

Humanitarian Access and Assistance to Myanmar: Complex Opportunity Structures in the Delivery of Border-based Aid

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Abstract

Post-coup Myanmar faces a complex humanitarian emergency, compounded by extreme restrictions on humanitarian aid access. As aid flows from inside the country have become increasingly constrained there is a concomitant need for cross-border and border-based assistance, much of it delivered as low-profile and locally-negotiated 'quiet' aid. Such work has a long legacy in Myanmar but requires navigating multiple overlapping domains of law, regulation and governance. This includes formal legal requirements in multiple countries (border controls, banking regulations, organisational registration and financial compliance mechanisms), governance structures at multiple levels (EROs, local authorities, national authorities), and associated structural and spatial factors (demography, territory, geography). The result is a complex framework of opportunities and constraints that establishes different potential for cross-border assistance and different risks for the aid actors involved. This paper applies this analysis to examine diverse 'aid opportunity structures' to different regions of Myanmar and to recognise the dual significance of border spaces as both an enabling route for humanitarian access and a site of multi-topic, multi-scalar jurisdictional restrictions.