



ASPBAE STATEMENT OF SOLIDARITY WITH ITS MEMBERS AND THE PEOPLE OF MYANMAR

The Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE) stands in solidarity with its members in Myanmar, the Thinking Classroom Foundation and Equality Myanmar, in their resistance to and condemnation of the coup d'état staged by the Myanmar military on 1 February 2021 which deposed the country's democratically-elected leaders and subjected the country into a year-long state of emergency in flagrant disrespect of democratic processes.

The coup averted the convening of the newly-elected Parliament which would have had a stronger presence of the National League for Democracy (NLD). The NLD won a landslide victory in the November 2020 elections, which the military claimed was marred by widespread fraud despite the country's independent election commission having certified the results and international election observers having deemed the process to have been free and fair.

This brazen act of disregard for democratic principles and human rights by the Myanmar military breaks the tenuous transition to civilian rule started in 2011, after decades of an authoritarian military rule. It also comes at an already difficult time for people in the country reeling under the unprecedented adverse impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on their health, income, access to food, jobs and over-all well-being.

President Win Myint, State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi and hundreds of other political leaders, activists, students and journalists have since been arrested and deprived of their civil liberties. Strategic means of communications were shut down. A number of development workers were also cut off from their organizational headquarters outside the country, sowing an overall feeling of insecurity despite the critical role they play in supporting the country.

In the days following the military coup however, civilian protests and resistance emerged - a sign of hope and affirmation that the people of Myanmar are defying illegitimate military rule. Teachers and labour unions, youth and student groups organized peaceful demonstrations and many have participated in acts of civil disobedience. Civil servants walked out of their work, people in their homes banged pots and pans as a sign of protest, and citizens organised online resistance to the coup – urging everyone, within and outside the country to resist the military regime and defend democracy and human rights at all costs.

We in ASPBAE stand by our civil society members and partners in the country in their fight for democracy and human rights.

As a regional network of more than 200 civil society organisations and individuals operating in around 30 countries of the Asia-Pacific, ASPBAE's core beliefs are founded on the sanctity of human rights and democratic freedoms of the people. Further, through their right to transformative and liberating education and lifelong learning, the people should be

empowered with the essential means to combat poverty, fight all forms of discrimination and authoritarianism, build a culture of peace and enable them to actively participate in development and governance.

We therefore call on our members, partners and the international community to use their voices and influence to:

1. Stand in solidarity with the people of Myanmar and support all forms of solidarity actions that amplify the calls to restore democracy, human rights and people's well-being in the country.
2. Pressure the Myanmar military to end its unlawful seizure of power and immediately restore democracy and civilian rule in the country by upholding the results of November 2020 elections
3. Demand the immediate release of all detained leaders, activists, students and journalists by dropping all false charges against them and restore their civil liberties
4. Resist any effort by the military to impede or prevent the flow of support services delivered by local, national and international organisations especially to the most marginalised sectors - women and girls, children, ethnic minority groups, people with disabilities, those from the poor communities, the people affected by protracted civil wars in the various parts of the country, and those who continue to suffer from the impact of COVID-19 pandemic
5. Support and stand united with teachers and students who continue to join the efforts of the people and grassroots organisations in conducting various forms of resistance to challenge the military takeover of power

ASPBAE is committed to advancing democratic freedoms and human rights for all.

May courage and solidarity sustain the people of Myanmar and all who fight for the restoration of democracy.