



Global Coalition to **Protect**
Education from Attack

The Impacts of Attacks on Education and Military Use in Myanmar



September 2022

Soldiers board a school bus outside a high school in Yangon in Myanmar on June 1, 2021. © 2021 Al Jazeera: Stringer/EPA

Summary

In 2020 and 2021, the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA) identified over 450 reported attacks on education and incidents of military use of schools, universities, and educational facilities in Myanmar by state armed forces and non-state armed groups,¹ the majority of which occurred after the military takeover on February 1, 2021.

Reported attacks on schools increased from approximately 10 in 2020 to around 190 in 2021, an increase of approximately 1,800 percent. Furthermore, GCPEA found that attacks on schools spread from at least three to 13 states and regions in Myanmar following the military takeover, with a peak in May 2021, and often involved the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects.

Military use of schools and universities was also pervasive in Myanmar and further threatened the safety and security of education. Military use alone can have grave consequences for education, since armed forces and armed groups often damage schools or universities while using them as a base or for other military purposes, and their presence places students and educators still attending the institutions at risk. Worth noting, however, is that military use can also provoke rival forces or armed groups to target the educational facility, yet further risking lives and damage. Military use may turn schools and universities into military objectives, rendering them lawful targets of attack during armed conflict.² In the data collected, GCPEA found that over a quarter of schools and universities used for military purposes in 2021 were subsequently targeted by rival forces or armed groups.

The widespread targeted attacks on, and military use of, schools, universities, and education infrastructure in Myanmar has created a hostile educational context for students, parents, and educators, who have found it increasingly challenging to make safe choices with regards to their learning, their children, and their jobs. GCPEA remains concerned about both the short and long-term consequences of this severe learning interruption and its broader implications for teaching and learning, from pre-primary through higher education.

Key recommendations

(full recommendations below)

- Armed actors should protect the civilian character of schools and universities and cease attacks and threats of attacks against students, teachers, academics, and educational facilities.
- Armed actors should refrain from using schools and universities for military purposes, including by implementing the [Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict](#).
- Non-state armed groups should sign and implement Geneva Call’s Deed of Commitment for the Protection of Children from the Effects of Armed Conflict, including as it relates to educational spaces.
- Armed actors should allow access for humanitarian actors delivering education to the most vulnerable children.
- Armed actors should refrain from politicizing education, and safeguard access to all levels of education.
- States and international justice mechanisms should support efforts to hold perpetrators of attacks on education accountable in impartial and independent courts.
- Education providers, humanitarian and development agencies, and donors should commit to supporting communities and local organizations to facilitate flexible ways to continue education.

Introduction

GCPEA has identified Myanmar among the countries most heavily affected by attacks on education in recent years.³ In 2020, GCPEA recorded at least 40 reported attacks on education or incidents of military use of schools and universities. The following year, GCPEA identified over 400 such incidents.⁴ The Myanmar military (Myanmar Armed Forces, also known as the Tatmadaw) and non-state armed groups, such as People's Defence Forces (PDFs) and ethnic armed organizations, as well as unidentified groups, were reported to have carried out these attacks.⁵ This case study details the geographic spread of attacks on education and military use over the 2020-2021 period, as well as the increase in military use of educational facilities. GCPEA found that over a quarter of schools and universities that were used for military purposes in 2021 experienced a subsequent attack.

Attacks on, and military use of, schools and universities, continued into 2022. For example, the United Nations (UN) documented 320 cases of the use of schools by armed groups, and 260 attacks on schools or school personnel, between February 2021 and March 2022.⁶ In addition, Save the Children reported seven attacks on schools and education offices involving explosive weapons in April 2022.⁷ There are also long-term impacts: military use and fighting near schools and universities increase the risks for students and educators associated with explosive remnants of war, including unexploded ordnance (UXO). The UN reported that Myanmar has experienced increased UXO contamination, affecting an increasing number of regions and states, since February 2021.⁸

The use of schools and universities by armed forces or groups, along with the subsequent targeting of these schools, places education in the crossfire. In Myanmar, this has resulted in the injury and killing of teachers, students, and other civilians, as well as the destruction of educational infrastructure. Analyzing violence against children and deprivations to their education, health, and development, the UN special rapporteur on Myanmar concluded in his June 2022 report, "The junta's violent assaults on children...likely constitute crimes against humanity and war crimes."⁹

Adding to this, education became politicized during protests against the military junta, which created a culture of fear around attending school or university. Combined, these attacks on and the politicization of education, meant not only direct harm to students and teachers, but also significantly reduced school attendance. In response to attacks, politicization, and Covid-19, education providers have taken significant steps to ensure safe access to learning in this context, some of which are detailed below.

