

Securing the Border, Constraining Aid: Chin Humanitarian Space in the India-Myanmar Borderlands

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Abstract

Drawing on humanitarian governance literature, this paper discusses the space for humanitarian action among Chin communities in the contested India-Burma borderlands. Based on key informant interviews conducted between August 2025 and February 2026 with internally displaced persons (IDP) leaders, diaspora representatives, and grassroots practitioners, the research identifies several factors that have shaped the capacity for and constraints on cross-border assistance. This includes India's restrictive border area regulations, a shortage of operational humanitarian actors, and persistent funding shortages. In contrast to some other ethnic communities from Myanmar, who have decades of institutionalized cross-border operations, the Chin have been unable to establish a unified umbrella organization for aid coordination. Despite this, diaspora networks and grassroots working groups exhibit significant resilience, channelling resources through informal pathways without legal recognition. This work is supported by a range of different actors, including at times a role for non-state armed groups in facilitating aid delivery. Assistance from India to Myanmar is also impacted by national regulations such as the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act with the result that previous access supply routes and capacity for cross-border assistance to Chin State (such as sustained communities during the 2008-2010 famine) have been disrupted. Funding remains fragmented among multiple actors due at least in part to such geopolitical and organizational constraints.