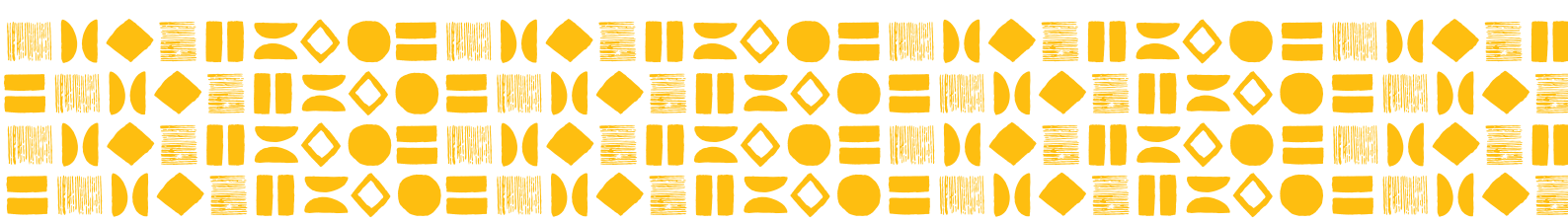# UNLOCKING CIVIL SOCIETY AND PEACE IN MYANMAR

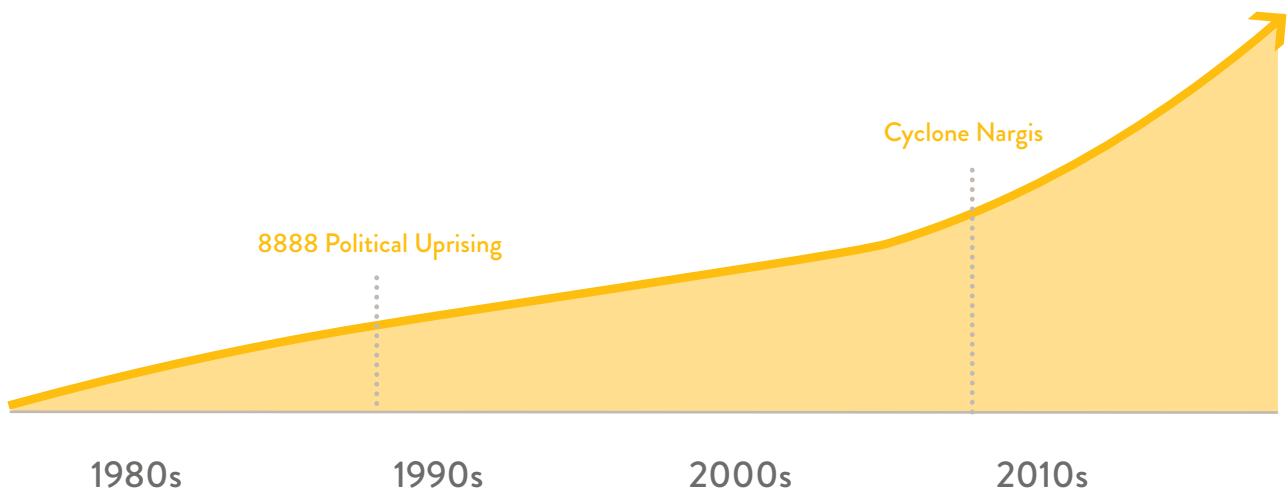Opportunities, obstacles and undercurrents

ABOUT THE COVER DESIGN:

The cover design is a reflection of the dynamism of civil society in Myanmar, which is inherently complex, fluid, and interconnected. The bar charted along the outer circumference of the circle depicts the number of people working in each organisation. The inner lines meet when one of those people is engaged or connected with another organisation. The many crossings show how civil society interacts, networks, grows and expands. Alone they are each significant but together they make broad, impactful strokes.

This visualisation was created using primary data collected throughout the research process for this *Discussion Paper*.

CIVIL SOCIETY: A BRIDGE BETWEEN THE FAMILY & THE STATE

FAMILY

STATE

RAPID GROWTH TRIGGERED BY TRANSITION & KEY EVENTS

Cyclone Nargis

8888 Political Uprising

1980s   1990s   2000s   2010s

EFFECTIVENESS IN KEY PEACEBUILDING FUNCTIONS

Social Cohesion

Socialisation

Advocacy

Protection

Monitoring

Service Delivery

Facilitation/ Mediation

Low   Medium   High

CIVIL SOCIETY IN MYANMAR: TRENDS

1 NEW ORGANISATIONS
A boom in new CSOs

2 REGISTRATION
More groups are
officially registering

3 POLICY CSOs
Want to engage
more in policy

6 YOUTH
Youth organisations are
becoming more prominent

5 GENDER
Women's organisations are
advocating for gender participation

4 NETWORKS
CSO's build networks

7 CEASEFIRES
Bi-lateral ceasefires
transform relations
with armed groups

8 CROSSBORDER
Cross-border
organisations are
still relevant

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Groups that preserve
ethnic culture are evolving

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Mi Chan Seik, Mon Youth Educator Organisation.

Acknowledgements

To the Reader

This *Discussion Paper* offers a sample of perspectives, not a definitive statement, on civil society vis-a-vis social cohesion and peacebuilding in Myanmar. It seeks to encourage further, much needed conversation and debate on this topic. It also aims to highlight and build on the extensive, diverse and everyday contributions of civil society towards peace across Myanmar. Analysis is indicative rather than exhaustive in nature.

Analysis covers events in Myanmar's transition up to June 2017. More recent developments in this rapidly evolving context, such as the August 2017 violence in northern Rakhine and more recent episodes of conflict in northern Shan and Kachin, are outside the scope of this *Paper*. Readers are encouraged to share their comments, feedback and ideas regarding this *Discussion Paper* with the Paung Sie Facility: analysis@paungsiefacility.org.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Who makes up civil society in Myanmar? Are there parts of civil society in Myanmar that are 'uncivil'?

2. How does civil society contribute to peace in Myanmar?

3. Why is it important to consider civil society's participation in peacebuilding?

4. How does civil society contribute to social cohesion in Myanmar?

5. Is civil society limited to professional organisations?

6. How has civil society contributed to Myanmar's history?

7. How has Myanmar's transition impacted civil society?

8. Which factors help and hinder civil society in Myanmar?

9. What is the relationship between media and civil society?

10. How is civil society advancing gender equality?

11. How has cross-border civil society evolved throughout Myanmar's transition?

12. How does civil society influence the peace process from the inside and outside?

13. Are there gaps in civil society's contributions to social cohesion and peace in Myanmar?

14. How do peacebuilders currently coordinate their efforts (national and sub-national)? What channels are needed to improve collaboration?

Conceptual Framework and Definitions

Civil Society: Civil Society is defined broadly as the space between the family and the state, but does not include political parties, professional unions and associations, private businesses, and Ethnic Armed Organisations (EAOs). For the purpose of this *Discussion Paper*, research was directed predominantly, but not entirely, to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society organisations (CSOs) at Union and sub-national level and their emerging networks. Research also included ethnic literature and culture associations. It is important to note that many people "*wear several hats*" in Myanmar, meaning that the affiliations of individuals are not always limited to one organisation. The roles of as key stakeholders often change roles over time. Due to their importance in Myanmar, faith-based networks are also included in civil society. Civil society is not synonymous with communities. It is inherently heterogeneous; its diversity relates to a range of different ethnic, linguistic, religious, gender, and class identities among which ethnicity stands out as a particularly prominent marker of identity in Myanmar.

Social cohesion: A cohesive society is one that works towards the wellbeing of all, creates a sense of belonging, promotes trust, and offers everyone the opportunity to prosper and advance peacefully.

Peacebuilding: Peacebuilding is defined as initiatives that foster and support sustainable structures and processes that strengthen the prospects for peaceful coexistence and decrease the likelihood of the outbreak, reoccurrence, or continuation of violent conflict.[1] Within this *Paper*, civil society engagement in peacebuilding refers to civil society-led initiatives that seek mitigate inter- or intra- ethnic, faith, and communal tensions and promote social cohesion.

Peace process: For the purposes of this research, the 'peace process' is defined as the national tri-lateral negotiations related to the ethnic armed conflict. Peace process architecture relates to government-led initiatives since 2011, spanning bi-lateral ceasefires, the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA), the Union Peace Conferences (UPCs), Joint Monitoring Committees (JMCs), and the national dialogue process. For the purpose of this *Paper*, participation in the peace process has been categorised into direct participation (contribution to decision-making and supporting roles within peace architecture), and indirect contributions, which are equally critical, that lie outside of the peace process and political structures.