Using data collected from media, UN, and non-governmental organization (NGO) sources, this case study uses GCPEA's [Toolkit for Collecting and Analyzing Data on Attacks on Education](#) to analyze attacks on schools and universities and military use of educational facilities in 2020 and 2021.

Armed conflict and attacks on education in Myanmar in 2020 and 2021

Based on allegations of voter fraud, the Myanmar military overthrew the democratically elected civilian government in February 2021.¹⁰ Protests against the military junta, as part of the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM), erupted throughout the country, and, in response, the military targeted CDM supporters, which included teachers, students, and university staff.¹¹ Following the military takeover, hostilities between the Myanmar military, various ethnic armed organizations, as well as People's Defence Forces (PDF), escalated, and continued into 2022.¹² Local PDFs are often either officially or unofficially aligned with the National Unity Government (NUG), an alliance of politicians, and, in some cases, with ethnic armed organizations.¹³ At the time of writing, most of the NUG members were reported to be in exile.¹⁴ In addition, unidentified armed groups and armed actors also carried out attacks on civilians.¹⁵

The escalating violence increased barriers to education for students in the country. For example, the army reportedly used force on teachers and administrators when occupying several schools and universities.¹⁶ In addition, by late May 2021, the junta had suspended over 19,000 university faculty members and over 125,000 school teachers.¹⁷ In June 2021, 90 percent of parents and students reportedly boycotted the planned reopening of schools under the military junta.¹⁸

Escalating conflict added to the challenges already faced by the education sector due to Covid-19-related school closures, which left over 12 million children and adolescents without access to “organized learning” between March 2020 and at least June 2021,¹⁹ when schools remained closed.²⁰ In June 2022, school enrolment was reportedly 80 percent lower than it was two years previously, with 7.8 million children out of school.²¹

Both the CDM protesters and military made demands on students, teachers, and educational staff, which sometimes escalated into attacks. The CDM pressured students and staff to join the movement, while the military pressured them to return to school.²² For students and educators, the decision to attend or boycott school became politicized, often with serious consequences.²³ For students and staff alike, not attending school or university could be seen as an affront to the military's authority, causing repercussions such as arbitrary arrest or threats. In other cases, university students who supported the CDM reported fearing a return to class due to the possibility of being arrested or targeted by the military on the basis of that affiliation.²⁴ In yet other instances, some school teachers who wanted to return to work for economic reasons were reportedly targeted for their alleged disloyalty towards the CDM.²⁵

Security forces also reportedly used Covid-19 containment measures to survey student and teacher behavior, in certain instances. For example, a student at Dagon University in Yangon remarked that Covid-19 identification and temperature checks provided the soldiers at the university with the opportunity to search the bags of the students at the university gates.²⁶ In addition, the NUG stated that it would not recognize degrees, diplomas, and certificates issued by schools under the military junta, further challenging access to and continuity of education.²⁷

