

## **Research Impact: Tracing Contribution to Civilian Protection**

Gillian McKay

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### **Abstract**

This paper examines how research contributes to impact in contexts where formal safeguards have been eroded, with a focus on civilian protection in Myanmar. Using contribution analysis and nested actor-based theories of change, the study traces the key benefits of an international research collaboration on unarmed civilian protection (UCP) and community self-protection (CSP), Creating Safer Space (CSS). Through illustrative examples from four CSS projects across Myanmar – which analysed the diffusion and localisation of protection norms in Kachin and northern Shan states; community perceptions and coping strategies in Rakhine State; experiences of spontaneous UCP across central Myanmar and Chin and Kachin states; and protection dynamics affecting Myanmar refugees in northern Thailand – the paper suggests that research impact is not a linear process of knowledge production and uptake, but rather an ongoing, iterative, and relational contribution within dynamic protection landscapes. The aim is to understand how research contributes to protection practices, strategies, and discourse in Myanmar. The paper finds that CSS has generated tangible benefits for communities, practitioners, and researchers. By interrogating impact pathways across domains and stakeholder groups, and engaging critically with research impact literature, it highlights the importance of participatory engagement and offers empirical insight into how research can support civilian protection in Myanmar and other conflict-affected contexts.