

**Press release - embargoed until (10 am Bangkok time) 19<sup>th</sup> February 2015**

**New report: Eastern Burma health recovery decades away**

A new report, based on the first large-scale health survey in eastern Burma since recent ceasefires, shows some improved health indicators, linked to programming of local ethnic health providers, but highlights that sustained improvements to the overall health of conflict-affected communities remain dependent on the peace and reform process, and may take decades.

The report, *The Long Road to Recovery*, based on data from 64 townships, with a target population of half a million people, shows decreased rates of malaria and maternal malnutrition, and improved patterns of breastfeeding. However, it also reveals that infant and child mortality rates in eastern Burma remain higher than the country's official figures, and are similar to other conflict-affected countries such as Somalia, reflecting the ongoing lack of protection and security despite ceasefires and large increases in humanitarian aid to Burma.

The survey was conducted by a network of ethnic and community-based health organizations, which, due to conflict and persecution, have developed their own primary health care service structures, outside the central government health system, through a network of rural clinics and mobile medical teams across eastern Burma.

Data shows that ethnic health groups are the main health care providers for these conflict affected communities. 70% of respondents accessed treatment from ethnic health organizations, and just 8% from government facilities. When seeking health care, 75% of respondents had to walk to the nearest health facility, taking on average an hour and a half.

“We have a long way to go in obtaining sustainable peace,” said Dr. Cynthia Maung, a co-author of the report. “To respond to the health challenges facing eastern Burma we must capitalize on the existing infrastructure built by ethnic and community-based health organizations.”

See the full report, *“The Long Road to Recovery: Ethnic and Community-based Health Organizations Leading the Way to Better Health in Eastern Burma,”* by the Health Information System Working Group at [www.hiswg.org](http://www.hiswg.org) (email: [hiswg.active@gmail.com](mailto:hiswg.active@gmail.com))

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