

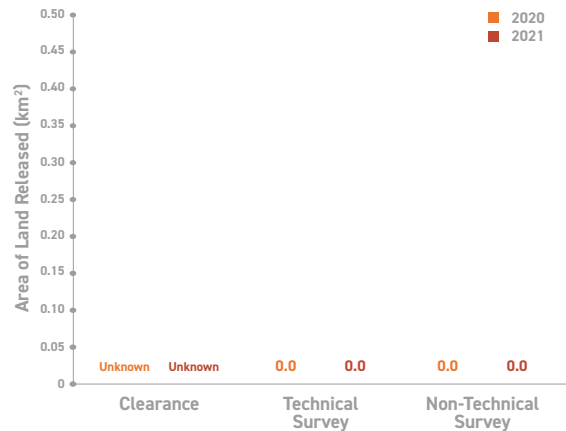
KEY DATA

ANTI-PERSONNEL (AP) MINE CONTAMINATION: UNKNOWN

AP MINE
CLEARANCE IN 2021
UNKNOWN

AP MINES
DESTROYED IN 2021
UNKNOWN

LAND RELEASE OUTPUT



KEY DEVELOPMENTS

A military coup d'état in February 2021 and the imposition of a one-year state of emergency disrupted the work of demining organisations and halted mine action sector discussions on setting up a national mine action authority. Escalating conflict caused a higher number of civilian casualties and pushed the number of internally displaced above one million. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) led the creation of a Mine Action Area of Operations in December 2021, which provided a platform for demining operators and humanitarian organisations to coordinate activities and share information.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Myanmar should accede to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) as a matter of priority.
- Myanmar's armed forces and armed ethnic organisations should halt the use of anti-personnel mines, including victim-activated mines of an improvised nature.
- Pending the creation of a credible national mine action authority international donors should ensure the Mine Action Area of Responsibility is sufficiently resourced to coordinate humanitarian demining organisations at the national and sub-national level; develop centralised data collection and information management; and provide more funding for mine action non-governmental organisations (NGOs).
- Mine action NGOs and their implementing partners should develop national standards for implementing and reporting permitted activities, including community-based assessments and non-technical survey.
- Relevant authorities in Myanmar should grant permission to humanitarian mine action organisations in the country to undertake surveys to identify and mark mined areas (using conventional marking systems), particularly where returns of internally displaced persons (IDPs) are planned.

DEMINING CAPACITY

MANAGEMENT CAPACITY

- Department of Rehabilitation (DoR)

NATIONAL OPERATORS

- Tatmadaw (Army)
- Unspecified ethnic armed entities/non-state armed groups
- Unspecified non-government organisations

INTERNATIONAL OPERATORS

- Danish Refugee Council Humanitarian and Disarmament and Peacebuilding Sector (DRC)
- Danish Church Aid (DCA)
- The HALO Trust
- Humanity and Inclusion (HI)
- Mines Advisory Group (MAG)
- Norwegian People's Aid (NPA)

OTHER ACTORS

- UNICEF

UNDERSTANDING OF AP MINE CONTAMINATION

Myanmar is heavily mine-affected as a result of conflicts between the Tatmadaw (army) and numerous non-state armed groups (NSAGs) affiliated with ethnic minorities. The conflicts started after the nation's independence in 1948 and continue with anti-personnel mines and victim-activated improvised devices continuing to be laid by government forces and NSAGs.¹

There is no accurate estimate of the extent of mine contamination but available data shows that nine out of the fourteen states and regions are contaminated with landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERW).² Mine contamination is concentrated in the states bordering Bangladesh, China, and Thailand. Landmine casualty data are not systematically collected in Myanmar but UNICEF monitoring of mine and ERW incidents found most casualties in 2021 occurred in Shan and Kachin states in the north and east of the country, in the western state of Rakhine, and in the south-eastern Kayin and Magway states. Other states experiencing mine/ERW casualties included Bago, Chin, Kayah, Mon, Sagaing and Tanintharyi.³

The Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar, established by the UN Human Rights Council,

reported in September 2019 that northern Myanmar is "heavily contaminated with landmines" and that the parties to the conflict, including the Tatmadaw, the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), the Restoration Council of Shan state (RCSS, formerly referred to as the Shan State Army South (SSA-S), and the Shan State Progressive Party (SSPP, formerly referred to as the Shan State Army North (SSA-N)), all continued to lay landmines and use improvised explosive devices (IEDs).⁴