Gender: The socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that determine our understanding of masculinity and femininity. The question of gender difference and the construction of masculine and feminine is not universal, but culturally specific and strongly influenced by other factors such as ethnicity, religion, race, and class.[2]

Youth: Myanmar's National Youth Policy defines young people as between the ages of 15-35. The United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250 considers young people to fall between 18-29 years.

Acronyms

AA	Arakan Army
ACCM	Alliance for Civilian Ceasefire Monitoring
AGIPP	Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process
ALP	Arakan Liberation Party
ANP	Arakan National Party
ARSA	Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army
BCN	Burma Centrum Netherlands
BGF	Border Guard Force
BNI	Burma News International
BWU	Burmese Women's Union
CBO	Community-based organisation
CCM	Civilian Ceasefire Monitoring
CCMT	Chin Ceasefire Monitoring Team
CDES	Center for Development and Ethnic Studies
CDNH	Center for Diversity and National Harmony
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CHRO	Chin Human Rights Organization
CIDKP	Committee for Internally Displaced Karen People
CMN	Chin Media Network
CNF	Chin National Front
CPTC	Chin Peace and Tranquillity Committee
CPM	Civilian Protection Monitoring
CSFoP	Civil Society Forum for Peace
CSNeP	Civil Society Network for Peace
CSO	Civil society organisation
CT	Coordination Team
DPN	Delegation for Political Negotiation
EAOs	Ethnic Armed Organisations
EMReF	Enlightenment Myanmar Research Foundation
ENAC	Ethnic Nationalities Affairs Center
ENMF	Ethnic Nationalities Mediators Fellowship
EPLO	European Peacebuilding Liaison Office
EU	European Union
FFSS	Free Funeral Service Society
GBV	Gender-based violence
GDI	Gender and Development Institute
GEN	Gender Equality Network
GoM	Government of Myanmar
GONGO	Governmentally-organised non-governmental organisation
HURFOM	Human Rights Foundation of Monland
ICG	International Crisis Group
IDPs	Internally displaced persons
IFY	Inter-Faith Youth

Acronyms

ILO	International Labour Organization
INGO	International non-governmental organisation
JMC	Joint Monitoring Committee
JMC-L	Joint Monitoring Committee – Local level
JMC-S	Joint Monitoring Committee – State level
JMC-U	Joint Monitoring Committee – Union level
JPF	Joint Peace Fund
JST	Joint Strategy Team
KBC	Kachin Baptist Convention
KDG	Kachin Development Group
KDN	Karen Development Network
KE	Karenni Evergreen
KED	Karenni Education Department
KESAN	Karen Environmental and Social Action Network
KHRG	Karen Human Rights Group
KIA	Kachin Independence Army
KIO	Kachin Independence Organization
KMSS	Karuna Mission Social Solidarity
KNA	Karen National Association
KNPP	Karenni National Progressive Party
KNU	Karen National Union
KNWO	Karenni National Women Organization
KNYN	Kachin National Youth Network
KNYO	Karenni National Youth Organization
KRDC	Kachin Relief and Development Committee
KRW	Karen River Watch
KSCN	Kayin State Civil Society Network
KSCSN	Kachin State Civil Society Network
KSPMN	Kayah State Peace Monitoring Network
KSWDC	Karenni Social Welfare Development Center
KSWN	Kachin State Women's Network
KWA	Kachin Women Association
KWAT	Kachin Women's Association Thailand
KWEG	Karen Women Empowerment Group
KWHRO	Kuki Women's Human Rights Organization
KWO	Karen Women's Organization
KyWO	Kayan Women's Organization
LCMs	Local Ceasefire Monitors
LIFT	Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund
LRC	Local Resource Center
MATA	Myanmar Alliance for Transparency and Accountability
MFE	Myanmar Fifth Estate
MIDO	Myanmar ICT for Development Organization

Acronyms

MNCWA	Myanmar National Committee for Women's Affairs
MNEC	Mon National Education Committee
MNHC	Mon National Health Committee
MPC	Myanmar Peace Center
MPSI	Myanmar Peace Support Initiative
MRDC	Mon Relief and Development Committee
MSCSN	Mon State Civil Society Network
MWO	Mon Women Organization
MYPO	Mon Youth Progressive Organization
NA-B	Northern Alliance – Burma (NA-B)
NCA	Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement
NDAA	National Democratic Alliance Army
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NEYA	National Ethnic Youth Alliance
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NGSS	New Generation Shan State
NLD	National League for Democracy
NMSP	New Mon State Party
NP	Nonviolent Peaceforce
NRPC	National Reconciliation and Peace Centre
Nyein	Nyein (Shalom) Foundation
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OMI	Open Myanmar Initiative
PACE	People's Alliance for Credible Elections
PCG	Peace-talk Creation Group
PDI	Peace and Development Initiative
PfP	People for People
PI	Pyidaungsu Institute
PSF	Paung Sie Facility
PWO	Pa-O Women's Organization
RCSS	Restoration Council of Shan State
RISE	The Research Institute for Sociology and Ecology
RPF	Rahmonnya Peace Foundation
RWA	Rakhine Women Association
RWU	Rakhine Women's Union
SAZ	Self-Administered Zone
SEDF	Smile Education and Development Foundation
SFCG	Search for Common Ground
SLORC	State Law and Order Restoration Council
SPDC	State Peace and Development Council
SOP	Standard Operation Procedures
SSA-N	Shan State Army-North
SSA-S	Shan State Army-South

Acronyms

SWAN	Shan Women's Action Network
SYCB	Students and Youth Congress of Burma
TAF	The Asia Foundation
TAT	Technical Advisory Team
TBC	The Border Consortium
TGO	Thingaha Gender Organization
TIPS	Tagaung Institute of Political Studies
TNI	Transnational Institute
TNLA	Ta'ang National Liberation Army
ToR	Terms of Reference
TSYU	Ta'ang Student and Youth Union
TWO	Ta'ang Women's Organisation
TWU	Tavoy Women's Union
TYO	Tai Youth Organization
UKSY	Union of Karenni State Youth
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNFC	United Nationalities Federal Council
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolutions
UPC	Union Peace Conference
UPDJC	Union Peace Development Joint Committee
USDA	Union Solidarity and Development Association
USDP	Union Solidarity and Development Party
USIP	United States Institute of Peace
UWSA	United Wa State Army
VAW	Violence against women
WAPAN	Women and Peace Action Network
WLB	Women League of Burma
WON	Women's Organizations Network
WPN	Wunpawng Ninghtoi
WPN-A	Women's Peace Network – Arakan
WRWAB	Women's`Rights & Welfare Association of Burma
YMBA	Young Men's Buddhist Association
YSPS	Yangon School for Political Science

Mi Kun Chan Nom, Mon Women's Organisation.

Introduction

From high profile leaders like Cardinal Charles Maung Bo, Archbishop of Yangon, to civil society leaders in cities and towns nationwide, people across Myanmar are working everyday to find ways to bring peace and social cohesion to their communities. Local and sub-national initiatives working across the country complement more formal engagement from civil society organisations (CSOs) in the ongoing nationwide peace process and transition more broadly.

The people of Myanmar have known armed conflict for decades – more than one third of Myanmar's 330 townships are affected by conflict in some way.[3] The transitional administration of President U Thein Sein brought about new ceasefire initiatives and started the peace process. Alongside efforts to broker peace during the same period, fresh fighting broke out in northern Kachin State, while Rakhine State saw widespread inter-communal violence.

In 1999, the scholar David Steinberg stated civil society had died in Myanmar, or *"perhaps, more accurately, it was murdered."*[4] Since 2010, however, CSOs have become increasingly active and visible, building on historical cvil society developments with many mobilising in and around the formal peace process between the Government of Myanmar and a variety of Ethnic Armed Organisations (EAOs). They have also started more informal, bottom-up peacebuilding efforts in local communities.

These civil society peace efforts have been applauded internationally. A number of civil society leaders in Myanmar, many of them women, have received regional and global prizes for their contributions to peace. Daw Seng Raw Lahpai, the founder of the Metta Foundation, won the 2013 Ramon Magsaysay Award; Mi Kun Chan Non, Chair of the Mon Women's Organisation (MWO), won the 2014 N-Peace Award along with Wai Wai Nu of the Women's Peace Network – Arakan (WPN-A); and Kachin peace activist Mai Mai won the US Embassy's 2017 Women of Change Award, to name a few.

