



# Prospect Burma

The higher education crisis in Myanmar:  
How UK universities can help



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Patron: His Majesty King Charles III | CIO 1167686



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**Prospect Burma:**

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### Key figures

**3,708,300**

Estimated total IDPs within Myanmar

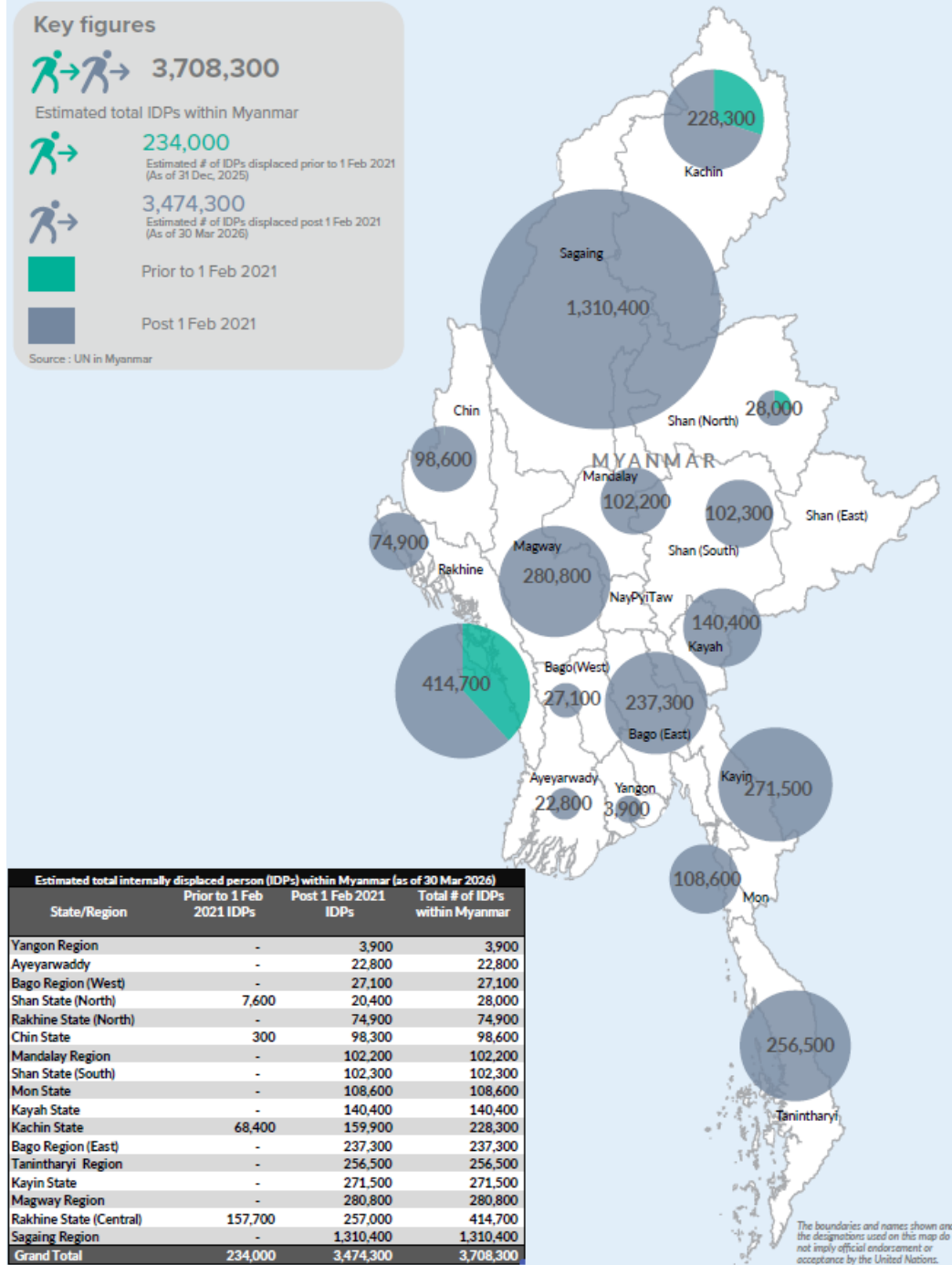
**234,000**  
Estimated # of IDPs displaced prior to 1 Feb 2021  
(As of 31 Dec, 2025)