Attacks on schools

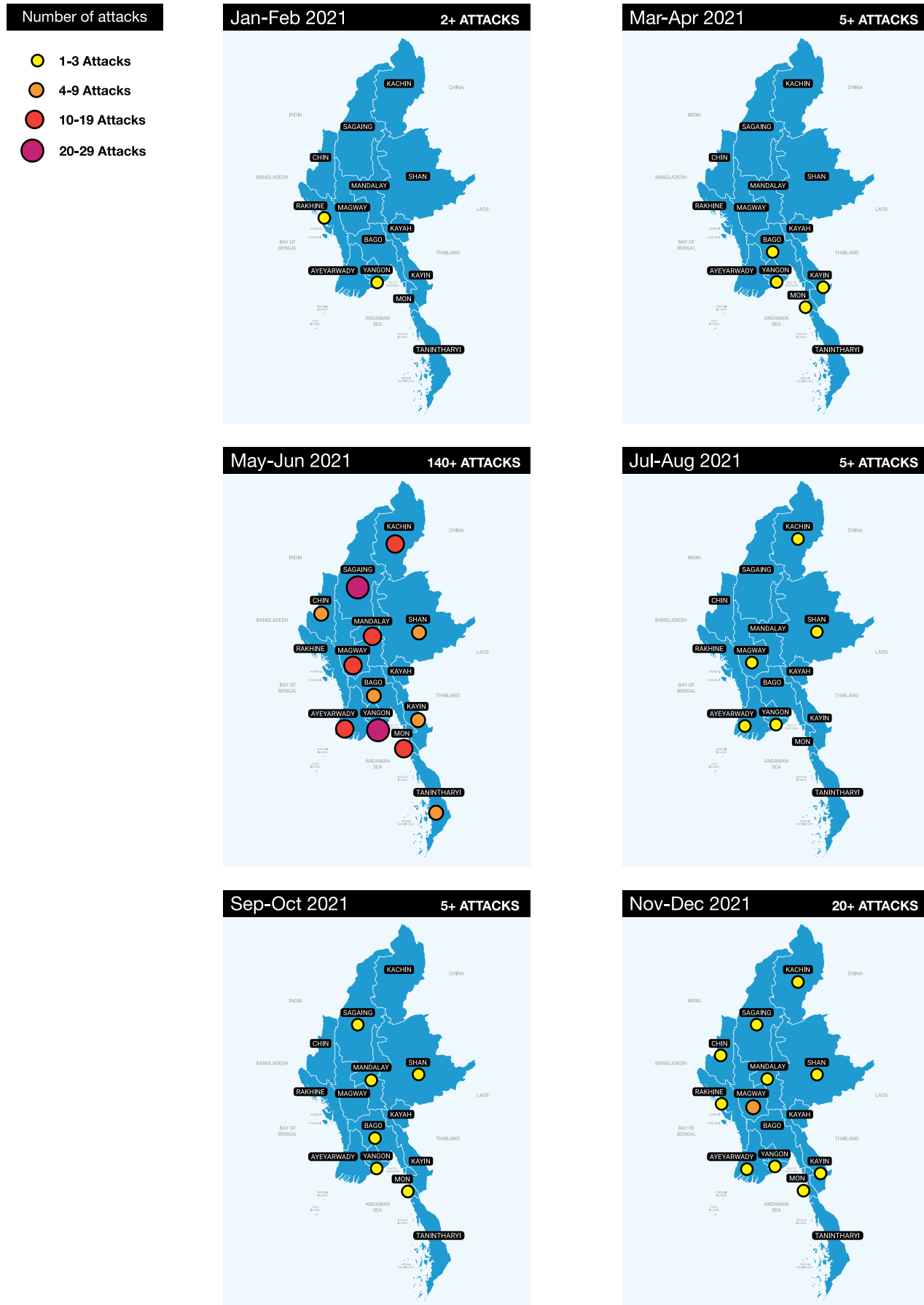
In 2020 and 2021, GCPEA collected at least 200 reported attacks on schools.²⁸ The UN verified ten attacks on schools in 2020, while GCPEA identified at least 190 reported incidents of attacks on schools in 2021.²⁹ Attacks on schools include targeted and indiscriminate use of force by the Myanmar military and related militias, other state security forces, and non-state armed groups on pre, primary, and secondary schools, as well as other education infrastructure, such as administrative buildings or offices. Examples include arson, airstrikes, shelling, threats of violent attack, and crossfire.

GCPEA found that attacks on schools increased significantly following the February 2021 military takeover. Attacks peaked in May 2021, when Save the Children reported that more than 100 schools and education facilities were attacked, primarily with explosive weapons.³⁰ GCPEA identified news and NGO reports which enabled a geographic breakdown of attacks and found that Sagaing state and Yangon and Magway regions were the most impacted in May 2021.³¹ (See Figure 1).

The increase in attacks on schools in May and June 2021 coincided with the military junta's announcement that universities and schools would reopen after Covid-19-related closures, on May 5, and June 1, 2021, respectively.³² The Myanmar military and police were reportedly operating in and around schools at this time.³³ The CDM organized widespread protests against the reopenings; furthermore, armed groups increasingly targeted schools during May and June to deter students and teachers from returning to schools controlled by the military junta. For example, in June 2021, in Kachin state, an unidentified armed group reportedly detonated two explosive devices underneath a school registration desk.³⁴ The UN reported that high schools began to reopen in July but closed again in August; schools officially reopened in November 2021.³⁵

Attacks on schools also occurred in more administrative divisions in 2021 than in the prior year. In 2021, at least 13 regions and states were impacted by attacks on schools, with Yangon, Sagaing, Magway, Ayeyarwady, and Mon experiencing the highest number of attacks (see Figure 1). This represents a geographic shift from 2020, when far fewer divisions were affected by attacks on schools, namely Kayin, Rakhine, and Chin states. In 2020 and 2021, the most prevalent forms of attack on schools in Myanmar were explosives, arson, and nearby armed clashes.