> *Since 2010, CSOs have become increasingly active and visible, with many mobilising to support the peace process.*

This *Discussion Paper* seeks to provide deeper insights into the efforts of people working for a peaceful Myanmar, analysing Myanmar's complex transition up to June 2017. Its aim is to help people better understand how civil society is contributing to the country's complex transition. It is not the goal of this *Paper* to describe each and every contribution to peace, an impossible undertaking in a rapidly evolving context, but to provide an indicative guide to what is happening and possible future opportunities to inform discussion. For a detailed outline of the methodology, see Annex 1. For a background on peace and conflict in Myanmar aimed at readers who are less familiar with the subject, see Annex 3.

This *Discussion Paper* starts by outlining the historical and contemporary evolution of civil society in Myanmar before analysing the conditions that help or inhibit civil society's involvement in peace, exploring how Myanmar civil society contributes to both informal and formal peacebuilding efforts. Next, this *Paper* analyses civil society functions using a framework developed by Thania Paffenholz through a three-year research project covering sixteen countries around the globe entitled *"Civil Society and Peacebuilding: A Critical Assessment."*[5] Paffenholz laid down seven functions of civil society in peacebuilding: protection, monitoring, advocacy, socialisation, social cohesion, mediation and facilitation, and service delivery. The analysis in this *Discussion Paper* asks how useful and applicable the above framework is for Myanmar and provides analysis of the seven peacebuilding functions against Myanmar's civil society. Finally, this *Paper* offers an overview of peace, conflict, and civil society for every State in the country, plus a summary covering all seven Regions.

Section 1: What is Civil Society?

1.1 The space between the family and the state

Defining civil society is no straightforward task; there are multiple definitions with overlapping and at times competing meanings. The label covers activities and organisations that often go by other names: non-profits, associations, community groups, citizen groups, bottom-up society, people-centred groups, and so on. For the purpose of this *Discussion Paper*, civil society is broadly defined as the space between the family and the state.[6] Civil society is not synonymous with communities. Civil society, in Myanmar and globally, is often politicised and intertwined with political society. Nevertheless, an effective, diverse and capable civil society remains an important part of a democratic country – and civil society is an

> **Including civil society in peacebuilding leads to longer lasting peace.**

essential traveling partner on the path to a socially cohesive nation.

Civil society is often conceived as a positive public good, but multiple examples exist where civil society is regarded as 'uncivil'. Uncivil society refers to instances where groups, individuals, and organisations perpetuate and organise around issues that, for example, are discriminatory or promote hate speech. In other words, it is important not to romanticise the role of civil society.[7] Civil society can contribute to violence and conflict as much as it can contribute to peace. Further, civil society is not stagnant. It evolves and mutates over time, often responding to broader political and societal dynamics in a country.

Civil society groups in Myanmar are a great mosaic of ethnicity, religion, gender, class, age, and ideology. Some are devoted to activism and political agendas whereas others maintain their independence from political influence. Others are

Young people march at an inter-faith peace rally, Yangon. (Source: Frontier.)

more focussed on providing people with services such as humanitarian aid, health, education or legal representation.

In Myanmar's administrative wards and villages, people have organised to offer social welfare, to form women's and youth groups, to collect blood donations, and to offer free funeral services. Usually these groups are not overtly political.

This analysis largely excludes political parties, Ethnic Armed Organisations (EAOs), governmentally organised non-governmental organisations (GONGOs), private businesses, and professional unions and associations. The primary focus is on more independently organised groups. The boundaries of civil society organisations (CSOs), however, are permeable, and some of the people interviewed for this research are also members of state-backed or EAO-affiliated groups.

1.2 Civil society and sustainable peace

Extensive qualitative and quantitative evidence shows that including civil society in peacebuilding leads to longer lasting peace. This was borne out in quantitative studies of peace agreements in the post-Cold War era, for example.

There is much diversity within and between the different layers of civil society. This is a powerful tool for peacebuilding. Research on the role of women's organisations in peace processes, for example, illuminates that the meaningful participation of women increases the likelihood of peace agreements holding.[8] Similarly, there is an emerging understanding that bringing young people into peace initiatives yields positive dividends.[9] Research indicates that young people with a role in transitions increase peaceful cohabitation, reduce discrimination and violence, and support vulnerable groups.[10]

Including CSOs in peace processes is one of the best ways to keep developments from becoming elite-driven and detached from what is happening on the ground. Local, grassroots groups are also well equipped to distill the root causes of violence and bring these issues to the peace table. While research demonstrates the multiple ways that civil society contributes to peace, some notes that, *"civil society can contribute in important ways to peacebuilding, but mostly it plays a supporting role."*[11]

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Who makes up civil society in Myanmar? Are there parts of civil society in Myanmar that are 'uncivil'?

2. How does civil society contribute to peace in Myanmar?

3. Why is it important to consider civil society's participation in peacebuilding?

4. How does civil society contribute to social cohesion in Myanmar?

5. Is civil society limited to professional organisations?

Section 2: Civil Society Space in Myanmar

This section starts by offering a brief historical overview of civil society in Myanmar before analysing how civil society is contributing to peace in Myanmar's transition, inside and outside the formal peace process. Next, this section looks at the contextual factors that help and hinder civil society in Myanmar, then analyses key civil society trends emerging out of data collected to inform this *Discussion Paper*.

2.1. A brief history of civil society in Myanmar

Civil society in Myanmar today can be traced back to pre-independence times, when groups such as the Young Men's Buddhist Association (YMBA) formed in response to British colonial rule. One of the earliest civil society organisations (CSOs) was the Karen National Association (KNA), or Daw K'Lu, founded in 1881 by foreign-educated Karen. KNA's aim was to promote unified Karen identity, leadership, and education, and to work towards the social and economic development of the Kayin people. In 1947, the KNA and other Karen organisations[12] merged, forming the Karen National Union (KNU).[13]

> *Civil society established spaces and activities that lay beyond the attention of the government.*

After U Ne Win's administration came to power in 1962, the state began extending its influence over previously autonomous aspects of social life.[14] Some observers have concluded that Myanmar civil society ceased to exist under successive governments until 2010. This assertion, however, has been re-evaluated in recent years.[15] Particular forms of civil society activity did indeed exist, including on the periphery of the country and areas

of mixed control, despite complex restrictions on people's ability to organise in public spaces.

After U Saw Maung's government came to power in 1988, followed by the administration of U Than Shwe in 1992, many political activists were imprisoned, went underground, or left the country. At the same time the government formed Government Organised Non-Governmental Organisations (GONGOs) to increase its influence over people's engagement in public affairs. These included the Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) – an umbrella group with obligatory membership.[16] However, over time, civil society established spaces and activities that lay beyond the attention of the government.

During the 1990s, the government signed bi-lateral ceasefires with various Ethnic Armed Organisations (EAOs) that ultimately did not create sustainable peace. This process nonetheless created spaces where civil society could emerge and re-emerge. The Metta Development Foundation[17], which today is one of Myanmar's largest non-governmental organisations (NGOs) with over 700 staff across the country, started in Kachin State in response to the bi-lateral ceasefire between the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and the Tatmadaw in 1994. Metta has focussed since its inception on local development and avoided direct engagement on political activities.

Myanmar's biggest CSO that is focussed on peace-related issues, the Nyein (Shalom) Foundation[18], emerged after the same bi-lateral ceasefire agreement. Founded by Reverend Dr. Saboi Jum, who had helped both sides negotiate the accord, Nyein began to expand across the country in 2000. Until 2010, Nyein focussed mainly on peace education. Its team held hundreds of events aimed at changing attitudes and teaching

people conflict management skills. Nyein also held youth inter-faith peace trainings in 2005 and 2006 and helped with youth camps in Indonesia, which became a starting point for other inter-faith youth activities in Myanmar.[19] Nyein has expanded its focus and now engages directly with peace process with its leaders holding high-level technical, advisory, and coordination roles.

Other CSOs grew in spaces where the state was absent. The Free Funeral Service Society (FFSS), founded in Yangon by the actor U Kyaw Thu in 2001, was formed to offer social services to those who could not afford them, filling gaps left by the government. Although predominantly led by Burmese Buddhists, FFSS spread across different ethnic and faith-based communities around the country, and its model was replicated by other organisations. The group's activities were later described as *"soft power resistance"* though FFSS was never outspokenly political. A senior civil society advocate raised concerns that, because FFSS was led by a charismatic individual, it *"built followers, not networks."*[20]

Education was also a key focus of civil society under the more restrictive conditions that preceded U Thein Sein's transitional government. Buddhist monastic schools began to provide civic education while in the Christian communities of Kachin, Kayin, and Kayah States, churches became hubs for the transfer of technical knowledge and skills. Churches and monasteries were among the few institutions that could operate with relative autonomy, and they provided space for viable civil society activities.

