

tool 37 Community-Led Monitoring in Southeastern Myanmar

Case study

A national NGO has been documenting a wide range of violations against rural populations in Southeastern Myanmar since 1992. Given the characteristics of the armed conflict in Myanmar and its impact on children, the NGO has documented grave violations against children and fed information into the MRM.

Documentation methodology: information is gathered through a network of community-based field researchers: individuals who are known and respected by their community and committed to the protection of human rights. Some of them receive financial or material support from the NGO; others act on a voluntary basis. Field researchers are trained to gather oral testimony, collect other forms of evidence of abuse (such as photos, video, official documents, etc.), cross-check information from multiple sources and assess the credibility of these sources and to report incidents to the NGO using standard forms (situation updates, incident reports).

Community-centered approach to human rights documentation: while the documentation methodology is structured and rigorous, the NGO's approach is to echo villagers concerns, rather than to pro-actively seek information on specific issues or violations. As such, field researchers are trained to ask open questions so that communities can express their concerns spontaneously. As community members, field researchers are also themselves encouraged to present their analysis of relevant local dynamics or recent events in their case reports and situation updates. This approach acknowledges and accepts that individual reports can never be 100 percent neutral, and rather seeks to mitigate subjectivity by gathering evidence from as many sources and perspectives as possible and articulating competing viewpoints.

Information processing: the work of field researchers generates a considerable amount of information on a wide range of issues. An Information Processing Team then assesses all data and requests, if necessary, a follow-up with relevant community members to clarify or confirm facts. The team then distills core issues for advocacy based on all information available and develops and disseminates advocacy materials, such as thematic reports, commentaries, press releases, incident reports, etc.

Feedback and motivation: the NGO gives periodic feedback to each field researcher on the quality of their reports and offers advice and recommendation for improvement where necessary. All field researchers meet annually and prizes are awarded to the best researchers for each category of reports.

related tools

-  tool 34 – Factsheet 'Opportunities and challenges of engaging with communities to monitor and respond to grave violations'