**3,474,300**  
Estimated # of IDPs displaced post 1 Feb 2021  
(As of 30 Mar 2026)

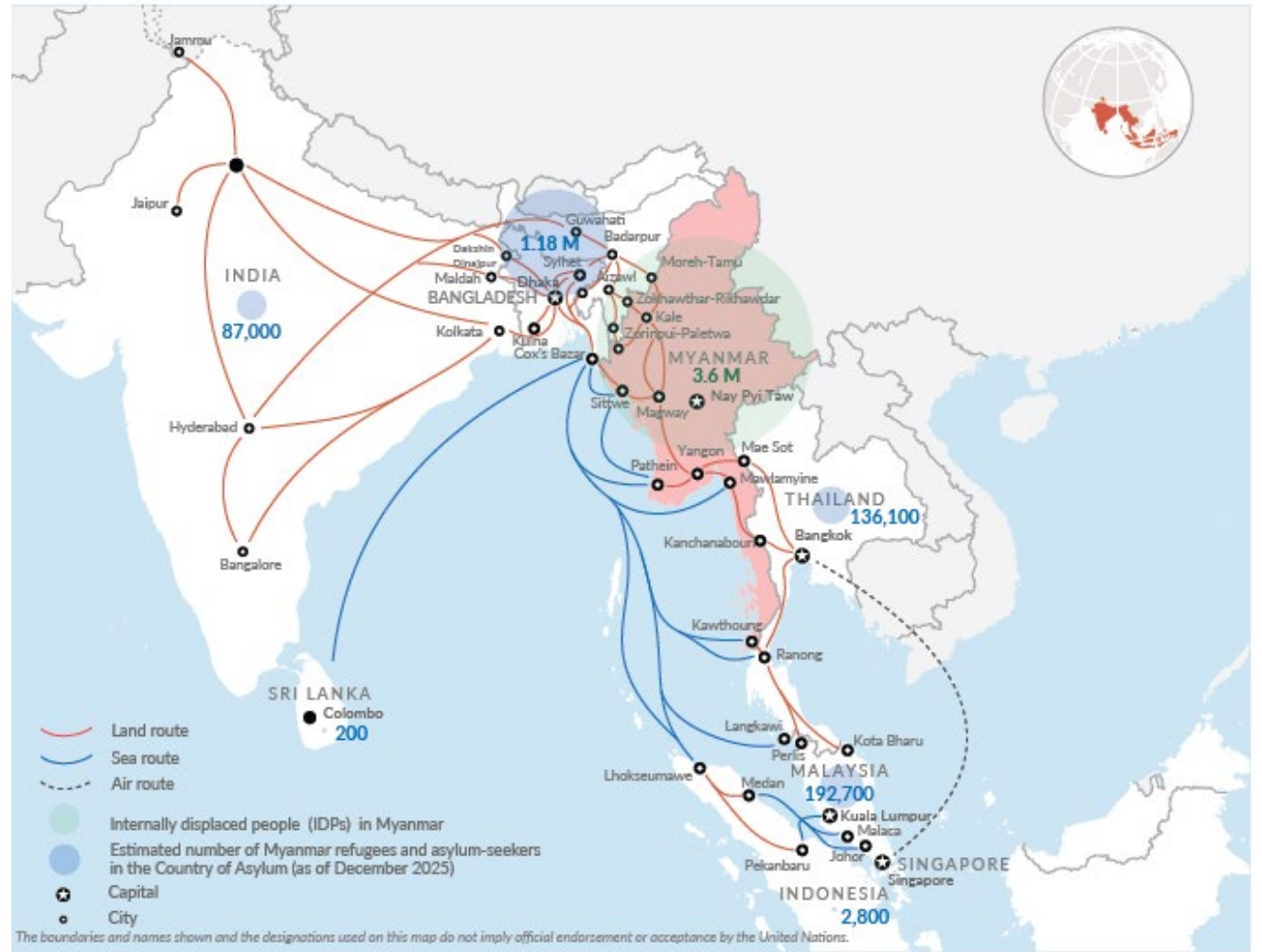
Prior to 1 Feb 2021

Post 1 Feb 2021

Source : UN in Myanmar



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.