Since the military coup of February 2021, the use of mines and IEDs has proliferated with the spread of resistance to military rule from People's Defence Forces. In 2021 and 2022, the Tatmadaw has been reported laying mines in to protect infrastructure such as pipelines and telecommunications towers.⁵ The Tatmadaw was also reported laying landmines "on a massive scale" in Kayah state using mainly M-14 and MM-2 anti-personnel mines that are manufactured by Myanmar's military to protect military positions and in areas from which troops were withdrawing. Troops were also reported placing mines around entrances to houses and on paths to rice fields.⁶

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

Myanmar has pursued a number of options for setting up a national mine action authority since 2012 but none had reached a conclusion before the military coup in February 2021. The Tatmadaw established a State Administration Council (SAC) to lead the government but as of August 2022 no mechanism had emerged for managing or coordinating mine action.

The government first set up a Myanmar Mine Action Centre under the Myanmar Peace Centre (MPC) in 2012 with support from Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), but the centre was never fully staffed. The MPC was dissolved at the end of March 2016 and replaced by a National Reconciliation and Peace Centre, which reported to the then head of government, State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi.⁷ In 2019 and early 2020,

1 Amnesty International, "Myanmar: Military's use of banned landmines in Kayah state amounts to war crimes", 20 July, 2022; "Myanmar: In reverse: Deteriorating Human Rights Situation, Report, January–February 2021, p. 8.

2 The Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor, Myanmar Burma Mine Ban Policy, Last updated 12 November 2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2Trv0m>.

3 UNICEF, Myanmar Landmines/ERW Incidents Information (2021), Factsheet (covering January–December 2021), at: <https://uni.cf/3cgxhWW>.

4 "Report of the Detailed Findings of the Independent International Fact Finding Mission on Myanmar", UN doc. A/HRC/42/CRP.5, 16 September 2019, pp. 155–58.

5 See, e.g., "Myanmar junta lays landmines around Chinese-backed pipelines", *The Irrawaddy*, 21 January 2022; G. Moeller, "Myanmar military lays landmines around Telenor's telecoms towers", *ScandAsia*, 8 November 2021.

6 Amnesty International, "Myanmar: Military's use of banned landmines in Kayah State amounts to war crimes", 20 July 2022.

7 R. Fasth and P. Simon, "Mine Action in Myanmar", *Journal of Mine Action*, Issue 19.2 (July 2015).

Myanmar was making progress towards establishing an NMAA, which is needed to strengthen its humanitarian mine action programme. The government told the Fourth Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) Review Conference in November 2019 that “Myanmar will as soon as feasible establish the needed national legislation to establish a national mine action authority.”⁸

Myanmar held an international workshop on how to establish an NMAA to lead and manage a humanitarian mine action programme in Nay Pyi Taw in October 2019, attended by the Tatmadaw, humanitarian mine action non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Myanmar, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Mine Action Centre (ARMAC), the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD), and several ambassadors.⁹ Discussions focused on which ministries would form part of a future NMAA and the mechanisms for establishing the Authority.¹⁰ An interministerial meeting on 3 January 2020, attended by 14 different ministries including the Ministry of Defence, agreed in principle to establish an NMAA.¹¹

The government then created an interministerial task force in 2020 to work towards setting up the NMAA.¹² Myanmar informed the 18th Meeting of States Parties to the APMBC in November 2020 that it had set up a Mine Action Working Group in May 2020 as “the first step towards formulating a National Strategy and Plan of Action for mine clearance”.¹³ However, momentum was lost with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting shift in government priorities, and was further eclipsed by government elections in November 2020.¹⁴

A Department of Rehabilitation (DoR) created in 2018 gradually took over responsibility for overseeing mine action operators and their activities. Operators found the DoR cooperative and engaged.¹⁵ As the department charged with implementing the government’s “National Strategy on Resettlement of IDP Return and Closure of IDP Camps”, it was said to be committed to acquiring approvals needed to allow humanitarian demining to begin, but it was also felt to lack the capacity needed to tackle national-level issues such as creating an NMAA and mine action legislation. In November 2020, the DoR’s Director General announced during a mine

risk working group (MRWG) meeting that it had finalised the vision and terms-of-reference of a working committee that was to be set up prior to the establishment of an NMAA and had submitted it to the President office for consideration. No concrete results emerged by the time the Tatmadaw took over the government in February 2021. Since then, operators have followed a policy of non-engagement with the DoR.¹⁶