FIGURE 1.
Maps of reported attacks on schools in Myanmar in 2021



Attacks on higher education

In 2020 and 2021, GCPEA identified at least 19 reported incidents of attacks on higher education. Of these, 11 were attacks on university facilities and eight were attacks on university students or staff. All but one of these reported events occurred in 2021.

Following the February 2021 military takeover, university students and faculty regularly participated in nationwide protests, both on and off campus. The military responded to these protests with detentions, violent force, and, in some cases, by occupying and raiding universities. For example, Scholars at Risk reported that security forces wearing civilian attire arrested a faculty member of University of Yangon, in Yangon city, on March 2, 2021. The arrest allegedly occurred at the campus gates where students and staff had met to protest; police also used force to disperse the remaining protesters.³⁶ A number of attacks on higher education facilities involving the use of explosive weapons also occurred in May 2021 when universities were reopening.³⁷ For example, local media reported that an armed group claimed responsibility for a bomb explosion at the Taunggyi Technical University on May 14, 2021.³⁸

Universities in Mandalay Region

Over a quarter of reported attacks on higher education facilities and personnel, as well as the military use of these facilities, occurred in Mandalay region, where high numbers of student protests took place. For example, shortly after the military takeover began, students protested outside the campus gates of the University of Medicine in Mandalay, after which police arrived and detained a number of participants.³⁹ Several days later, on February 14, 2021, around 20 soldiers raided the Myanmar Aerospace Engineering University in Meiktila, Mandalay region, to threaten against anti-junta protests.⁴⁰ Authorities also reportedly terminated the contracts of 245 faculty from Mandalay University.⁴¹ On March 7, 2021, soldiers forcibly entered Mandalay Technical University in Mandalay city and shot teargas and rubber bullets to vacate students and staff from the campus.⁴² Local media reported that, between March 6 and 8, 2021, the military occupied all universities in Mandalay city for use as bases.⁴³

Military use of schools, universities, and education facilities

Globally, around 40 percent of all reported military use of schools, universities, and other education facilities, occurred in Myanmar in 2020 and 2021, according to Education under Attack 2022.⁴⁴ After approximately 30 incidents in 2020,⁴⁵ Myanmar saw a sharp increase in military use from March 2021 onwards,⁴⁶ when the military and armed groups used education facilities primarily as bases, but also for detention, weapons storage, and fighting positions.⁴⁷ Between February and September 2021 alone, the UN reported that 176 education facilities were used by security forces.⁴⁸

Military use occurs when armed forces, other state security forces, or non-state armed groups partially or fully occupy schools or universities and use them for purposes that support a military effort. The military use of schools and universities can compromise their protection as civilian objects under international humanitarian law; it may turn them into military objectives, rendering them lawful targets of attack during armed conflict.⁴⁹

GCPEA identified evidence of the military strategically and systematically using universities as bases. For example, in March 2021, in the context of widespread CDM protests, the Myanmar military reportedly coordinated a deployment of troops to occupy and establish bases in public buildings across the country, including universities.⁵⁰ GCPEA identified reports of the military use of 23 universities in Myanmar between March 6 and March 9, 2021.⁵¹

In Myanmar, GCPEA found evidence that armed forces and armed groups occupied some schools and universities for long-term use as military bases; for example, local media reported that military soldiers were stationed at a school in Chan Mya Thar Si, Mandalay region, between at least mid-September and October 11, 2021.⁵² In other cases, the deployments were temporary or reactive to armed clashes; for example, on May 12, 2021, more than 100 soldiers reportedly took up positions in a high school building in Thamin Chan village, Sagaing region, for five days, following shootouts with civilian resistance forces the week prior.⁵³

In some cases of military use in Myanmar, one or two soldiers or fighters used an educational facility as a firing position, and in others, hundreds of troops were stationed at a school or university, using it as a base. For example, on September 26, 2021, local media reported that the military reinforced its presence at a high school in Mandalay region with five military vehicles and about 200 troops.⁵⁴

