

Success Stories of Data Disclosure: Total and Chevron in Myanmar



Image credit: Environmental Justice Atlas

Background

On February 1, 2021, the Myanmar armed forces, the Tatmadaw, seized power and began to enact a regime of unrelenting violence upon the citizens of Myanmar. Though the military junta met with resistance in the form of the civil disobedience movement (CDM), it did little to stop their reign of terror. The economy of Myanmar is spiralling towards total collapse, civil institutions have been decimated, warfare is ongoing, and thousands of citizens have died at the hands of the regime.¹ The Tatmadaw's junta was, and is, financed in large part by natural resources and, in particular, the state-owned enterprise Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE), which came directly under military control following the coup.² MOGE itself provides the largest source of foreign exchange available to the military government, accounting for USD \$1 billion in 2017-18, and a forecasted USD \$1.5 billion in 2020-21.³

The Role of Data Disclosure

In March of 2021, Publish What You Pay released [a report](#) detailing millions of dollars flowing to the Myanmar Military from operations at the Yadana gas field, a joint venture of gas giants Total and Chevron in partnership with MOGE. PWYP used the publicly available data from the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) as well as data from the European Union laws, which oblige extractive companies operating in EU states to disclose their project-level payments to foreign governments, to uncover the direct financing of the military regime via oil and gas sales. PWYP revealed that in a twelve-month period (2016/2017), USD \$8.3 million worth of gas extracted from the Yadana project was sold by MOGE on behalf of the joint venture to the Myanmar Military and its associates, including the Asia World Company.⁴

In June of 2021, PWYP released [a follow-up report](#), expanding on the role of oil and gas projects in financing the violent regime of the Tatmadaw. PWYP reported estimates that 50% of all foreign exchange revenue was from oil and gas sales, making this one of the most

¹ Richard Paddock, "A Year After Coup, Myanmar Is Mired in Conflict and Chaos", *The New York Times*, February 1, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/01/world/asia/myanmar-coup-anniversary-sanctions.html>

² Publish What You Pay, *The military or the people. Who benefits from Myanmar's offshore gas?*, (March 2021), 4, <https://www.pwyp.org.au/publications/who-benefits-from-myanmar-gas>

³ Publish What You Pay, *Financing the Military in Myanmar: Analysis of Gas Revenues*, (June 2021), 5, <https://www.pwyp.org/pwyp-resources/financing-the-military-in-myanmar-analysis-of-gas-revenues/>

⁴ Publish What You Pay, *The military or the people. Who benefits from Myanmar's offshore gas?*, 2

crucial sources of funding for arms and fuel imports.⁵ Total was further implicated in this report, as between 2017 and 2018, the amount that MOGE collected from various payments from Total amounted to nearly USD \$400 million.⁶

How Change Happened

This data presented by PWYP was used for media and the global advocacy efforts of governments and NGOs to advocate for multinational oil and gas companies to cease their financing of the junta, and then to divest from involvement in Myanmar. In January of 2022, Total and Chevron announced their intention to [withdraw from their operations in Myanmar](#), citing human rights concerns as a motivating factor for their exit.⁷ In late January, Australian energy giant [Woodside followed suit in totally withdrawing operations](#) after announcing their exit from the A6 block [in February of 2021](#) in the face of sustained pressure from Australian Human Rights groups over their involvement in Myanmar.⁸ The data obtained from EITI records was instrumental in exposing the role that these multinational oil and gas companies played in financing the brutality of the military, and instrumental in advocating for their removal.

⁵ Publish What You Pay, *Financing the Military in Myanmar: Analysis of Gas Revenues*, 4

⁶ Publish What You Pay, *Financing the Military in Myanmar: Analysis of Gas Revenues*, 1

⁷ Emma Connors, "TotalEnergies and Chevron exit Myanmar gas projects", *The Australian Financial Review*, Jan 23, 2022, <https://www.afr.com/world/asia/totalenergies-and-chevron-abandon-myanmar-gas-projects-20220122-p59qf7>

⁸ Stephen Dziedzic, "Australian energy giant Woodside withdraws from Myanmar almost one year after military coup", ABC News, 27 Jan, 2022, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-01-27/woodside-out-of-myanmar-ahead-of-february-1-coup-anniversary/100785758>