Meetings of the MRWG also came to a halt after February 2021. The SAC expressed interest in establishing a new MRWG in April 2022 but engagement between the government and humanitarian actors has remained largely frozen and no further action had followed on the issue.¹⁷

In response to mounting conflict and casualties, UNICEF led the creation of a Mine Action Area of Responsibility (MA AoR) in December 2021 “to ensure predictable, accountable and effective responses to the threat posed by landmines and explosive remnants of war in Myanmar” and to ensure that “action on mines is at the centre of humanitarian planning and responses.”¹⁸ Demining organisations endorsed the terms of reference. The MA AoR has met monthly in 2022, attended by demining organisations, NGOs, and UN humanitarian agencies, reviewing developments, displacement trends and available data. Meetings were co-chaired by Mines Advisory Group (MAG) in the first six months with the position due to rotate every half-year between international and national organisations every six months. Sub-national coordinating bodies were set up for Rakhine state, the South East (Kayin, Tarintharyi and Mon states) and Kachin state.¹⁹

At the Fourth APMBC Review Conference in November 2019, Myanmar acknowledged that mine action “is a precondition for safe return and resettlement of internally displaced people (IDPs), and sustainable and durable solutions.” It declared that the government was “finding practical ways to move forward to closing the IDP camps using this national strategy” and that it aimed “to start humanitarian demining in non-conflict areas as a part of this camp closure strategy”.²⁰ That position and any consideration of how to put it into practice has been eclipsed by the February 2021 military coup and the subsequent intensification of conflict resulting a sharp rise in the number of IDPs.

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES AND ACTION

It is not known how, if at all, the environment is taken into consideration during planning and tasking of survey and clearance of mines in Myanmar in order to minimise potential harm.

8 Statement of Myanmar, Fourth APMBC Review Conference, Oslo, 25–29 November 2019.

9 Ibid.; and emails from Bekim Shala, Country Director, Mines Advisory Group (MAG), 13 April 2020; Geoff Moynan, Programme Manager, HALO Trust, 8 May 2020; and “Multi-stakeholder workshop on establishing a National Mine Action Authority in Myanmar”, ARMAC, 30 October 2019, at: <http://bit.ly/2An5L6H>.

10 Email from Bekim Shala, MAG, 13 April 2020.

11 Interview with Win Naing Tun, Department of Rehabilitation, MSWRR, Geneva, 14 February 2020; and email from Kyaw Lin Htut, Programme Manager, NPA, 3 April 2020.

12 Interview with Win Naing Tun, Department of Rehabilitation, MSWRR, Geneva, 14 February 2020; email from Hilde Jørgensen, Programme Manager – Humanitarian Mine Action, NPA, 27 May 2021.

13 Statement of Myanmar, 18MSP, Geneva 16–20 November 2020.

14 Email from Hilde Jørgensen, NPA, 27 May 2021.

15 Email from Liam Harvey, Programme Manager, DRC, 21 April 20.

16 Email from Matthew Walsh, Head of Humanitarian Response and Mine Action, DCA, 22 April 2021.

17 Email from mine action stakeholders, August 2022.

18 UNICEF Myanmar Country Office Situation Report No. 6, 5 August 2022.

19 Email from Kim Warren, Coordinator, MA AoR, 11 August 2022, zoom interview, 12 August 2022.

20 Statement of Myanmar, Fourth APMBC Review Conference, Oslo, 25–29 November 2019.

GENDER AND DIVERSITY

DanChurchAid (DCA) has had a gender and diversity policy and implementation plan in place in Myanmar. In 2020, the last year for which it provided information, women made up 60% of DCA's programme staff and 50% of managerial positions were held by women. In addition, 87% of operational staff in 2020 were women.²¹