Military use increased risk of turning schools and universities into targets

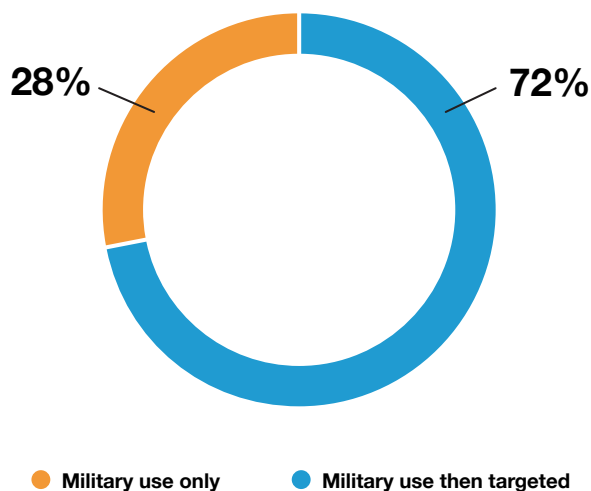
In July 2021, the UN reported instances of security forces using schools for military purposes which subsequently sustained damage during military actions.⁵⁵ GCPEA also recorded incidents of the use of educational facilities for military purposes which were later targeted, either by the military or by armed groups. GCPEA identified over 80 reported incidents of military use of schools and universities across 12 regions of Myanmar in 2020 and 2021, with the majority occurring between February and December 2021.⁵⁶ GCPEA found that over a quarter of schools and universities that experienced military use were later targeted in 2021 (see Figure 2). Of the

relatively few incidents of military use that GCPEA recorded in 2020, there were no incidents where educational facilities were subsequently targeted.

GCPEA identified a number of incidents of schools targeted by rival armed forces or armed groups while occupied. For example, a bomb reportedly exploded on August 13, 2021, inside the compound of No. 3 Basic Education High School, in Mandalay region, where Myanmar military forces were positioned.⁵⁷ Also, on June 22, 2021, in Mandalay region, Myanmar military troops reportedly raided a boarding school that was being used as a base by an armed group. This raid resulted in an exchange of gunfire, as well as casualties, and arrests.⁵⁸

Some universities were also targeted while being used by state armed forces or armed groups. For example, local media reported that, between December 23, 2021, and December 27, 2021, armed clashes allegedly occurred between PDF fighters and Myanmar military troops stationed at Kalay Technological University, in Sagaing region.⁵⁹

FIGURE 2.
Proportion of schools and universities used for military purposes then targeted in Myanmar, 2021



Sample size 85 reported incidents; 24 incidents occurred in which schools or universities were used for military purposes and targeted in 2021 (22 schools and two universities); 61 incidents occurred in which schools or universities were used for military purposes but were not targeted.

Impacts of conflict and Covid-19 on schools and universities

Over a year of Covid-19-related school closures, which began before the military takeover, and subsequent violence surrounding schools and universities, has severely impacted the educational system in Myanmar. A UN report estimated that approximately 12 million children missed school for at least 18 months due to the combined impact of the pandemic, the anti-junta protests, and ongoing conflict. The unprecedented use of, and attacks on, schools and universities has destroyed physical infrastructure, reduced teaching and personnel capacity, fostered fear in students and families, and created an environment of violence around learning.⁶⁰ For students who returned when schools reopened in November 2021, the quality of education was reported to have deteriorated due to staff shortages and lowered quality of teaching⁶¹ and, in conflict-affected areas, continued interruptions due to clashes between armed groups and the military.⁶² The UN found that the lack of educational access for children had long-term impacts, including emotional distress, higher likelihood of resorting to violence, reduced earning potential, and increased vulnerability to trafficking, child marriage, and child labor.⁶³

The military use of schools, and even the nearby presence of military troops, may reduce school attendance. According to a UN report, some parents in Myanmar were reluctant to send their children to school due to fear of the military personnel stationed at or nearby schools.⁶⁴ News outlets also reported that schools operating under the military junta could be targeted in attacks by rival armed groups.⁶⁵

“I haven’t been to school since they closed due to COVID. I was a Grade 6 student before COVID. Due to the fighting, and unstable situation, teachers didn’t go back to our school and the village. There have been no teachers in my village since the fighting began. I think they have also had to flee and hide in a safe place like us due to the fighting. I now live in a temporary tent in a jungle after fleeing from my village.” - Kyi, 14 years old, Magway region⁶⁶

