

GPAJ Refugee Crisis Workshop

Date : March 15, 2024 20:00-21:30 (JST)

Presenters : Akiko ABE (GPAJ Member) and Humanitarian Experts at Thai-Myanmar Borders (Humanitarian Affairs, Women and Children Affairs, Food and Shelter, Livelihood Affairs, Education, Civil Society, Youth and Landmine Issues, among others)

Theme : From the Field of Borders-Current Situation and Challenges faced by the Displaced Populations at Thai-Myanmar Borders

The current situation and challenges of displaced people in Myanmar was presented to understand such a global humanitarian crisis with the first-hand experience faced by the local humanitarian experts mainly in the northern region of Myanmar. After a presentation regarding the ongoing support for each sector such as humanitarian needs including food, shelter and education as well as support for civil society, participants discussed future support needs and the type of support required from the international community including Japan. (There are estimated to be 17.6 million people in Myanmar who require humanitarian assistance, and 19.6 million people displaced by conflict.)

Currently, the humanitarian corridor has been proposed at the Thailand-Myanmar border area and humanitarian assistance led by the Thai Red Cross and Myanmar Redcross began on March 25th for the first time. On the other hand, some displaced communities and the humanitarian supporters have shared some concerns about safety and security issues for the displaced populations especially from the ethnic groups relocated in conflict affected communities at the borders.

Regarding the above-mentioned assistance, there were some field reports that some authorities were also providing assistance together with Myanmar Redcross in some areas, and displaced populations had been questioning the effectiveness of such humanitarian assistance from the beginning of this planning of the humanitarian assistance. Regarding these concerns, even before the aid was actually deployed, local humanitarian experts were appealing to the international community for assistance that should directly reach to the displaced populations by ongoing conflict. United Nations has also its own limitation to reach out to the areas of displaced populations at the borders due to its lack of access. Therefore, these humanitarian experts believe that necessary assistance are not reaching enough to the

people at the border areas where there are many ethnic groups in greater need of humanitarian assistance.

What can Japan and the international community do for such humanitarian crisis faced by the border in response to such a need? What is needed is to listen more carefully to the voices of the people on the ground, to help people become protected and empowered through self-reliance, and to cooperate with the international community to provide support in a variety of ways so that people can mutually help themselves in this crisis together with international community's continued support. Further continuation of this kind of dialogue between the people working in the field and the international community was requested among participants and the humanitarian experts also thanked for being able to share to the international community.

* Further Details can be found at International Development Journal (June, 2024) See attached.

Report from the Field (Photo taken and shared by Akiko ABE)



Seminar on Myanmar Issues organized by Thai Parliamentarians (March, 2024)



GPAJ Refugee Crisis Research Group listens to the communities at borders for their urgent humanitarian needs (March, 2024)



Reunion with Family of Refugees after many years (March, 2024)



Visit to the Refugees and Migrant Schools: Japanese Students shared “how to study in Japan”



Visit to Refugees and Migrant Schools: International Cultural Exchange made by Students.



Visit Child Dream's educational support for the displaced populations in Thailand.



Organized Refugee and Migrant Education Forum with Community Learning Centers at borders and discuss the way forward with University in Thailand together with Japanese students representatives.

Akiko ABE

Humanitarian, Development and Peacebuilding Policy and Programme Expert.

GPAJ Member of the Board of Directors.

Worked for various UN and other international cooperation assignments in peacebuilding, humanitarian and development field in a number of conflict affected countries in Southeast and South Asia as UN Volunteer, UN Staff and various Japanese aid agencies staff and consultants for almost 20 years in 8 countries. Currently continuing several consultancy work and volunteering assignment for international agencies and community organisations for the conflict sensitive humanitarian, peace and development programme planning and management. Conducting Ph.D. research for promoting human security and humanitarian and development assistance towards peacebuilding in conflict affected countries while conducting the field work and volunteering for peace and development in Asia such as Myanmar and Thai borders. Main publication includes 『Understanding Regional Dynamics in Asia-Pacific』 (Waseda Univ. and Beijing Univ, 2022)