

# Ethnic Health Organizations Forum: Better Health Together

## Statement

Date: May 22, 2017

Representatives of twenty-three Myanmar ethnic health organizations (EHOs) gathered for an historic first forum themed 'Better Health Together' held in Ngwe Saung, Myanmar between May 20 and 22, 2017, to discuss equitable pathways to health for all in Myanmar.

At the forum, participants discussed a range of key issues including the health status of communities in ethnic areas, the ethnic health system and health policies, universal health coverage, and coordination and cooperation between EHOs, the Government of the Union of Myanmar (GoM) and the Ministry of Health and Sports (MoHS).

Participants expressed their support for the GoM's commitment to achieve universal health coverage (UHC) in Myanmar by 2030, and the agreement to implement the health recommendations of the United Nations Human Rights Council.

However, they also emphasized the ongoing health crisis that affects millions of people in Myanmar, particularly in ethnic areas, caused by weaknesses in the health system and health policies, a lack of decentralization, insufficient coordination and cooperation, and a deficit of mutual trust and recognition between GoM departments and ethnic and community-based health organizations.

Forum representatives made the following key recommendations to the GoM to support the achievement of health for all:

1. To improve coordination and cooperation with ethnic and community-based organizations in the reform of national health policy, systems and strategies in line with the changes in the political context.
2. To formally recognize and support the authority, administration, and management of ethnic and community-based health organizations in their areas, and their existing systems and structures, in particular during the planning and implementation of health projects between MoHS and international non-government organizations in the ethnic areas in the interim period of the peace process.
3. To increase the budget allocation to support health services for people residing in conflict-affected areas and remote regions.
4. To reduce centralization in the Myanmar health system and work towards devolving responsibility to regional and local levels.

As the forum reached its conclusion, representatives underscored the need for the peace process in Myanmar to be genuine, equitable and inclusive, and to fully and fairly address the root causes of conflicts that have fuelled the country's health crisis.

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