Above: Myanmar regional refugee routes and locations (UNHCR, January 2026)

Left: estimated IDPs within Myanmar (UNHCR, March 2026)



# Barriers to higher education



Displacement



Unable to leave



Finance constraints



Family commitment



Safety concerns



Lack of electricity



No internet



Mental health issues



Lack of accredited documents



Intl university barriers



## Current international initiatives

- USAID's **Diversity and Inclusion Scholarship Program (DISP)** was launched in 2024 to support over 1,000 Myanmar students to study at international universities but was abruptly terminated in 2025.
- The **EU Mobility Programme for Myanmar (EMPM)** launched in 2023 and awards scholarships to Myanmar students to complete transfer degrees at universities in ASEAN. The pilot will run to Dec 2026.
- **Government-funded scholarship programmes** continue (e.g. Singapore, Japan) but some are no longer accepting applications from Myanmar nationals (e.g. New Zealand) and visa processes have become increasingly stringent.
- In March 2026, the **UK Home Office** announced that Myanmar students would no longer be eligible for student visas, closing off scholarship pathways to UK institutions.
- **Scholarship organisations** such as Child's Dream and Daughters Rising continue to support Myanmar students to study in Thailand and the region. However, in-person opportunities are limited to small numbers of students.



# Introduction to Prospect Burma

- UK-registered Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)
- Founded in 1989
- Purpose is to provide pathways to international higher education for young people from Myanmar affected by conflict, displacement and marginalisation
- Team members in UK, Thailand and India
- Team of Myanmar nationals provide support and advice
- Patron is His Majesty King Charles III





# International university scholarships: **in-person**

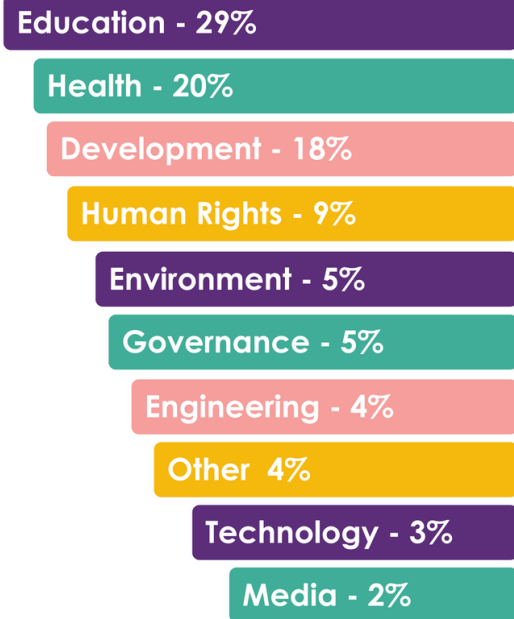
- Most scholarships (around 65%) are for study in Thailand. Students also study elsewhere in Asia, Europe, the UK and North America.
- We receive applications from every single state and region.
- Application numbers are up 300% since the coup.
- We work with 10-15 international university partners, providing fee waivers and support in kind.
- 1,700 alumni supported to date.
- GBP 7.7 million spent directly on scholarship awards since 1995.
- Our alumni have made significant contributions to critical areas such as education, health, governance, public policy, resource management, and many other sectors.



