between the Government of Myanmar and the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO) broke out again in early June 2011, after 17 years of ceasefire. This conflict has displaced over 100,000 civilians to 167 camps across Kachin and northern Shan State. As of November 2014, a series of ceasefire negotiations, including negotiation for the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement hasn't yet brought any concrete result for the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) to return home safely.

Nine local humanitarian organisations have formed a Joint Strategy Team (JST) and collaborate together to ensure an efficient, impactful and quality humanitarian response to address the most urgent needs of the IDPs, effectively coordinating with the UN and International NGOs.

Concerns:

Stalled Peace Process

Previous attempts of Myanmar government's Union Peace making Work Committee (UPWC) and the Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team (NCCT) which represents most of the major ethnic armed groups has made some encouraging progress. However, most recently, the 6th meeting in September 2014 has seen major regressions, effectively diminishing the hope of achieving a swift nationwide ceasefire agreement.

Increasing militarization: a threat to life security and dignity of civilians

Regardless of the ceasefire negotiations, increasing militarization has led to continuing clashes, some are sporadic but some are strategic. Human right violations and threat to life security and dignity of the civilians are always a concern in Myanmar and many cases are reported by credible institutions like Amnesty International, International Human Rights Watch and Fortify Rights, and the successive UN special rapporteurs on human rights. The incidents where IDP camps and IDPs are affected by indiscriminate attacks of Government military had raised great concerns among the humanitarian communities. In November 2013, over 2,000 people including 400 students from Namlimpa camp had to flee 3 days on foot to safety because the Government military indiscriminately shot and shelled heavy motors into the camp. Shelters and foods provided by humanitarian organisations are being destroyed. In April 2014, 4 motor shells from Government military dropped in Lagat Yang camp. Civilians temporarily escaped to Man Wein Gyi and returned to the camp later. However, continuing harassments, arbitrary detentions and threats to life by Government military caused the IDP to leave the camp again, which was 3rd displacement for the majority. Both camps were abandoned.

Premature return and resettlement

While sporadic clashes are continuing, there are increasing incidents of premature return and resettlement of the IDPs with very little consideration of international principles and guidelines like the "UNHCR Durable Solution Framework". Myanmar government has promoted a resettlement of 140 families to Pa La Na resettlement area near Myitkyina, in May 2014, with limited support like basic housing and some food. Lack of viable livelihood opportunities and access to basic services are key challenges for the IDPs being resettled there. In October 2014, 32 families from Loi Je camp returned to Sinlum village with facilitation and some support from Myanmar government. The presence of

Government military and being in the proximity of the ongoing conflict is a threat to the returnee's security. There was no attempt of clearing the landmine before return. Therefore, presence of landmines and unexploded ordnance made the returnees' agrarian livelihood impossible.

Humanitarian needs

After 41 months of displacement, the support to the IDPs is still a far cry from humanitarian minimum standards. Even to meet their basic needs like food and shelter is still a constant struggle. Protection of children, women and vulnerable groups remains great challenge. Adolescence are regularly being targeted by human trafficking to China. Education in emergency situation is still a widening gap. Hundreds of highschool graduates from KIO control area are left in limbo because there is no way to access higher education for them. Psychosocial support is very much needed to address trauma, depression and anxiety of IDPs. On the one hand, there is the unmet humanitarian need, severely degrading the dignity of the IDPs, being scorned by the war that is not of their making. On the other hand, there are fund cuts from donors and international governments, apparently being exhausted as the crisis being prolonged.

Requests: The world leaders, international governments and the UN,

I. Must encourage the warring parties to respect and abide International Humanitarian Principles and IDPs Rights:

1. International humanitarian principles, laws and the "UNHCR Durable Solutions Framework" must be respected by Myanmar Government, KIO, and all humanitarian actors in the implementations of the Return and Resettlement process; ensuring a dignified, safe and voluntary return or resettlement. Land mine issues should be specifically addressed. The IDPs need to be directly involved in any discussion about return and resettlement, which ensures that they are fully informed of their rights and options.
2. All stakeholders need to **ensure that the IDP's protection needs are addressed**. Ensure that civilians are not exposed to any "violence to life and person, cruel treatment and torture, outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment." As per International Humanitarian Law.

II. Should increase funding support to meet the urgent humanitarian needs

3. **Humanitarian response should continue in the IDPs camps until a safe return and resettlement takes place; this aid should be duly funded in order to guarantee the fulfilment of the minimum humanitarian standards**. Up to now humanitarian response activities have struggled to fully meet the minimum standards due to funding constraints.
4. Urgent support is needed from international donors and the government to mitigate the gaps of the minimum humanitarian assistance to IDPs such as food and shelter. Currently, food is being promised to be secured only till March 2015. Immediate support is needed to fill the food gap to avoid the preventable humanitarian crisis.
5. All stakeholders should refrain of using pretended "targeting" approaches to reduce basic necessary humanitarian assistance like food. Standards of humanitarian aid cannot be lowered under any circumstances. We urge the agencies involved not to undermine the humanitarian assistance to IDPs with the reason of fund shortages.

