

ROUNDTABLE

Intersectional Approaches to Survivor-Centered Justice Initiatives in Myanmar

Coordinator

Alicia Cook, Alicia Cook

Roundtable Description

OVERVIEW

In the wake of the 2021 military coup, Myanmar has entered a period of intensified armed conflict, economic collapse, mass displacement, and widespread human rights violations. While violence and repression affect broad segments of the population, their impacts are not evenly distributed. Women, LGBTQ+ communities, ethnic and religious minorities, migrant workers, and working-class populations face layered vulnerabilities shaped by the intersection of gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality, and geography. These intersecting inequalities influence not only exposure to harm, but also access to protection, services, and pathways to justice.

At the same time, survivor-centred justice initiatives have emerged and expanded across Myanmar and in borderlands and diasporic spaces. Women-led organizations, LGBTQ+ networks, ethnic health and social service providers, labor unions, and community-based documentation groups are developing locally grounded responses to sexual and gender-based violence, justice, arbitrary detention, and conflict-related abuses. These initiatives often operate outside formal state institutions, which are widely seen as illegitimate or inaccessible. Instead, they emphasize survivor agency, confidentiality, psychosocial support, community accountability, and transformative approaches to justice.

This roundtable brings together civil society activists, human rights defenders, and practitioners to examine how intersectional feminist and class-conscious frameworks are reshaping justice practices in Myanmar's current crisis. It asks how survivor-centred approaches challenge narrow, legalistic models of accountability and instead foreground lived experience, structural inequality, and collective care.

KEY QUESTIONS & THEMES

Participants will explore several interrelated questions:

- How do gender, class, ethnicity, and sexuality intersect to shape experiences of violence and marginalization in post-coup Myanmar?
- In what ways are grassroots and cross-border organizations adapting survivor-centred models to contexts of militarization, displacement, and resource scarcity?
- How are labor activism, feminist organizing, and ethnic resistance movements informing broader visions of transformative justice?

5th INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON
BURMA/MYANMAR STUDIES
14-16 August 2026, CHIANG MAI UNIVERSITY

- What ethical and methodological challenges arise in conducting survivor-centred research and documentation under conditions of insecurity and surveillance?
- How can scholars collaborate responsibly with community-based actors without reproducing extractive or hierarchical knowledge practices?

The discussion will highlight both the possibilities and limitations of community-driven justice initiatives, paying attention to tensions around representation, safety, funding, and political fragmentation.

FORMAT

The proposed 90-minute roundtable will feature 4-5 speakers representing Myanmar women-led and LGBTQ+ civil society organizations, federal unit stakeholders, and activists/practitioners engaged in survivor support and documentation work. Each participant will offer a brief opening reflection/position statement followed by moderated dialogue and audience engagement. The roundtable will be moderated by Legal Action Worldwide (LAW), an INGO of international legal practitioners currently working on justice and accountability in Myanmar.

The format prioritizes conversation across sectors and encourages reflection on shared challenges and strategies.

CONTRIBUTION

By centering intersectionality and survivor agency, this session contributes to ongoing debates about accountability, resistance, and knowledge production in Myanmar studies. It foregrounds voices and practices that are often marginalized in formal political processes yet are crucial to sustaining communities amid crisis. Ultimately, the roundtable seeks to illuminate how justice is being reimagined from below — through feminist, class-aware, and community-rooted initiatives that envision more inclusive and equitable futures for Myanmar.

Keyword: Intersectionality, Gender and Class, Survivor-Centred Justice, Human Rights, Transformative Justice