Churches in particular offered space for civil society activities that in other contexts would have been situated in secular institutions.[21] The Karen Development Network (KDN), for example, held workshops inside church compounds that would likely have been unable to go ahead elsewhere. It billed its meetings on conflict management, democratisation, and decentralisation as workshops on *"reading the Bible with Karen eyes."*

Two major events in the lead-up to the landmark elections of 2010 revealed the strength of civil society. These were the *"Saffron Revolution"* in 2007, demonstrating the political potential of Buddhist monk-led groups, and cyclone Nargis in 2008, which revealed the mobilising and organising capacity of faith-based organisations and other CSOs.[22] Nargis forged connections between urban and rural communities as local actors became increasingly aware of each other, in many cases for the first time. Many organisations and networks can be traced back to this catalysing moment.[23]

> ❝ *Churches and monasteries were among the few institutions that could operate with relative autonomy.* ❞

Both events contributed to a trend that saw civil society become more politically engaged. This trend, some noted *"was magnified by the National League for Democracy (NLD)'s decision to engage in social work, as a way to engage with communities and mobilise support, while outflanking the government."*[24]

In the mid-1990s, civil society capacity building began to increase inside Thailand, with Chiang Mai and Mae Sot becoming hubs for activists in exile. *(See Section 2.5, 'Cross-border organisations are still relevant', for further information.*[25]*)* Cross-border organisations started to use more and more rights-based, evidence-based and advocacy-focussed approaches, began to speak about federalism,[26] and provided services to communities inside the country, at least in areas accessible to EAOs. During this time, international donors started to provide aid to internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the country alongside support refugees in Thailand.

From the 1990s, *"many conflict-affected communities, particularly in the southeast, were accessible only – or mostly – to local agencies working cross-border from Thailand […] this assistance saved many lives and "served to build local capacities."*[27]

Nan Thin Mya Mya Hlaing Htoo, Football United (center) next to Dr. Htay Naung (left), State Health Ministry and Myanmar Red Cross Society Kayin State, and U Myint Naing (right), Hpa'An University.

Cross-border aid remains vital in areas like Kachin where conflict makes access from government-controlled areas untenable.[28]

Before the transition, with many from the 1988 generation imprisoned or exiled, the work of developing civil society was left largely to younger generations. This is evident today in the fact that political parties mostly have older leaders (often beyond 70 years of age) whereas CSOs' members tend to be below 40 years of age.[29] *(See Section 2.5, 'Youth organisations are becoming more prominent, for further information.)*

> *With many from the 1988 generation imprisoned or exiled, the work of developing civil society was left largely to younger generations.*

These younger generations were encouraged to practice critical thinking during training and education by international groups, and after taking jobs with international non-governmental organisations (INGOs). The British Council, for example, ran a program that was accompanied by identity-based and thematic conversation clubs. It also held specialist programmes such as 'Human Rights for Teachers' and an election-themed discussion forum in the weeks leading to the 2010 general election.

While this support played an important role, organisation around the 2007 Saffron Revolution, cyclone Nargis in 2008, and the 2010 elections, showed that Myanmar civil society initiatives emerged without being driven by international support.

2.2. Civil society in Myanmar's transition

"The space for civil society to contribute to the peace negotiations between the government of Myanmar (GoM) and ethnic armed organisations (EAO) has widened considerably." [30]

After cyclone Nargis, civil society continued *"with a high political tempo"* and many new organisations formed in urban and rural areas.[31] Many exiled advocates started to return to Myanmar in 2012. President U Thein Sein's administration invited some prominent figures to join the Myanmar Peace Centre (MPC) and other national organisations, but advocates were also welcomed back to help at the State level. CSOs also started to rally together to campaign around common issues in Myanmar. For example, widespread civil society opposition to the Myitsone dam in Kachin State played a key role in the suspension of the project in 2011.

Another reason Nargis energised civil society politically is that the disaster caused widespread devastation shortly before the controversial constitutional referendum of 2008. Many civil society actors raised objections to the timing of the poll and rejected the result. Response to the referendum, followed by the 2010 general elections and 2012 by-elections that enabled Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to enter parliament, triggered unprecedented civil society engagement in civic education and election observation. Dr. Nay Win Maung of Myanmar Egress – known for his government contacts – was the most prominent driver of this engagement.[32]

The election of 2015, which brought Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's Government to power, also allowed civil society to show its mobilising capabilities as observers and voter educators. Many civil society groups joined efforts to hold a free and fair vote – efforts that were largely considered successful. During the same period, new bi-lateral ceasefires also galvanised civil society's role in the political process: *"The government's top levels recognised civil society as a key player, inviting participation of CSOs in both peacebuilding and statebuilding processes."*[33] *(For more details, see Section 3.1, Civil Society Functions: Contributing to Peace.)* Civil society also responded to new or recurring violence such as the renewal of conflict in Kachin State in 2011 and the violence in Rakhine State from 2012.[34]

> ❝ *The 2010 and 2012 polls triggered unprecedented civil society engagement in civic education and election observation.* ❞

Before the political transition began, few people had access to the internet or independent media. The end of official pre-publication censorship, and the sudden surge in internet access as SIM cards became widely available, created new challenges that civil society stepped in to help address. False rumours quickly became commonplace on Facebook, by far the most widely used platform in Myanmar with at least ten million users.[35] Some actors have sought to use Facebook to create tensions between communities spread misinformation. In 2014, inter-communal violence flared in Mandalay after rumours about a rape went viral on Facebook. Misinformation online also played a role in other bouts of violence around the country. *(The role of Facebook during the violence in Rakhine in August 2017 is beyond the scope of the Discussion Paper as analysis focuses on events up to June 2017.)*

Civil society responded to these new challenges with various early-warning initiatives, including one in Taunggyi[36], as well as efforts to counter rumours with facts and to de-escalate tensions. Campaigns such as Panzagar *("flower speech")* promoted peaceful coexistence online.[37] Panzagar was founded by Nay Phone Latt, a blogger who was sentenced to 20 years in prison after writing about the 2007 Saffron Revolution, but was released in 2012.[38] A senior civil society leader believes these initiatives were welcomed by President U Thein Sein's administration because they revealed where

A voter in Rakhine state. (Source: Frontier).

civil society was most active.[39] This perception complements a reportedly widely held belief that inter-communal violence may have been stoked deliberately to destabilise the political transition. Some analysts note that people in Myanmar do not necessarily view conflict between Muslims and Buddhists in religious terms or as communal, nor is it necessarily a central concern in daily life, as it is often constructed in the narrative surrounding the violence.[40]

66 *Bi-lateral ceasefires also galvanised civil society's role in the political process.* 99

Researchers have also begun to look into cases where imminent violence was successfully de-escalated by civil society. Walton et al (2017) found that a key factor was that civil society and religious leaders worked with other active citizens.[41] These efforts, though, did not *"necessarily include previously existing inter-faith or peacebuilding groups."*[42]

Rather, the people involved had built up trust and credibility in the communities concerned – and with local authorities - because they were previously involved in other activities unrelated to peace and inter-communal harmony. *"This previous work enabled them to counsel against violence, mediate disputes, and act as trusted interlocutors."* [43] between communities otherwise reluctant to talk.

2.3 Civil society's role inside and outside the formal peace process

Civil society is involved in Myanmar's peace process both formally and outside official channels. A key area where it is involved officially is the CSO Forum, a national platform where CSOs meet for *"issue-based"* discussions under the framework for the political dialogue. This section starts by outlining how civil society is involved in the formal process before discussing the factors that help and hinder civil society's engagement in peace.

The Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA), initially signed by eight EAOs in October 2015,

established the Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC) to oversee a political dialogue process. That Committee, through the national dialogue process, in turn aims to lead to a Union Peace Accord. The NCA also established the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) to observe and deal with ceasefire violations.

The UPDJC is tasked with holding an inclusive dialogue that would happen outside parliament but produce a Union Accord to later be ratified in the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, Myanmar's upper house.[44] In late 2015, the UPDJC announced key sectors for discussion: politics, social issues, economics, security, land and natural resources.[45] In 2016, Daw Aung Sung Suu Kyi's administration decided political parties should only participate if they had elected lawmakers and that civil society should participate mainly through the CSO Forum, with limits on what issues are discussed.[46] The CSO Forum is a formal, albeit parallel, channel for civil society participation in the formal peace process. Overall, civil society has limited space in the formal peace architecture, meaning much of its activity gravitates in and around the process, seeking to influence from the outside.