DRC reported in 2021 that it had a gender and diversity policy and implementation plan. It also disaggregates relevant mine action data by sex and age, and has gender-balanced survey and community liaison teams to help ensure women and children in affected communities are consulted as part of its survey and community liaison activities in Myanmar. There is equal access to employment for women and men at DRC, and in 2020, the last year for which it provided information, 58% of DRC's managerial/supervisory positions were held by women.²²

The HALO Trust has a gender and diversity policy and implementation plan specific to its work in Myanmar. HALO consults all gender and age groups during community liaison, with community liaison teams gender-balanced as far as possible. HALO disaggregates relevant mine action data by gender and age.²³ There is equal access to employment for qualified women and men in HALO survey and community liaison teams in Myanmar. HALO Trust reported that 31% of its 52 personnel working in Myanmar in 2021 were women.²⁴

MAG pursues a gender and diversity policy focused on

gender-balanced community liaison teams, equal participation by women in all MAG activities, and producing gender- and age-disaggregated data.²⁵ MAG employed a majority of women in 2021 with 22 female staff, including seven in management positions, and 19 male staff. It seeks to ensure its community liaison teams are gender balanced and also to recruit staff from a variety of different ethnic groups to be able to communicate in local languages.²⁶ MAG reported that women are always consulted during surveys and to help ensure this, the organisation asks village leaders to gather a mixed group of local women and men to avoid the tendency for village leaders to only recommend local men for consultation.²⁷

NPA has a gender and diversity policy and implementation plan, and relevant mine action data are disaggregated by sex and age. NPA consults with women and children during its non-technical survey and explosive ordnance risk education (EORE) operations in Myanmar. All non-technical survey teams are at least 50% female, and teams are fluent in the local languages of the area of operations. There is equal access to employment for qualified women and men in NPA survey teams in Myanmar.²⁸ In 2021, women made up 45% of its national staff and 44% of its operations staff. The programme was led by an expatriate woman manager until October 2021 when the position was nationalised and NPA's single field supervisor was also a woman. All teams are recruited from local communities enabling communication in local languages.²⁹

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

Myanmar does not have a centralised mine action information management database. Data collection and information management was included as one of the six main priorities of the 2018–19 MRWG strategic work plan.³⁰ It was hoped that a national database would be set up once an NMAA was established³¹ but that process stalled after the February 2021 coup.

The MA AoR ranks improving information management as a top objective and specifically creating a comprehensive mine victim information system. In the meantime, UNICEF collects victim data quarterly from open sources but the number of victims is believed to significantly exceed that recorded in available data.³²

DCA does not conduct direct non-technical survey but trains partner organisations how to do so. DCA partners maintain data in Microsoft (MS) Excel, MS Word, and Google Earth. As at April 2021, DCA had a project with a component related to information management which sought to build partners to capacity to gather, input, manage, and analyse data. The project was delayed due to the coup, but DCA was still planning to introduce Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) Core to its partners, and train them on its use. DCA also intended to better coordinate with the NTSWG in 2021 to achieve this.³³

21 Email from Matthew Walsh, DCA, 22 April 2021.

22 Email from Liam Harvey, DRC, 21 April 2021.

23 Email from Julie Utting, HALO Trust, 28 September 2022.

24 Email from Julie Utting, HALO Trust, 10 May 2022.

25 Emails from Bekim Shala, MAG, 13 April 2020, and from Sofia Raineri, MAG, 8 August 2022.

26 Email from Sofia Raineri, MAG, 8 August 2022.

27 Email from Bekim Shala, MAG, 13 April 2020.

28 Email from Kyaw Lin Htut, NPA, Programme Officer, 3 April 2020.

29 Email from Kyaw Lin Htut, NPA, 22 August 2022.

30 Email from Matthew Walsh, DCA, 22 April 2021.

31 Emails from Bekim Shala, MAG, 13 April 2020; Fabrice Vandeputte, HI, 8 May 2020; Kyaw Lin Htut, NPA, 3 April 2020; and Liam Harvey, DRC, 22 May 2020; and Matthew Walsh, DCA, 22 April 2021.

