

Intersectional Resistance and Survival Economies Against Militarized Patriarchy: Progressive Grassroots Women's Organizing in Post-Coup Myanmar

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Abstract

The 2021 military coup in Myanmar significantly increased women's participation across multiple sectors compared with pre-coup levels. This paper examines emerging grassroots women-led organizations and their bottom-up resistance against militarized patriarchy within both the revolutionary movement and the military regime. Drawing on three theoretical lenses (intersectional feminism, feminist political economy, and militarized patriarchy), this study analyzes three organizations: Women's Alliance Burma (WAB), the Women's Organization of Political Prisoners (WOPP), and Women Internationalists of the Chin Hills (WITCH).

Methodologically, the research draws on qualitative fieldwork conducted from March to June 2026, including in-person interviews with leading members of the three organizations in Mae Sot, Mizoram and conflict-affected areas in Chin State, supplemented by online interviews where in-person access was not safe, and triangulated with academic and grey-literature sources.

From an intersectional feminist perspective, the study shows how women from rural, ethnic minority, working-class, and conflict-affected backgrounds experience overlapping forms of structural oppression while emerging as central actors in strikes, humanitarian aid, labor mobilization, prisoner support networks, and armed participation. Through feminist political economy, the paper documents how women-led groups build alternative survival economies through crowdfunding, donations, and informal aid networks to sustain internally displaced persons, families of political prisoners, and striking workers.

The findings demonstrate that these organizations construct collective resilience by converting informal women's labor into the material infrastructure of resistance while simultaneously destabilizing the gendered foundations of authoritarian rule. The paper's contribution is empirical, presenting three previously under-documented organizations from primary fieldwork, and theoretical, showing that Myanmar feminism exists as a plural ecosystem rather than a single coherent ideology.