The national dialogue is a complex process divided into three core components. One is the CSO Forum, another is ethnic dialogues led by EAOs, and the third is regional dialogues – State or Region level processes involving many stakeholders led by government.[47] Civil society can participate in all three parts, though its main channel is through the parallel CSO Forum. At the time of writing this *Discussion Paper*, the first rounds of national dialogues had been convened:

> ## " *Most of the CSOs are not ready to participate in the current political process.* "

The UPDJC also approved regional dialogues in Bago Region and Shan State, but has not yet approved ethnic national dialogues requested in Rakhine and Shan States.[49]

When the parallel CSO Forum was announced in May 2016 by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the sectors for discussion included social, economic, and environmental issues only; politics and security were placed outside the remit of the CSO Forum.[50] Following this announcement a four person committee was established to set out the scope of the CSO Forum. A 43-member committee was later created to oversee the Forum.

Many CSOs publicly opposed the limited mandate of the CSO Forum because many CSO leaders wanted to take part in decision-making at the Panglong Conference and be able to discuss politics and security. Therefore, in preparation for the CSO Forum, CSOs organised a pre-Forum in February 2017 in Taunggyi, which included discussion on politics and security.[51]

The CSO Forum gathered over 500 civil society representatives from across the country, a significant achievement. The CSO Forum included at least one participant from nearly every township in the country, helping to expose more people, particularly in the Regions, to issues relating to

Ethnic Dialogue	Region Dialogue	Issue-based Dialogue
Karen (January 2017)[48] Pa-O (January 2017) Chin (February 2017)	Tanintharyi Region (January 2017)	CSO Forum in Nay Pyi Taw, February 2017, Preceded by a Pre-Forum in Taunggyi

Timeline of key national dialogues (January - February 2017).

INDICATIVE TIMELINE OF KEY HISTORICAL AND CIVIL SOCIETY EVENTS IN MYANMAR

1980s

80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87

- 8888 Political Uprising
- State Law and Order Restoration Council administration

1990s

90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 00

- General Elections
- 17 bi-lateral ceasefires
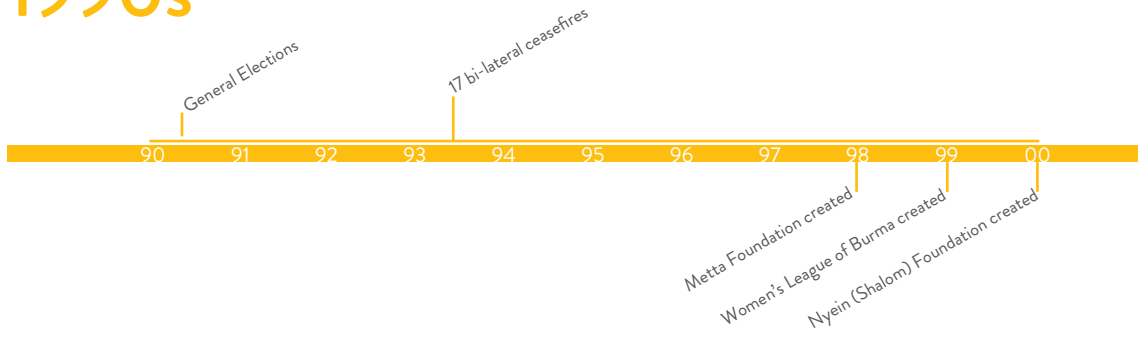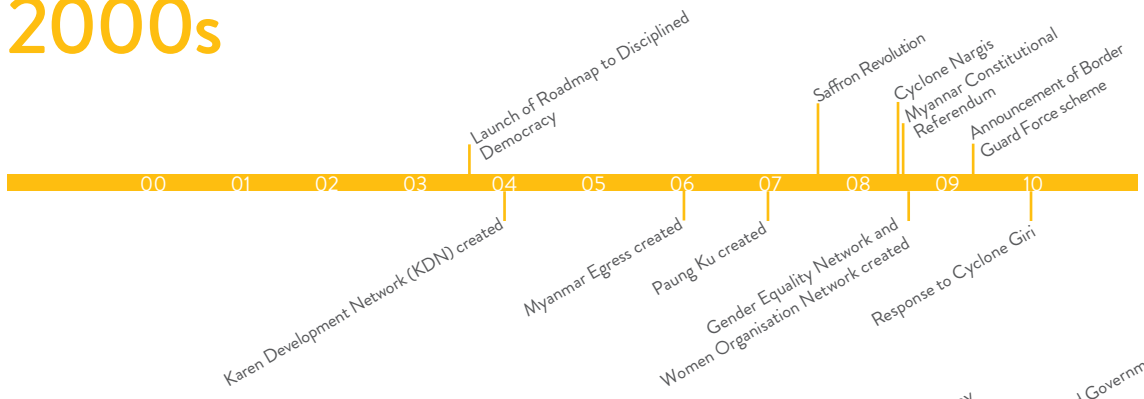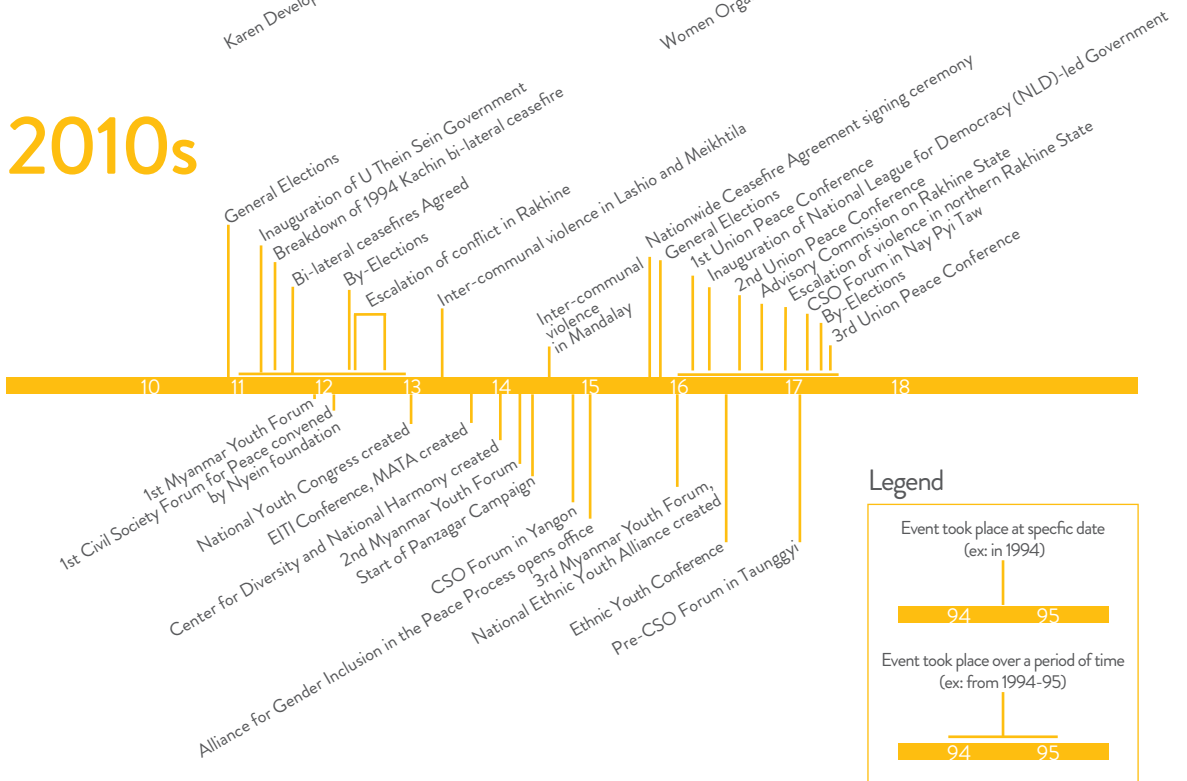- Metta Foundation created
- Women's League of Burma created
- Nyein (Shalom) Foundation created

2000s

00 01 02 03 04 05 06 07 08 09 10

- Launch of Roadmap to Disciplined Democracy
- Saffron Revolution
- Cyclone Nargis
- Myanmar Constitutional Referendum
- Announcement of Border Guard Force scheme
- Karen Development Network (KDN) created
- Myanmar Egress created
- Paung Ku created
- Gender Equality Network and Women Organisation Network created
- Response to Cyclone Giri