III. Should champion the protection of IDPs

6. All parties and Humanitarian actors should take all measures to ensure the security and safety of IDPs while staying in the camps. Military post should not be near any IDP camp. Military material and equipment should not be entered into the camps under any circumstance.
7. All parties and Humanitarian actors should take all measures to ensure the security and safety of IDPs, during and after their return or resettlement

IV. Should encourage Aid effectiveness and improving coordination

8. All stakeholders to recognize and support the local humanitarian agencies' roles and contributions to the current humanitarian response. The JST joint programme strategy for return and resettlement¹ has to be taken into account, supported and respected by UN agencies and INGOs.
9. Current coordination mechanisms should be reviewed and improved to ensure effective coordination space, without marginalizing local humanitarian organisations.

V. Should encourage civilian and civil society participation in the peace process

10. Warring parties should promote inclusiveness and opening the space for civilian participation in the current peace process. We reiterate that having a ceasefire agreement alone is not synonymous with meaning that peace will prevail in the region.

Joint Strategy Team
11 November 2014

Contacts: Gum Sha Awng, gum.sha.awng@metta-myanmar.org (+95 95192913),
Rose Mary, crazy13rm@gmail.com (+95 95065632)

Joint Strategy Team – Bridging Rural Integrated Development and Empowerment (BRIDGE), Kachin Baptist Convention (KBC), Kachin Relief and Development Committee (KDRC), Kachin Women Association (KWA), Kachin Development Group (KDG), Karuna Myanmar Social Services (KMSS), Metta Development Foundation (Metta), Nyein Foundation and Wunpawng Ninghtoi (WPN).

Endorsed by:

1. Alin Say Ta Marn
2. APLFD- WLFDD: Asia Pacific League for Freedom and Democracy, World League for Freedom and Democracy,
3. Ayeyawady West Development Organization
4. Bishop Francis Daw Tang, Catholic Diocese of Myitkyina, Myanmar
5. Center For Youth And Social Harmony
6. Civil Authorize Negotiate Organization (C.A.N-Org)
7. COMREG
8. DDA
9. Enabling Legal Environment Network
10. Gaia Sustainable Management Institute
11. Green Network
12. Hpan Tee Ein Development Organization
13. Htoi Gender and Development Foundation
14. Human Rights Defender and Promoter
15. Humanity Institute
16. IFI Watch Myanmar
17. Justice and Peace Network
18. Kachin Communities in Denmark
19. Kachin Communities in Europe
20. Kachin Communities in Singapore
21. Kachin Community in the Netherlands
22. Kachin Conservation Working Group- KCWG

¹ Available upon request to the contact persons.

23. Kachin Development Foundation, USA
24. Kachin Development Networking Group
25. Kachin Peace Network
26. Kachin Refugee Committee Malaysia
27. Kachin State Urban Rural Mission
28. Kachin State Women Network-KSWN
29. Kachin Women Association Japan
30. Kachin Women Peace Network
31. Kachin Women Union
32. Kaladan Development Foundation
33. Karen Environmental and Social Action Network (KESAN)
34. Karen Women Empowerment Group
35. Karuna Spectrum
36. Khit Thit Lu Nge
37. Lands in Our Hands
38. Lhaovo Literature and Culture Committee
39. Magway Farmers Union
40. Master Peace
41. Myanmar Chapter
42. Myanmar China Pipeline Watch Committee
43. Myanmar Youth Social and Education Local Focus (MYSELF)
44. Myo Gone Myint Youth Association
45. Myu Sha Sustainable Development Network
46. National NGO Network (3N)
47. Pa Day Thar Moe
48. Parn Pyoe Lett Youth Centre
49. Paung Ku
50. Peace Machine
51. Poem Lovers Association
52. Pyo Khin Thit – Ma-u-bin
53. Pyoe Khin Thit
54. Sane Yaung Soe
55. Sustainable Forest and Environment Conservation Group Kachin State (SECKS)
56. Sha-it Local Development Foundation
57. Shan Myo Set Thit
58. Shingnip Legal Aid Network
59. Students and Youth Congress of Burma (SYCB)
60. Sunflowers Group
61. TANKS- Transparency and Accountability Network Kachin State
62. Tarkapaw
63. Tharki Nwe Bwar Dhamma Youth Network
64. The Seagull- Mandalay
65. Triangle Women Network
66. TRIANGLE Women Support Group
67. UKSY United Kerenni State Youth
68. White Holding Hands
69. Women Initiative Network for Peace
70. Yangon-Laiza Peace Walk Group
71. Youth Circle