

ROUNDTABLE

Sustaining Activism in Crisis: Psycho-Social Well-Being, Trust, and Community Work in Myanmar

Coordinator

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Roundtable Description

Myanmar has experienced overlapping crises characterised by armed conflict, political repression, economic collapse, and widespread displacement since the military coup in February 2021. Individuals, organisations, and institutions involved in social and political transformation have been placed under tremendous pressure as a result of these circumstances, which have caused severe psychological suffering and increasingly weakened social cohesion.

Long-term exposure to group-based violence and insecurity has compromised psychological well-being, trust, and collective resilience in addition to physical safety. Under extremely restrictive circumstances, community-based activism persists, with activists, women leaders, youth leaders, and civil society actors serving as social cohesion mediators but also enduring isolation, exhaustion, and cumulative trauma.

In this context, psychosocial well-being is not only a support service but a critical enabling condition for sustaining activism, rebuilding social ties, and supporting social change. This roundtable builds on findings from a qualitative research study conducted under SEM's Promoting a Culture of Peace and Sustainability in Myanmar (PCPSM) Programme, which examines the psychological and social dimensions of Myanmar's protracted conflict through a holistic, process-oriented psychosocial lens.

Rather than presenting fixed conclusions, this roundtable draws on the experiences of psychosocial support practitioners who have identified critical gaps in existing approaches. While individual support is essential, it is frequently insufficient to address the crisis's wider impact on Myanmar's communities, relationships, and social structures. These insights highlight the need for holistic approaches that consider community and structural factors, such as repairing trust, strengthening relationships, and promoting collective well-being. In response, emerging practices place a greater emphasis on community and trust building, collaborative reflection, and relational aspects of healing.

The purpose of this roundtable is to provide a space for reflection and exchange on how to better integrate these holistic approaches into psychosocial support practice, as well as explore how other fields can connect with and contribute to this integration to more effectively support resilient communities and sustain social change in Myanmar.

The roundtable will:

1. Explore the psychosocial impacts of protracted conflict and group-based violence on

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individuals, communities, and institutions engaged in Myanmar.

2. Exchange experiences on key challenges in providing psychosocial support amid displacement, insecurity, and restricted civic space.
3. Share emerging practices that expand psychosocial support toward more holistic approaches, including community-building, trust-building, and strengthening collective well-being among Myanmar people in Myanmar and Thailand.
4. Identify key lessons and opportunities to better integrate psychosocial support with other fields ?such as peacebuilding, conflict transformation, and others? to support resilient communities and sustain social change.

The roundtable will be structured to prioritise participation, peer exchange, and collective reflection, and will involve:

- Resource participants offering framing inputs grounded in lived experience
- Guided roundtable discussion
- Interactive engagement with participants

This roundtable contributes to Burma/Myanmar Studies and peace-building discourse by highlighting the often-invisible emotional, relational, and social labour that sustains social transformation. It offers grounded insights into how holistic psychosocial approaches can support resilience, activism, and social reintegration in protracted conflict settings, rooted in the lived experiences of those working within and alongside Myanmar communities.

Keyword: Psycho-Social Support, Holistic Well-Being, Social Transformation