2010s

10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18

- General Elections
- Inauguration of U Thein Sein Government
- Breakdown of 1994 Kachin bi-lateral ceasefire
- Bi-lateral ceasefires Agreed
- By-Elections
- Escalation of conflict in Rakhine
- Inter-communal violence in Lashio and Meikhtila
- Inter-communal violence in Mandalay
- Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement signing ceremony
- General Elections
- 1st Union Peace Conference
- Inauguration of National League for Democracy (NLD)-led Government
- 2nd Union Peace Conference
- Advisory Commission on Rakhine State
- Escalation of violence in northern Rakhine State
- CSO Forum in Nay Pyi Taw
- By-Elections
- 3rd Union Peace Conference

- 1st Myanmar Youth Forum
- 1st Civil Society Forum for Peace convened by Nyein foundation
- National Youth Congress created
- EITI Conference, MATA created
- Center for Diversity and National Harmony created
- 2nd Myanmar Youth Forum
- Start of Panzagar Campaign
- CSO Forum in Yangon
- 3rd Myanmar Youth Forum, National Ethnic Youth Alliance created
- Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process opens office
- Ethnic Youth Conference
- Pre-CSO Forum in Taunggyi

Legend

Event took place at specfic date (ex: in 1994)

94 95

Event took place over a period of time (ex: from 1994-95)

94 95

the ongoing peace process. On the other hand, it raised questions about the representativeness of both the organisers and the attendees on behalf of townships, States, and Regions.[52] It also raised questions about what to discuss and how to prioritise key issues that could shape national policies.

There were concerns too about how useful CSOs could be in this framework when channelled into a parallel process. One civil society leader in Magway said: *"The CSO Forum resembles a child that is asking to take part in a game, without an exact role for that child."* [53] Another interviewee said: *"Most of the CSOs are not ready to participate in the current political process."* [54]

> ❝ *The trend of writing policy papers could be a 'trap' that might dampen activism or limit creative forms of civil society engagement and influence.* ❞

Some CSOs approach participation in national dialogues strategically – outside the auspices of the CSO Forum – for example, by focusing on writing policy papers with the view of influencing policy opinions from the outside. This is viewed as a route into political participation (for more information, see Section 2.5). One civil society leader warned that the trend of writing policy papers could be a *"trap"* [55] that might dampen activism or limit creative forms of civil society engagement and influence.[56]

The JMC, established immediately after the NCA signing to set up a process to monitor, verify and respond to ceasefire violations,[57] has three levels – a Union level (JMC-U), a State level (JMC-S), and a local level (JMC-L).[58] The JMC-U consists of ten representatives of the government or Tatmadaw and ten EAO representatives. Both parties nominate three civilians each, adding six civilian members (who are all men) to the JMC-U.[59] This composition is replicated at the lower levels, with the second vice chair usually being a civilian.[60]

In principle, the civilian JMC members have the same decision-making powers as other members, but it is reported that they are often called on to play a mediating role.[61] The civilian members are expected to bring the perspectives "*of the people*" and are often perceived as less biased, though civilian JMC members often wear multiple hats and have several roles in Myanmar's transition.[62] Civilian representatives often lack resources while the other members have offices and access funds to support their roles.[63] To date there is little formal engagement between the civilian JMC members and local peace observers or community protection monitors,[64] though informal channels reportedly exist through personal relationships.[65] *(For more information see Section 3.1, 'Monitoring'.)*

A number of factors either help or hinder CSOs hoping to contribute to peace. The next section will spell out and analyse these enabling and disenabling conditions, noting that these factors often shift as Myanmar's rapidly evolving context unfolds.

FACTORS THAT HELP OR HINDER CIVIL SOCIETY

| 1 Relations with the state | 2 Level of violence | 3 Freedom and role of the media | 4 Diversity within civil society | 5 Influence of external political actors | 6 Role of donor engagement |

The factors shown above are elements that can help and hinder civil society; these six factors are drawn from Paffenholz' peacebuilding framework, which outlines elements that enable or disenable civil society contributions to peace.

2.4. What helps civil society and what hinders it?

"Violence is the most important factor limiting the ability for civil society to play a meaningful role in peacebuilding."

— Thania Paffenholz, CCDP Working Paper

There are six main factors that can either help or inhibit civil society's efforts at peacebuilding. These factors are referred to as enabling or disenabling factors according to the Paffenholz framework developed to analyse the roles of civil society in peace processes and peacebuilding more broadly. These factors include relations with the state, the level of violence where it operates, and media freedom. Diversity within civil society, the influence of external political actors, especially regionally, and donor engagement are also key elements that impact civil society's engagement in peace.[66] These six factors are analysed below in the Myanmar context.

Factor 1: Relations with the state

Before 2010, society in Myanmar was extremely restricted as social control was the norm in everyday life. Civil society spaces nevertheless emerged in bi-lateral ceasefire areas and other niche locations under the radar of the government, demonstrating the inherent resiliency of civil society. Civil society activities have increased significantly responding to emerging opportunities in Myanmar's transition. Some senior CSO leaders believe, though, that President U Thein Sein and Minister U Aung Min sought to contain civil society's energies in favour of a top-down transition.[67] Notably, this is not a universally held assessment across CSO leaders.

> *Access for civil society to local power holders varies from State to State and from person to person.*

The current Myanmar Government continues to set limits for civil society in the peace process. Some CSO leaders have raised concerns about limiting their formal participation in political dialogue to the parallel CSO Forum and setting parameters around the types of issues that can be discussed. Others feel the State Counsellor would prefer CSOs to limit themselves to service delivery. One CSO leader shared that *"It is a misunderstanding that CSOs should only do social*

service. Social service should be provided by the government." [68] A former MP said, reflecting on State Counsellor's perception of civil society: *"We learnt from her how to open dialogue, but she is not exercising what she said. So now we are pushing her to open more dialogue."* [69]

CSOs reported that the change of government in 2016 disrupted communications between civil society and government institutions tasked with taking the lead on the peace process, including sub-national and Union-level parliaments. The NLD-led government is often perceived through the lens of experiences with local government, but access for civil society to local power holders varies from State to State and from person to person and is often based in personal relationships rather than institutions or processes.

Civil society leaders continue to report instances of surveillance of civil society leaders and organisations, offices and activities[70] and restrictions on civil society events. Many CSOs also see the 1908 Unlawful Associations Act, which outlaws contact with certain EAOs, as restrictive, particularly if they operate in areas where EAOs have not signed the NCA. During interviews in Kachin, Kayah, and northern Shan, civil society actors expressed fears about being prosecuted under the Act for engaging with EAOs. Some gender-focussed CSOs reported threats and harassment as a result of their opposition to the four Race and Religion Protection Laws and gender equality advocacy more broadly.[71] CSO advocates have also been among those arrested under the 2013 Telecommunications Law, which is regarded by some CSO leaders as a barrier to freedom of speech.[72]

Further, the 2014 Association Registration Law provides conditions for the registration, and thus formalisation, of CSOs, but questions remain about the registration of networks, as this is not covered by the law. *(For more information, see Section 2.5, 'More groups are officially registering.')*

Factor 2: The level of violence

For much of the time since independence in 1948, excluding a wide-reaching Communist insurgency, armed conflict has never affected the entirety of Myanmar's territory directly. [73] Rather it has taken place largely along its periphery, especially with Thailand and China. However, as some note: *"the whole country and the entire population are affected by conflict, at least indirectly. But there are enormous variations on how different areas and populations have coped, suffered, mobilised, disappeared, and/or survived decades of civil wars in Myanmar."*[74] Some analysis shows that one third of townships are affected by conflict to some extent. The bi-lateral ceasefires of the 1990s allowed the development of some civil society space in areas including Kachin State and Mon State. This trend re-emerged after the bi-lateral ceasefire agreements in 2011 and 2012.