Violence following the military takeover also affected the attendance rates of university students and faculty. Scholars at Risk, in the Free to Think 2021 report, noted that many academics and higher education personnel were suspended due to their suspected participation in CDM protests. Ahead of scheduled university reopenings, in May 2021, university faculty and staff were asked to sign a pledge to affirm no future participation in the CDM.⁶⁷ Subsequent university reopenings in June 2021 also resulted in widespread protests, and the junta stationed military forces and other security forces at universities across the country.⁶⁸ Media outlets reported that only a fraction of university students attended classes after their institutions reopened.⁶⁹

Continuing education during conflict

Though there have been significant challenges in the educational system in Myanmar, education providers in junta-controlled schools and alternative education providers have made efforts to ensure access to education. While GCPEA cannot assess the quality of education in each of these initiatives, they represent important efforts to continue education during a conflict that has acutely affected educators and learners.

Local education initiatives emerged or were strengthened in the past two years. In 2022, the UN reported that some communities and civil society groups had established new education initiatives in the wake of the post-takeover violence; in addition, enrollment in some school systems run by ethnic administrations, which were already established before 2021, had reportedly doubled or tripled since the military takeover.⁷⁰ This increase demonstrated a demand for alternative education.

In addition, the NUG announced in May 2021 that it was developing a parallel education system, consisting of alternatives such as distance learning and homeschooling, for those who chose not to attend junta-controlled schools.⁷¹ However, this alternative system also faced challenges. For example, one teacher remarked that the need to flee each time the military arrived meant that his teaching could not gain the momentum required.⁷² The junta has also reportedly imposed internet blackouts, which have directly impacted the ability of students to access educational resources and videos online,⁷³ and teachers aligned with the NUG were reportedly arrested for giving online classes after the junta labelled the NUG a “terrorist organization.”⁷⁴ While teachers had not yet received salaries from the NUG at the time of writing, residents had reportedly provided some financial support in order for education activities to continue.

International media outlet France24 also reported that some school teachers conducted lessons over apps like Telegram.⁷⁵ At the higher education level, in 2021, Spring University Myanmar began offering an online and alternative higher education and vocational education option.⁷⁶ Similarly, the University of Yangon Students’ Union announced an online Federal University, which involves online lectures and trainings, and educational materials delivered via radio and television.⁷⁷

Recommendations

This case study highlights the alarming increase in the number of attacks on schools and universities in Myanmar, as well as their geographic spread across the country, following the February 2021 military takeover. In particular, the study found that armed actors in Myanmar systematically used schools and universities for military purposes and that, when these facilities were used, a significant proportion were targeted. This evidence underscores the urgent need for armed actors to refrain from such practices, including by implementing the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict.

Furthermore, as schools and universities became a battleground in Myanmar, students and teachers could no longer safely access their places of study or work, which has in part led to a learning emergency which will have acute and enduring effects on human development, peace, and security. Schools should remain safe havens.

The NUG published a Code of Conduct for the People's Defence Forces that aligns with international human rights law and international humanitarian law with regard to prohibitions on attacking educational facilities.⁷⁸ While reports show that PDFs and other anti-junta armed groups have attacked and used schools, the UN reported that attacks on schools carried out by anti-junta groups subsided after the NUG called on PDFs not to attack schools.⁷⁹ More needs to be done by the military and all armed actors in Myanmar to protect education from the consequences of armed violence.

GCPEA recommends the actions below to reduce and mitigate the impact of attacks on education.

Militaries, other state security forces, and non-state armed groups, and those with influence over these parties, should:

- Protect the civilian character of schools and universities and cease attacks and threats of attacks against students, teachers, academics, and educational facilities.
- Refrain from using schools and universities for military purposes, including by implementing the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict. In cases of doubt whether an object which is normally dedicated to civilian purposes, such as a school, is being used to make an effective contribution to military action, it should be presumed to be a civilian object.
- Avoid the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects in populated areas, including near schools or universities or along routes to or from them, and develop operational policy based on a presumption against such use.
- Take action to protect education, including by advising the Myanmar military, PDFs, and other armed actors to cease all harassment, intimidation, and violence against students, families, teachers, and other staff engaging with any education providers, whether junta-con-

trolled, NUG-led, or run by other actors

- Allow access for humanitarian actors delivering education to the most vulnerable children.
- Non-state armed groups should sign and implement Geneva Call's Deed of Commitment for the Protection of Children from the Effects of Armed Conflict, including as it relates to educational spaces.

States, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and international bodies should:

- Strongly condemn all ongoing grave violations of children's rights in Myanmar; call for perpetrators to be held accountable, and demand that all parties uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law.
- Call for an immediate cessation of attacks on schools, health facilities, and protected personnel, and urge the Myanmar military and non-state armed groups to end all military use of such facilities and to ensure that attacks on these institutions and related protected personnel are investigated and that perpetrators are duly prosecuted.
- Support efforts to hold perpetrators of atrocity crimes accountable in impartial and independent courts, including the International Criminal Court, and national courts in countries with universal jurisdiction laws.
- Reiterate calls for safe and unimpeded access for the delivery of humanitarian assistance to all civilians in need, including children.
- The UN Secretary-General should list the Myanmar military, including integrated border guard forces, for attacks on schools and hospitals, in the annexes of his annual report on children and armed conflict, in addition to its existing listings.

Education authorities, including under the junta, NUG, and ethnic organizations, should:

- Take action to protect and promote education for all children, including by allowing and supporting students and teachers to return to the classroom safely, regardless of previous involvement with protests such as CDM, and by allowing students, families, and teachers to engage with alternative or junta-controlled education systems, without threat, punishment, or retaliation.

Donors, humanitarian and development actors, and education providers should:

- Develop and implement gender-responsive risk assessments, education continuity plans, and comprehensive safety and security plans to prevent and mitigate the impact of attacks on education.

- “Build back better” after attacks on education and ensure funding not only to repair but to improve schools and make them safer and more inclusive for all students and educators.
- Commit to supporting communities and local organizations to effectively provide flexible education opportunities that respect the wishes of the parents and children.
- Adopt guidance from GCPEA’s *Toolkit for Collecting and Analyzing Data on Attacks on Education* when developing or strengthening systems to monitor attacks on education and conducting humanitarian or sectoral needs assessments.
- Fully fund the Humanitarian Response Plan which is only 17% funded at the time of writing, ensuring an adequate share goes to education, which remains one of the least funded sectors

Methodology

This case study analyzes data from GCPEA's Education under Attack database, specifically data on attacks on education in Myanmar from January 1, 2020, to December 31, 2021. Data include verified incidents and unverified reports from international non-governmental organizations, the UN, local and international media, and conflict monitors including the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED).

GCPEA defines attacks on education as any threatened or actual use of force against students, education personnel, education facilities, or education resources. Attacks on education and military use of schools are intentionally or indiscriminately perpetrated by armed forces, other state security forces, or non-state armed groups for political, military, ideological, sectarian, ethnic, or religious motivations. For a full set of definitions, see GCPEA's *Education under Attack Dataset Codebook*.

Where a report indicates that a school or university was being used for military purposes when targeted, GCPEA does not count the incident as an attack on a school or university, but rather as military use, since the use of educational facilities can compromise their protection as civilian objects under international humanitarian law. Nonetheless, these incidents highlight the increased vulnerability of schools and universities to further damage and destruction when armed forces or groups use them for military purposes.

This case study drew upon a sub-set of the 2020-2021 Myanmar data which included the following sub-categories of attacks: attacks on schools, attacks on higher education, and military use of schools and universities. While GCPEA identified other types of attacks on education during the 2020-2021 period, they were beyond the research scope of this case study. For more information on all types of attacks on education in Myanmar, read the Education under Attack 2022 profile.⁸⁰

A methodological challenge in this case study was determining precise dates of military use for comparison with the date of targeting of educational facilities. In many cases, news and NGO sources reported either that an educational facility was in use when it was targeted or reported that an educational facility had been continually in use over a period of time, during which it was targeted. However, in other cases, news and NGO sources reported that an educational facility was used on a particular date without reporting when, or if, the armed force or group vacated the facility. If that same school or university was targeted, even very shortly after, GCPEA was unable to determine if the school was still being used for military purposes. The case study excluded all such reports when analyzing the targeting of schools while they were used for military purposes. In other words, only cases where reports clearly stated that military use was ongoing and the educational facility was targeted at that time were included in the analyses. This conservative analysis may have resulted in an underreporting of the number and percentage of educational facilities targeted while used for military purposes.

