



Factsheet

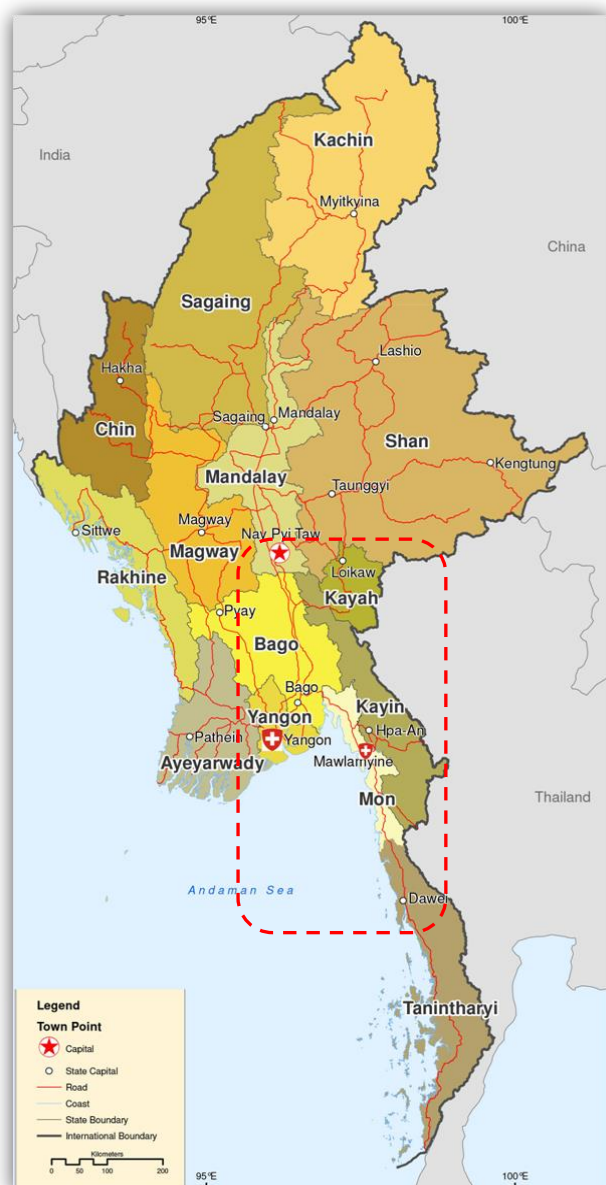
24 April 2015

# Myanmar

Program of the Swiss FDFA's Human Security Division

## Context and Swiss Engagement

After decades of violent armed conflict, **Myanmar is now in the midst of a transition on three fronts:** from military rule to democratic governance; from centrally-planned to market-driven economy; and from 60 years of armed conflict to peace. Yet progress is constrained by continued distrust between ethnic, religious and political groups (leading in some cases to violence and armed conflict) and by social services and institutions, which need to adapt to new political paradigms.



Switzerland is committed to making a contribution to a peaceful and prosperous future for Myanmar. Transitions are fragile. Consolidated peace is a primary prerogative on which all other sustainable development depends. Hence, in addition to the work of Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) took the decision to **set up a Human Security program focusing on the support to peace, democracy and human rights.**

**The Human Security program can build on the credibility of Swiss engagement** thanks to SDC's work, which began with humanitarian support to Myanmar refugee camps in Thailand's border region in the mid-1990s and expanded into Myanmar in 1998. Myanmar became a priority country for SDC Humanitarian Aid from 2001 onwards. Direct project implementation was initiated as a response to the disaster caused by cyclone Nargis in 2008.

The Swiss intervention in the area of peace support and democracy aims at supporting the transition by assisting political negotiations and the build-up of institutions through which conflicts between the communities are resolved peacefully, in view of creating a more democratic and inclusive polity in Myanmar. It is implemented by the FDFA's Human Security Division (HSD) and part of the FDFA's strategy for the years 2013-2017.

## Peace, Democracy and Human Rights

In the area of **peace support**, HSD's vision is that key negotiating parties have articulated their aspirations and have presented them both in cease-fire and political peace negotiations. Such negotiation should lead towards a democratic and inclusive Myanmar. HSD works towards this outcome mainly through two lines of intervention:

- Direct support to negotiation parties through advisory services to government and ethnic groups, retreats and capacity building seminars for negotiators and advisors. Only upon request of all negotiating parties, would Switzerland be ready to take on a more active role as observer, monitor, host or facilitator.
- Prevention and resolution of inter-communal violence

- Promotion of a broader inclusion of civil society and women in the negotiations through advisory services, funding of consultation conferences and exchange of experience with other conflict related contexts.

HSD's engagement for **democracy** aims at increasing the acceptance of democratic norms and values within Myanmar society. Three sets of activities are foreseen:

- The legal framework is improved by advocating for, and assisting in, the ratification of key international instruments, including capacity building for their application;
- Small actions are foreseen to strengthen non-profit civil society organisations (in which women, men and ethnic minorities are equally represented), in particular their capacity to interact with the government and with private business.
- In the year of elections, Switzerland is supporting a process to facilitate the establishment of a code of conduct by the political parties for the electoral period.



*U Aung Min (L), vice chairman of the Myanmar government's Union Peace Making Work Committee (UPWC), shakes hands with U Naing Han Tha (R), leader of the ethnic armed groups' National Ceasefire Co-*

#### Further Information

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FDFA website on bilateral relations with Myanmar:

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/myanmar/en/home/bilaterale-beziehungen/in-kuerze.html>

FDFA website on cooperation with Myanmar:

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/myanmar/en/home/international-cooperation/strategy-myanmar.html>

#### Recent projects and activities

- Switzerland supports the preparation of ceasefire agreements and of a political dialogue through providing ad hoc and on-going expertise in Myanmar;
- Switzerland supports the work of the Centre for Diversity and National Harmony, in order to maintain the monitoring of the intercommunal relations; follow the implementation of some of the recommendations for Rakhine and support the establishment of an early warning system;
- Switzerland has provided international expertise to the UEC and the interested political parties on the establishment of a Code of Conduct;
- Switzerland has invited for the third year in a row a group of 24 persons from ministries, parliament, regional governments, political parties and civil society to a three-week course on international relations, governance and public participation.