> *Civil society activities under conditions of severe violence are inherently different than those covered by ceasefire agreements.*

Civil society activities under conditions of severe violence are inherently different than those covered by ceasefire agreements. CSOs respond to violence in a range of ways: with advocacy, monitoring and protection activities and humanitarian assistance distinguished from the CSO work in more stable areas. *(For more information, see Section 3.1.)*

Responses to inter-communal violence in Rakhine State and elsewhere show how violence shapes civil society activity. Relations between different ethnic communities are also tested by conflict between EAOs, creating challenges well-suited for civil society to address with peacebuilding and conflict de-escalation efforts. This happened between Shan and Ta'ang communities in northern Shan State *(see Section 4.7, 'Shan State')* and between Shan and Kachin communities in Kachin State.[75]

Factor 3: The freedom and role of the media

The space for media in Myanmar has expanded rapidly in recent years. Since 2011, pre-publication censorship has been abolished, private daily newspapers and other media have proliferated, and more training has become available for journalists. Across the country, this has enhanced public scrutiny and enhanced the quality journalism.[76] Despite these shifts, challenges persist. A 2016 Freedom House publication noted, *"the government maintained tight control over the media,"* meaning that media workers still risked violence for critical coverage *"of the government, the military, and rebel groups."*[77] Independent media outlets also face chronic shortages in investment, which limits their ability to scale up reporting across the country.

> ❝ *Since 2011, pre-publication censorship has been abolished, private daily newspapers and other media have proliferated.* ❞

Journalists cover peace and conflict across the country and have some access to EAOs. In June 2017 three journalists were charged under the Unlawful Associations Act for reporting in northern Shan State, though these charges were later dropped.[78] Myanmar's News Media Law, a local report noted at the time, "*broadly exempts journalists from being detained by security forces in the course of their coverage of conflicts.*"[79] An NLD spokesperson said, though, that the journalists' arrest does not damage press freedom in Myanmar.[80] The use of the Telecommunications Acts in defamation cases indicates re-emerging limitations to the freedom of expression. In June 2017, over one hundred reporters launched a campaign against section 66(d) and set up a committee to protect journalists.[81] Some journalists have said that they have started to self-censor more when they write about the government.

There is some overlap and cooperation between civil society actors and journalists. In Mon State, for example, there are monthly coordination meetings between CSOs and media outlets, facilitated by the Southern Myanmar Journalist Network.[82] CSOs also developed various forms of citizen journalism, media monitoring and anti-hate speech initiatives, which often take place on Facebook, the most widely used social media platform in the country. In Kayah State, the Kantarawaddy Times, for instance, runs a fellowship program with CSOs. Fellows distribute the newspaper to villages and receive training on how to gather information in remote areas. The paper also cooperates with the Karenni National Women's Organization (KNWO) to extend training to women in refugee camps in Thailand.[83]

Factor 4: The diversity within civil society

*"If we don't work together, we cannot go far …
We are the biggest threat to ourselves."*

—Interview in Loikaw on 10 March 2017

Civil society in Myanmar contains highly localised organisations, nationwide groups and everything in between. A large number of ethnicities, faiths, gender identities, age groups and ideologies shape civil society. Some advocates and groups are rural, some are urban; some operate across national borders and others in-country. Geographical differences tend to affect the focus of the work at hand. Civil society in the Regions is much less concerned with the peace process than in States, for example. Ethnic politics also play a role in many Regions, though, especially along the borders with States. Ethnicity is arguably one of the most prominent markers of identity expressed in civil society. Civil society's diversity can be interpreted as a strength even if it also reflects divisions and differences.

> ## If there are two people in one room trying to solve a problem, they will leave it having founded three organisations.

Interactions between CSOs are a crucial factor for their growth, development, and effectiveness. Initiatives that explicitly reach beyond ethnic and religious boundaries to enhance social cohesion are currently rare *(see Section 3.1, 'Social Cohesion').* Despite the formation of many national and subnational networks, civil society appears to be competitive and divided, influenced by *"unhealthy competition"* over resources and personal recognition or status, making organisations and individuals prone to power struggles.[84] A common saying in Myanmar speaks to this issue: *"If there are two people in one room trying to solve a problem, they will leave it having founded three organisations."* Personal rivalries play into these dynamics in many cases though not in all instances. In the words of a

long-time observer of Myanmar politics: *"This is a land of competition and jealousy."*[85] This sentiment seems to be widely acknowledged among CSOs. A female CSO leader in Hpa'an stated: "*Most CSOs want to support the peace process […] but they don't understand the history and the root causes of the conflict. Many CSOs are interested in the peace process because of the budget, not the politics.*"[86]

> ## Many CSOs are interested in the peace process because of the budget, not the politics.

Some civil society leaders interviewed report that international aid contributes to competition and jealousy amongst CSOs. Organisations operating outside of Yangon, particularly in rural areas and across international borders, often feel their counterparts in the city have an unfair advantage in accessing funding. One leader in Lashio shared that donors do not really support CSOs in remote areas. But these CSOs are really the ones engaging with the communities. They should not only give to CSOs who can come up with a good proposal. They should look at what they are doing.[87] Another advocate in Chin State said *"township level Community Based Organisations (CBOs) don't know how to write a proposal, but they know how to handle the problem."*[88] Some CSOs note that international influence is having an impact, as one leader in Taunggyi shared: *"INGOs came and our unity was broken […] Many CSOs are project-orientated and follow where the funding is […] Now many communities won't come to participate if we don't pay them."*[89]

Lway Poe Ngeal, Women's League of Burma.

Factor 5: The influence of external political actors[90]

Thailand has allowed the presence of Myanmar ethnic armed actors in exile for decades. Chiang Mai remains an important hub for ethnic politics, not least because of the presence of the United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC). In addition, Thailand continues to host over 100,000 refugees and up to three million Myanmar migrant workers, most of whom do not have a legal residence permit.

China is an increasingly influential player in the peace process.[91] For exiled organisations based in Chiang Mai, the route through China was for a long time the fastest and safest way to reach

Kachin State. China also experiences spill-over effects from armed conflict in northern Shan State and Kachin State and hosts a significant population of refugees and migrants from Kachin. China is increasingly investing in large-scale infrastructure projects in the country. India's role is not as prominent, but is relevant to the role of Naga armed groups across the border from the Naga Self-Administered Zone (SAZ) in Sagaing Region. India has also provided refuge for the Chin National Front (CNF) in the past[92] and hosts Rakhine communities in border towns who have some contact with civil society groups in Rakhine State.[93] Bangladesh, similarly, hosts refugees from Rakhine State.

Factor 6: The role of donor engagement

"We expect more than we invest."

—INGO National Program Officer, Sittwe, 31 March 2017

International support plays a significant role in shaping civil society's engagement in the peace process and peacebuilding more broadly.[94] Since the easing of international sanctions in 2012, the amount of international aid has increased significantly. At the time of interviews, civil society leaders reported a perception that donors were increasingly shifting their support to government rather than CSOs. CSOs' perceptions of donors are divergent and depend on their direct interaction with international entities. One senior CSO leader commented that *"the civil society sector seems forgotten now"*[95] when reflecting on international aid. Another civil society advocate said, *"now it is only the peace sector that provides funding"*[96]. Paung Ku, which started as an initiative of INGOs to support local self-help groups in 2007, is often mentioned as a funder for CSOs at the local level. Donors say that CSO capacities to work with international funding have grown over recent years – organisational and capacity development was an explicit goal of earlier approaches to funding.[97]

> ## Now it is only the peace sector that provides funding.

Although few donors have an explicit or exclusive focus on civil society and peacebuilding, most believe that both are important. At the same time, there is a shared sentiment among donors that the full potential of civil society engagement and contributions to peacebuilding has not yet been fully explored. Different donors and agencies apply different definitions (or no definition at all) to peacebuilding, meaning there is no unifying strategy about which organisations and sectors to fund. Daw Seng Raw, a CSO leader, reflecting on donor approaches shared: *"I think that it is misguided to separate humanitarian, economic development, protection and rights issues from peacebuilding Uneven or uncoordinated support of one field or the other is self-defeating."*[98]

> ## It is misguided to separate humanitarian, economic development, protection and rights issues from peacebuilding.

Few donors or funding agencies provide core funding for CSOs, instead funding projects, activities or events. This is perceived as detrimental to strengthening CSOs in the long-term: *"While INGOs receive core funding for essential needs like rent, accommodation, salaries and travel, local and national NGOs very often do not, which prevents them from undertaking strategic planning and building the systems that are able to meet donor funding requirements. This can lead to the marginalisation of local NGOs and hinders effective aid delivery."*[99] However, core funding can be approached in several ways depending on what is defined as the *"core"* – overheads, strategy, or mission – and different organisations have different core needs. One interlocutor shared that an increase in funding and the number of projects that have to be managed does not result in an increase of civil society capacity.[100]

CIVIL SOCIETY IN MYANMAR: TRENDS

1

NEW ORGANISATIONS
A boom in new CSOs

2

REGISTRATION
More groups are
officially registering

3

POLICY CSOs
Want to engage
more in policy

6

YOUTH
Youth organisations are
becoming more prominent

5

GENDER
Women's organisations are
advocating for gender participation

4

NETWORKS
CSO's build networks

7

CEASEFIRES
Bi-lateral ceasefires
transform relations
with armed groups

8

CROSSBORDER
Cross-border
organisations are
still relevant

9

LITERATURE AND CULTURE
Groups that preserve
ethnic culture are evolving

The trends identified - discussed in section 2.5 - above show key findings related to civil society developments based on research undertaken to inform this *Discussion Paper* from January to June 2017.