32 Email from Kim Warren, MA AoR, 11 August 2022, zoom interview, 12 August 2022.

33 Email from Matthew Walsh, DCA, 22 April 2021.

DRC uses the Fulcrum information management system.³⁴ The HALO Trust's information management system is also Fulcrum, with data recorded in Microsoft Access.³⁵ MAG is using Survey123 for data collection and ArcMAP for mapping and GPS services, both provided by ArcGIS. MAG upgraded its information management systems in 2020 by switching to MAG's new global IM system which is on the ESRI platform and is called Operations Management Information Systems (OMIS).³⁶

NPA Myanmar and its partner organisations also use Survey123 in the collection of non-technical survey information and all survey data are recorded digitally, including polygon mapping directly via Survey123, with hard copy sketch maps drawn as a back-up. This enabled "live" quality control (QC) checking by NPA Myanmar's information management officer.³⁷

PLANNING AND TASKING

In the absence of a national mine action authority, Myanmar has not formulated national or state level plans for mine action.

The MA AoR drew up a strategic plan setting out general goals for the sector, including improving information management, risk education, victim assistance, improving coordination, and developing advocacy to raise the profile of humanitarian demining operators in Myanmar and attract more funding for delivery of protection services. In the first six months of 2022, MA AoR members reportedly provided training on explosive ordnance risk to approximately 150,000 people, of whom 68,434 were children.³⁸

Operators are not tasked by central authorities but liaise with local communities in their operating areas to identify tasks.³⁹ The location of armed clashes and displacement as well as results of community survey helped operators to determine priorities.⁴⁰

LAND RELEASE SYSTEM

STANDARDS AND LAND RELEASE EFFICIENCY

Historically, Myanmar has not had national standards and therefore operators have followed International Mine Action Standards (IMAS) and their own standard operating procedures (SOPs). Operators are not permitted to conduct technical survey, clearance or explosive ordnance disposal so the focus of the mine action sector is on developing standards for permitted activities.

Tentative steps to develop national standards saw the drafting of a first national standard on marking, which was approved by the government in January 2020. A Non-technical Survey Working Group also worked on a standard for non-technical survey in 2020, led by the Mine Action Advisor from the New Zealand Embassy,⁴¹ but the group had not finalised and approved the standard by the February 2021 coup which suspended discussions on national standards.

The government agreed in 2018 that physical marking (with warning signs) and fencing should be included as part of non-technical survey⁴² but implementation has been patchy. It also approved marking of polygons, though local authorities were also involved in the approval process.⁴³ DRC was not able to mark the hazardous areas it identified in 2020 as in the previous year, but many hazardous areas were identified in 2019 along electricity-cable base structures, which were already fenced off to prevent people from entering.⁴⁴

The HALO Trust received permission in 2020 for marking of hazardous areas by authorities in both north Shan and Kayin states, provided that the village chief agrees and conducted limited marking of CHAs with warning signs in local languages.⁴⁵ MAG received permission from the government to conduct fencing/marketing operations in early 2020 and recruited technical field staff to support the activity but did not conduct any fencing or marking in 2020 due to the movement and travel restrictions that persisted throughout the year in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.⁴⁶

34 Email from Liam Harvey, DRC, 21 April 2021.

35 Email from Stephen Hall, HALO Trust, 13 April 2021.

36 Email from Bekim Shala, MAG, 13 April 2020; and Sofia Raineri, MAG, 9 June 2021.

37 Email from Hilde Jørgensen, NPA, 27 May 2021.

38 UNICEF Myanmar Country Office, Situation Report No. 6, 5 August 2022.

39 Email from Julie Utting, HALO Trust, 10 May 2022.

40 Email from Sofia Raineri, MAG, 8 August 2022.

41 Email from Liam Harvey, DRC, 21 April 2021.

42 Emails from Liam Harvey, DRC, 21 April 2021; and Matthew Walsh, DCA, 22 April 2021.

43 Emails from Bekim Shala, MAG, 16 August 2019 and 26 May 2020; and Kyaw Lin Htut, NPA, 21 August 2019.

44 Emails from Liam Harvey, DRC, 22 May 2020 and 21 April 2021.

45 Emails from Geoff Moynan, HALO Trust, 8 May 2020; and Stephen Hall, HALO Trust, 13 April 2021.

46 Emails from Sofia Raineri, MAG, 9 and 22 June 2021.

OPERATORS AND OPERATIONAL TOOLS

Five international demining organisations (DCA, DRC, The HALO Trust, MAG, and NPA) have offices in Yangon and some provincial locations. Demining organisations are not permitted to conduct technical survey, clearance and therefore concentrate non-technical survey, risk education, and community liaison.

