

**Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion
Knowledge Management Platform
Virtual Federal University**

Webinar Concept Note

Exploring Social Contracts in conflict-affected areas of Myanmar: A community level research approach

Proposed Date: 10 May 2023

Proposed Time: 13:00-14:30 (BST) / 14:00-15:30 (CEST) / 18.30-20:00 (MMT)

Format: Online via Zoom

Pre-registration required [via this link](#). Numbers limited.

This webinar is an opportunity for student researchers from Myanmar to share their findings from their research projects about the social contract of citizenship after the 2021 coup in Myanmar. It will also launch the webpage that showcases their work. The project was designed to shift traditional power dynamics and recognize the researchers as the experts with local knowledge best placed to influence the trajectory of developments in their communities. International participants will also be able to engage directly with researchers working in fragile and conflict affected settings in Myanmar and refugee areas. For the wider security and rule of law community, the webinar will provide space to learn, via a concrete example, how conflict affected youth can articulate their changing relationship with the state.

Target Audience

The event will draw in an international audience through the networks of Knowledge Management Platform and the Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion, including:

- international human rights and policy actors
- actors working on statelessness issues
- actors working on social contracts and related issues in other fragile and conflict-affected settings
- general audience students and other young people

Proposed Format

- Introduction by Messina at KMF (5 minutes)
- Overview of Myanmar context and research context: Hilary or Khine Zin and Natalie. (5 minutes)
- Presentation of findings by student research teams (total 40 minutes),
Topics include two or more of the following:
 - Access to Education of Children in IDP Camps: A case study in Southern Shan State
 - Violation of citizenship rights from the most conflicted areas in post-coup Myanmar
 - Becoming migrants and loss of citizenship rights after the coup – study of Myanmar migrants in Mae Sot, Thailand.
 - “You Belong with Me”: A research survey on public attitudes towards citizenship in Myanmar
- Interactive sessions between audience and research teams (30 minutes). 4 Breakout rooms covering the above topics. Each breakout room to include audience members, one student

research team, and one facilitator from the following group (Messina, Khine Zin, Hilary, Natalie, Deneisha)

- Roundup/feedback (5-10 minutes) Messina

About the project

Re-imagining the Social Contract of Citizenship in Federal Democratic Post-Coup Myanmar

In February 2021, Myanmar’s military leadership attempted to seize control of all state institutions from a civilian elected government in a coup d’etat, plunging the country into conflict and crisis. Opposition to the coup has been widespread, ranging from civil disobedience to armed resistance. Strategies have been developed to de-legitimise the coup-group. A parallel government has been set up under a newly established ‘Federal Democratic Charter’, which rejects the existing constitution that marginalises Myanmar’s ethnic minorities. The coup-group’s justice system and monopoly over the legitimate use of force/violence has been undermined by the opposition, who have established parallel security services, administrative and justice systems and government. The opposition movement seeks to deconstruct and reconstruct social contracts between Myanmar’s multi-ethnic populations and the central state, seeking a more democratic vision for the country. Meanwhile multiple conflicts between ethnic armed organisations and the Myanmar military have been reignited with territories and sectors of administration and governance, falling under control of local ethnic-based authorities with different visions of self-determination ranging from federalism to independence. Within this turmoil, social contracts are in a state of flux, simultaneously being re-imagined and re-practiced as a political reality. A vital aspect of reimagining social contracts is establishing an inclusive citizenship framework that embraces those previously excluded under the military’s exclusionary 1982 Citizenship Law. This project provides resources and support to indigenous knowledge production, by enabling Myanmar youths to explore the impact of the current authoritarian citizenship regime at the community level and begin to re-imagine what a more just and equal citizenship framework may look like. This project emphasises student participation and ownership and has two phases: Knowledge-Building and Research.

Knowledge-Building: Citizenship and Statelessness in International Contexts Course.

This phase of the project, which ran from 2021-2022, provided open-source learning materials, teaching and online peer-discussion sessions for students in and from Myanmar. It built on ISI’s knowledge-building experience and resources tailored to the Myanmar context. The Virtual Federal University (VFU) is a free education platform and community committed to critical education for federal democracy in Myanmar. Its student body, comprised of Myanmar students who are currently taking part in the democracy movement, coordinated the course, led discussion groups and translated the materials into Burmese, and other languages of Myanmar. The VFU Research Program supports students to design and conduct research that aims to understand urgent social and political challenges and inform practical solutions for a safe and equitable future. <https://www.federaluniversity.org/>

Community-level research: Reimagining Citizenship in Myanmar

This phase of the project, which ran from July 2022 to March 2023, brought together four teams of graduates from the phase one course, to conduct research related to citizenship and statelessness in their own communities. This phase was funded by KMF under their work relating to social contracts in fragile and conflict-affected settings. Researchers received training on qualitative and participatory research methodologies and developed their own projects focused on local Myanmar contexts in which people are at risk of statelessness or are unable to effectively exercise their citizenship. ISI and VFU provided a series of workshops to help the student researchers develop their skills and critical thinking relating to a federal and democratic future for Myanmar.