A second methodological challenge in this case study was that GCPEA did not have fine-grained data for all reported incidents of military use in 2020 and 2021. Some UN and NGO sources reported large tallies of military use without disaggregating the information. GCPEA identified individual reports for many, but not all, of these incidents and therefore may have missed cases in which educational facilities were targeted while used for military purposes. It is uncertain whether the additional information would have increased or decreased the percentage of educational facilities targeted while used for military purposes (as a part of all reported incidents of military use) reported in this case study; more incidents of educational facilities used and targeted would increase the percentage, while more incidents of educational facilities used but not targeted would have decreased the percentage.

The Toolkit

To produce the analyses in this case study, GCPEA used data collection methods and calculations available in the [Toolkit for Collecting and Analyzing Data on Attacks on Education](#). The *Toolkit* offers indicators to analyze different attack types and their impacts on students, personnel, and educational infrastructure. Specifically, GCPEA relied on *Toolkit* indicators:

- 1.1.1 Number of reported attacks on schools
 - Disaggregation by province or state; disaggregation by weapon type

- 3.1.1 Number of reported incidents of military use of schools and universities
 - Disaggregation by level of school and university; disaggregation by subsequent targeting

- 6.1.1 Number of reported attacks on higher education institutions
 - Disaggregation by province or state

In this case study, GCPEA also combined calculations from indicators 1.1.1 and 6.1.1 with 3.1.1 to determine the percentage of educational facilities targeted while used by armed forces or groups, as a part of all incidents of military use.

Where possible, GCPEA disaggregated data as suggested in the *Toolkit* to provide richer analyses of the incidences and effects of attacks on education, including by weapon type, damage, injury, and death.

GCPEA also analyzed incident data by subcategories, such as location of school or university, level of schooling, and perpetrator of attack.

GCPEA recommends the *Toolkit* for improved understanding of the scope and impact of attacks on education and the military use of schools and universities. To address underreporting, data gaps, and limited impact analyses, the *Toolkit* provides guidance to governments, civil society organizations, the UN, and humanitarian and development agencies on data collection, analysis, and reporting.

Although this case study demonstrated the prevalence of the targeting of schools and universities while used by armed forces or groups, as well as several impacts of attacks, additional relevant topics and impacts could have been analyzed with richer data. For instance, GCPEA could not assess the percentage of all schools in a region affected by attacks, or the percentage of schools in a region damaged or destroyed by attacks, among other impacts. Where possible, GCPEA encourages concerned governments and organizations to implement guidance available in the *Toolkit* to collect and report richer, disaggregated data through monitoring systems, humanitarian or sectoral needs assessments, or other data collection efforts. With richer data, and the subsequent analyses that become possible, more effective response and prevention plans can be developed.



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To learn more about the scope and impact of attacks on education in Myanmar and globally, explore [GCPEA's webpage](#) and the *Education under Attack 2022* [report](#) and [interactive website](#).

This case study is the result of independent research conducted by GCPEA. It is independent of the individual member organizations of the Steering Committee of GCPEA and does not necessarily reflect the views of the Steering Committee member organizations.

Endnotes

- ¹ GCPEA [Education under Attack 2022](#). This number includes all categories of attacks on education for 2020 and 2021; subsequent portions of this case study focus on particular categories, namely, attacks on schools, attacks on higher education, and military use of educational facilities. Military use occurs when armed forces, other state security forces, or non-state armed groups partially or fully occupy schools or universities and use them for purposes that support a military effort.
- ² GCPEA “[Commentary on the ‘Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict,’](#)” 2015. Bede Sheppard, “[Keeping schools safe from the battlefield: Why global legal and policy efforts to deter the military use of schools matter,](#)” International Review of the Red Cross, No. 911, August 2019.
- ³ GCPEA [Education under Attack 2022](#). GCPEA [Education under Attack 2020](#). GCPEA [Education under Attack 2018](#).
- ⁴ GCPEA [Education under Attack 2022](#).
- ⁵ UN Human Rights Council, “[Losing a generation: how the military junta is devastating Myanmar’s children and undermining Myanmar’s future,](#)” Conference room paper of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, June 14, 2022, A/HRC/50/CRP.1, para. 98. GCPEA [Education under Attack 2022](#).
- ⁶ UN Human Rights Council, “[Losing a generation: how the military junta is devastating Myanmar’s children and undermining Myanmar’s future,](#)” Conference room paper of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, June 14, 2022, A/HRC/50/CRP.1, para. 101.
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