DCA works entirely through local partner organisations in Myanmar. DCA had around 15 formal partners in 2020, the last year for which it provided information, and supported a number of other small civil society organisations (CSOs) implementing EORE and victim assistance activities.

Prior to February 2021, DCA also worked closely with the Departments of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation on EORE activities. As at April 2021, DCA hoped to be able to provide non-technical survey training and implementation support to its partner organisations, though this was contingent on the political situation.⁴⁷

DRC had planned to start non-technical survey in Kachin and Shan states in 2020 but it was prevented from proceeding, first by COVID-19 restrictions and by political-security circumstances after February 2021. DRC in partnership with national CSOs conducted community liaison and mapping activities continued throughout 2020, the last year for which it provided information, and started conducting risk education in Rakhine state.⁴⁸

The HALO Trust's Myanmar programme had a total staff of 52 in 2021, including seven risk education teams with 30 personnel, working from five locations in three of the most heavily impacted states. Visa restrictions obstruction entry of international staff resulted in remote management of the programme. In addition to a headquarters in Yangon, it had team locations established in Lashio (Shan state), Myitkyina (Kachin state) and in Hpa-an (Kayin). In 2021 it added a small

sub-location at Thandaungyi (also Kayin state) and expected to maintain this structure in 2022. HALO Trust teams are dual-trained for non-technical survey and risk education but in view of COVID-19 restrictions focused on risk education in 2021. It delivered EORE mainly through household training sessions since group sessions were not permitted, reaching more than 42,000 people. It also developed a "train-the-trainer" course for two local partners to enable them to train community-based trainers. HALO started conducting household surveys pre- and post-risk education in 2021 to gauge the impact of its risk education activities.⁴⁹

MAG had six community liaison/EORE teams working in 2021 operating initially in Kayin, Tanintharyi and through partners in Kayah and Kachin states. After February 2021 MAG expanded operations to Chin state (Mindat, Paletwa, and Thantlang) and it added additional capacity in 2022 when it also set up operations in Rakhine. With the suspension of non-technical survey following the February 2021 coup MAG has focused on risk education and community-based assessments of the mine/explosive ordnance threats conducting community interviews to develop a view on the scale of contamination.⁵⁰

NPA shifted the focus of its operations in 2021 away from non-technical survey and preparing for land release to risk education and conflict protection and preparedness in response to the deteriorating security environment. It maintained a head office in Yangon and field offices co-located with partner organisations in the Bago region and Mon State but closed its office in Kachin state. Its activities were conducted by three teams with a total of sixteen staff trained for non-technical survey, risk education, and community liaison and included staff of partner organisations.⁵¹

DEMINER SAFETY

In March 2021, a Myanmar military airstrike in Kayin state hit an office of a DCA partner organisation causing material damage and loss of equipment. The military coup has profoundly impacted DCA's operations in Myanmar in terms of security, access to funding, government relations, visas, and travel authorisations.⁵²

In response to escalating conflict in Myanmar after the February coup, The HALO Trust introduced additional emergency procedures creating a more responsive security alert and monitoring system. Daily review of security and deployment is conducted. Information is collected from a range of sources to provide a comprehensive security analysis.⁵³

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND PROGRESS TOWARDS COMPLETION

Humanitarian mine action operators did not release any areas though survey or clearance in 2021. The HALO Trust and MAG had conducted non-technical survey identifying hazardous areas in 2020 but demining operators suspended that activity after the February 2021 military coup and limited survey activity to community-based assessments. Operators were not permitted to conduct technical survey, clearance, or explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) spot tasks by either the government or ethnic minority authorities.

47 Emails from Matthew Walsh, DCA, 22 April and 29 June 2021.

48 Email from Liam Harvey, DRC, 21 April 2021.

49 Email from Julie Utting, HALO Trust, 10 May 2022.

50 Email from Sofia Raineri, MAG, 8 August 2022.

51 Email from Kyaw Lin Htut, NPA, 22 August 2022.

52 Email from Matthew Walsh, DCA, 22 April 2021.

53 Email from Julie Utting, HALO Trust, 10 May 2022.