

EMBARGOED UNTIL 09:00AM - 03 JUNE 2013

PRESS RELEASE

A new report released today in Yangon - Bridging the Housing, Land and Property (HLP) Gap - calls on Government and Ethnic Group peace negotiators, as well as the international community supporting peace efforts, to address and bridge the housing, land and property rights gaps that continue to undermine the prospects for long-term peace throughout Myanmar.

Yangon - Findings within *Bridging the HLP Gap* indicate that none of the peace negotiating parties have yet to formulate a consolidated and clear HLP policy during the peace process, and that the HLP rights of returning refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) have thus far been excluded from the peace process.

Bridging the HLP Gap provides a series of specific recommendations to the Government, ethnic actors and the international community, grounded in international law and best practice, to ensure that HLP rights and basic human rights principles guide the peace process and any agreements on refugee and IDP return.

Commenting on the main findings of the report, its author and Displacement Solutions' Director and Founder, Scott Leckie, a leading international expert on HLP rights with many years of experience in Myanmar, said that there is an urgent need to bridge the massive and growing HLP gaps that is hindering the success of peace agreements between the government and ethnic peace negotiators.

"Many peace agreements around the world in recent years have explicitly included provisions on HLP rights and we urge the parties in Myanmar to do the same," he said.

"Recognising the HLP rights of refugees and internally displaced persons, as well as the need to significantly overhaul HLP law and policy in the country will immeasurably contribute to peace and prosperity in the country as a whole", Leckie added.

"Given that HLP laws in Myanmar provide virtually no enforceable legal protection against displacement and land confiscation for ordinary people in rural and ethnic areas, and the clear bias of recent land legislation in favour of state, business and investor interests, it is vital that international human rights norms - which are far more protective of the rights of ordinary people - are used as the basis of peace efforts," he said.

"Human rights law clearly recognises rights to return, rights to HLP restitution, rights to adequate housing and secure tenure and the right not to be arbitrarily or forcibly evicted and these need to finally take precedence if Myanmar is truly to become a country based on the rule of law and universal rights", Leckie added.

The new report comes at a time of ever more frequent and alarming reports within the media and by local observers of greater displacement, land grabbing and more vocal efforts by citizens and communities to resist such efforts. Recent crackdowns by the authorities against land rights protestors in various parts of the country have been widely criticised.

"Displacement Solutions is particularly concerned for ordinary people at the community-level

who stand to lose out considerably if their HLP rights do not take a central position within the peace negotiations and eventual peace agreements, in particular returning refugees, internally displaced persons and others living in ethnic areas who - in accordance with their rights - seek tenure rights or the option of safely reclaiming their former homes and lands from which they were forced to flee", Leckie added.

The full report is available on www.displacementsolutions.org

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**INVITATION TO A LAUNCH ON MONDAY, 3 JUNE 2013
(09:00AM - SEDONA HOTEL)**

BRIDGING THE HLP GAP

**The Need to Effectively Address Housing, Land and Property Rights During Peace
Negotiations and in the Context of Refugee/IDP Return: Preliminary Recommendations to
the Government of Myanmar, Ethnic Actors and the International Community**

Displacement Solutions is delighted to invite you to please join us at 09:00 a.m. on Monday, 3 June 2013 at the Sedona Hotel in Yangon for the launch of a the latest report by Displacement Solutions on current and future prospects for housing, land, and property rights in Myanmar. Tea, coffee, and light refreshments will be served.

Bridging the HLP Gap addresses the need to address housing, land, and property rights (HLP rights) within the various peace processes between the Government of Myanmar and the ethnic groups, in particular the HLP rights of refugees and IDPs. The report, written by leading international HLP expert – Scott Leckie – contains a number of preliminary recommendations to ensure that agreement can be reached on the complex and vital issues comprising HLP rights as a basis for a sustainable peace, each of which will be outlined for the first time at the launch event.

If you have any questions, please contact Geoff Myint at geoff.myint@gmail.com. We hope very much that you will be able to join us as we launch this important new report.

Sincerely,

Scott Leckie
Director

www.displacementsolutions.org