

ROUNDTABLE

Beyond the State: Plural Health Systems, Border Resilience, and Governance in Post-Coup Myanmar

Coordinator

Sirada Khemanitthathai, Zarni

Roundtable Description

Since the 2021 military coup, Myanmar's public health landscape has fractured, creating a governance vacuum where state institutions are contested or absent in many regions. Rather than a complete collapse, the crisis has accelerated the emergence of plural and decentralized health systems led by ethnic health organizations, civil society networks, humanitarian actors, and cross-border partnerships. These actors are not only responding to emergency needs but are actively shaping new models of health governance and resilience.

This roundtable brings together practitioners and researchers from Community Partners International, Ethnic Health Organizations, Equal Health, REACH for Equity, and the Thai National Health Foundation to examine how health systems are evolving beyond conventional state structures. Through five interconnected presentations, the session explores governance without government, data sovereignty through localized surveillance systems such as EWARS, tele-health platforms bridging fragmented geographies, and cross-border policy frameworks that strengthen regional health security.

The discussion moves beyond humanitarian narratives by analyzing how current practices contribute to long-term Health Systems Strengthening (HSS) in conflict settings. Presentations highlight how investment in community-based workforce development, decentralized supply chains, and collaborative governance structures is laying the groundwork for future federal health arrangements in Myanmar. Particular attention is given to the Thai–Myanmar border as a critical space where humanitarian diplomacy, policy brokerage, and regional cooperation intersect.

Collectively, the roundtable argues that plural health systems are not temporary substitutes for state functions but represent evolving architectures of governance shaped by political realities and community agency. By examining operational experiences alongside policy analysis, the session contributes to broader debates on health and humanitarian politics in Southeast Asia and offers insights into how cross-border collaboration and non-state leadership can inform future global health governance in fragile contexts

Keyword: Plural Health Systems, Ethnic Health Organizations, Governance Beyond the State, Post-Coup Myanmar, Health Systems Strengthening in Conflict