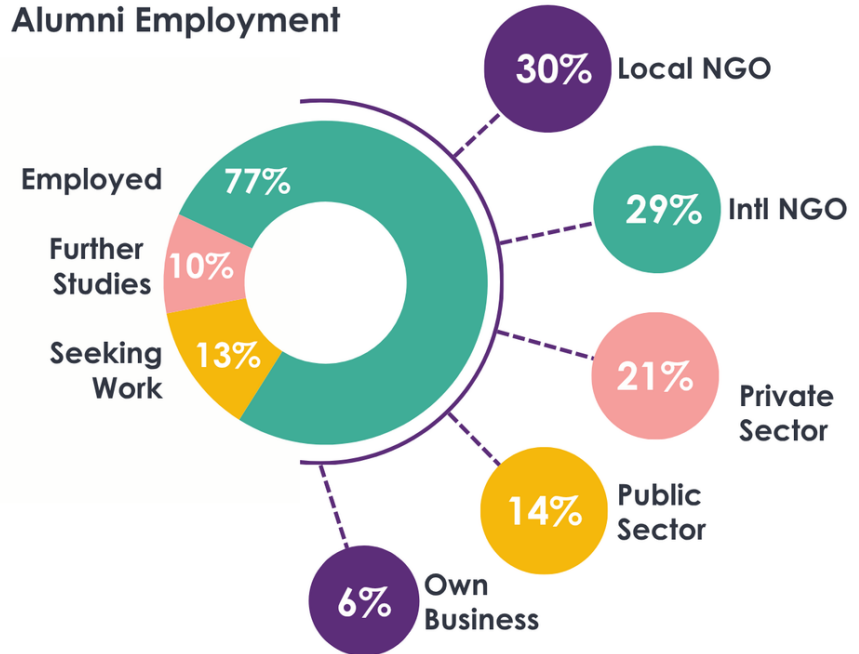


# International university scholarships: **in-person**

## Sector Speciality



## Alumni Employment





# International university scholarships: **online**

- Prospect Burma established Myanmar's first scholarship programme for online degrees in 2023, with the support of a United Nations partner.
- Accredited degree, diploma and certificate programmes offered by international universities are eligible for scholarship awards.
- Our tailored support infrastructure keeps student engagement and retention high, and overcomes barriers to learning:
  - Stipends to cover data and support laptop / power bank purchase;
  - Students matched with mid-career Myanmar mentors;
  - Access to a range of counselling services;
  - Contingency fund to support changes in circumstance.
- Application numbers have grown 100% YoY, average retention rate is 96%.





# Recommendations

## **A. Create online scholarships for Myanmar students**

Create dedicated online undergraduate, postgraduate, certificate and diploma scholarships for Myanmar students affected by the current crisis for the academic year 2026/27, which can be managed through Prospect Burma's existing online programme.

### Possible institutional contributions

- Reallocate existing in-person scholarship funds for Myanmar nationals towards online programmes.
- Provide fee waivers for courses that will be of particular relevance to Myanmar young people, including education, healthcare, IT, public policy and administration, business and engineering.
- Work in partnership with Prospect Burma to facilitate these scholarships.



## Snapshot: student profiles

- Students are typically 18- 39 years old, including IDPs in Myanmar (65.5%) and displaced learners in Thailand, Malaysia, India, and Bangladesh
- Many are family breadwinners, at risk of military conscription, or members of the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM), making flexible learning options essential
- Most have industry experience with elementary to intermediate English proficiency (*IELTS 6.0–6.5*)
- Some students lack civil documentation or academic transcripts due to displacement

- Academic demand is mainly for undergraduate programmes (63.1%), followed by master's programmes (35.2%)
- Preferred courses include accredited certificates, diplomas, degrees, UK Level 4+, and foundation programmes
- Main subject interests: Education, Engineering & Technology, Business, Law & Social Sciences, and Medical Sciences



# Recommendations

## **B. Create scholarships at branch campuses in countries already hosting Myanmar students**

UK universities with existing branch or partner campus in India, Malaysia and elsewhere in the region can expand equitable access by establishing in-country scholarships for refugees and displaced persons for the academic year 2027/28.

### Possible institutional contributions

- Pilot a small number of fee-waiver scholarships at regional branch or partner campuses.
- Consider partnering with existing scholarship providers such as Prospect Burma who can publicise opportunities, organise student selection and support student relocation.



# Recommendations

## **C. Support alternative pathways, including foundation and bridging programmes for students unable to complete secondary education due to conflict and displacement**

UK universities can provide access to programmes which provide pathways back into formal learning. Demand is high for these opportunities, given the 5 million young people who have dropped out of education or training since the 2021 coup. This is particularly relevant as a tool for inclusion of women, refugees and others from severely disadvantaged backgrounds.

### Possible institutional contributions

- Pilot a cohort of students to attend suitable foundation or bridging programmes with fee waivers to widen inclusion.
- Programmes could include optional English language and digital skills modules.



# THANK YOU

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