2.5. Current trends

Myanmar's fast-paced transition has had a significant impact on civil society. Not only are more organisations emerging, but also their focusses and approaches are shifting as they seek to adapt to a fast-paced context. This *Discussion Paper* will now examine nine key trends on civil society and peace that emerged from analysing primary data collected as part of the research process. Analysis of these trends covers Myanmar's transition up to June 2017.

Trend 1: A boom in new CSOs

Of the 197 organisations interviewed for this *Discussion Paper* between February and March 2017, just 14.7% - or 28 groups - were founded before 2000. Many of these are or were cross-border organisations. From 2008, after cyclone Nargis, the number of CSOs in Myanmar increased rapidly; civil society leaders founded 23 organisations between 2008 and 2011.

Under the administration of President U Thein Sein, this trend accelerated, with 75 groups – just under 40% of all those interviewed – forming between 2012 and 2014. A further 35 - 17.8% - have been founded since 2015.[101] While these figures reveal something of a boom in new CSOs during the course of the political transition, several new organisations at State and Region level are informal, rely on a network of volunteers and often have yet to fully develop their organisational capacity.

What is more, within the fast-paced dynamics of the transition, organisations are forming before being abandoned by their founders after they decide to pursue a new project to better suit the new environment they find themselves in. There are also some cases of empty organisations, which only consist of one or two members. These issues relate to the fractionalisation among CSOs and their competitive quest for influence and access to international funding.

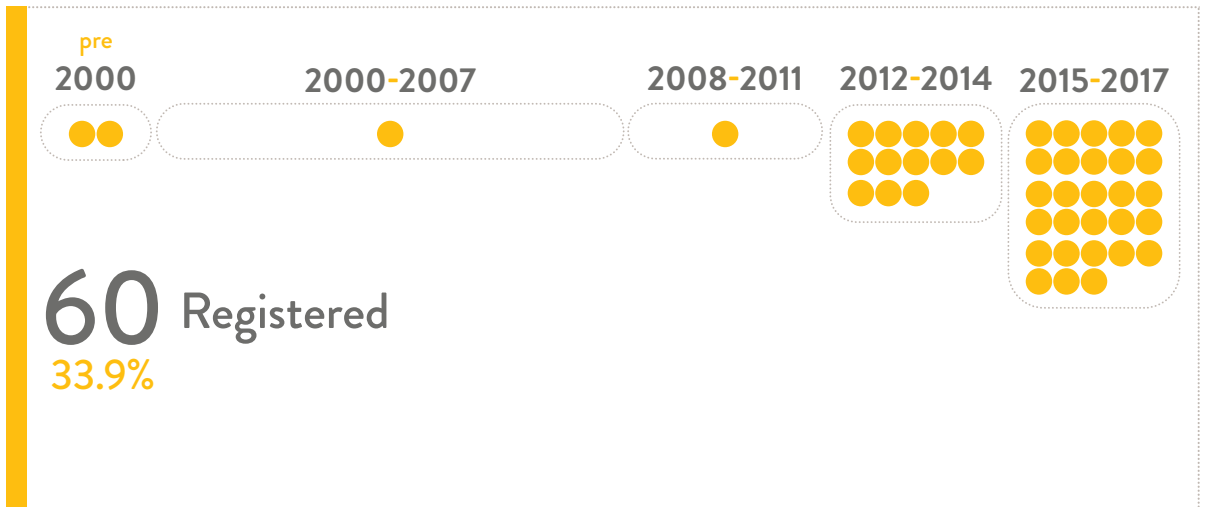### Trend 2: More groups are officially registering

Civil society organisations across the country pursue different approaches and have different perspectives on legally registering. Those who actively engage with the government and try to influence it choose registration, while cross border organisations and those who mistrust or fear the government prefer to stay unregistered, under the radar *(see below in this section, 'Cross-border organisations are still relevant')*. Although registration is not always a strict requirement to receive donor funding, many think it improves their chances of attracting international investment.

> 66 *Most CSOs remain unregistered but there is a clear trend towards registering.* 99

Until 2014, few organisations were officially registered and there was little legal framework to do so. The passing of the new Registration of Associations Law in July 2014, which applies to national NGOs, CSOs and INGOs alike, changed these conditions. This law was the result of a consultation between legislators and civil society. The passing of the Registration Law in 2014 is considered a success for civil society-driven policy-advocacy and constructive engagement between government and CSOs in itself. Organisations can now apply for registration at various levels - Union, State, township, and so forth - according to their area of activities for a five-year term. The registration process is not considered to be difficult, although some CSOs consider reporting requirements after registration onerous. Several organisations say they had to change their name during the registration process to make it less political or remove explicit references to ethnic identity. Some civil society leaders report that requirements are unevenly applied.

There is a clear recent trend towards registration based on data collected for this *Discussion Paper*. Most of the CSOs interviewed for this *Discussion Paper* were unregistered, but of those that had

INDICATIVE CIVIL SOCIETY REGISTRATION TIMELINE

| pre 2000 | 2000-2007 | 2008-2011 | 2012-2014 | 2015-2017 |

60 Registered
33.9%

18 Registration in process
11.2%

99 Yet to initiate process
55.9%

Total in sample:

177

Civil society organisations

The data shown above was compiled from interviews with 177 organisations. Organisations were asked to share the status of their registration in order to glean an indicative trend of the number of registered vs. unregistered organisations.
(Note: of the 60 organisations registered, 15 did not specify the year they officially registered.)

registered the majority (46.7%) did so after 2015. Just over 20% that had registered did so between 2012 and 2014, and only one CSO registered between 2008 and 2011, one between 2000 and 2007, and two before 2000. While only a third of the 177 interviewed were officially registered, just over 10% said they have applied and are awaiting approval.

Trend 3: CSOs want to engage more in policy

Another recent phenomenon is that CSOs increasingly want to influence policy processes. CSOs have been engaged in advocacy campaigns since at least the mid-2000s, but specialised policy institutions seem to have only arrived during the political transition process. One is the Yangon School of Political Science (YSPS)[102], founded in 2012 by alumni of the British Council and the American Center, which conducts political education. As a spin-off of YSPS, the People's Alliance for Credible Elections (PACE)[103] developed a specialisation in citizen election observation. Supported by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and international funding, PACE grew and professionalised significantly during its involvement in the 2015 elections. Founded by two faculty members of Myanmar Egress in 2011 and made up mostly with alumni from there, the independent Enlightened Myanmar Research Foundation (EMReF)[104] has become a valuable partner for international organisations and universities, conducting a wide range of research.

Some policy and think tanks include entities like the Tagaung Institute of Political Studies (TIPS).[105] TIPS offers rare contributions to the policy fields of civilian-military relations and security sector reform since 2015, driven by a group of young people of various ethnic backgrounds. Some organisations have a core focus on providing background research and information for the peace process *(see Section 4.4, 'Peacemakers keep the public informed')*. Others provide research and policy generation for EAOs, like the Pyidaungsu

> ## New CSO networks are emerging both at Union and sub-national level.

Institute (PI)[106] and the Ethnic Nationalities Affairs Center (ENAC).[107]

The phenomenon of CSOs opting to engage in the political dialogue process by advising on policy is supported largely by international donors. Emerging CSOs at the sub-national level also want to participate more in policy influencing, requesting further capacity development in this techical area. Where these policy research and advocacy capacities require strengthening, national CSOs also sometimes engage international consultants to assist them in technical policy formulation.[108] This new trend of CSOs engaging in policy reflects an older trend of civil society in Myanmar taking on roles that are not fulfilled by the state. Just as CSOs formed under EAOs to provide service related to healthcare and education to their communities, civil society groups today are forming to fill gaps in policy and ideas where institutions do not exist to serve this purpose.

Trend 4: CSOs build networks

"We can raise our voice stronger. We can show that we are on the same page when it comes to crucial issues."

—Environmental Activist, February 2017, Yangon

New CSO networks are emerging both at Union and sub-national level. Civil society networks in Myanmar vary greatly in size, orientation, and institutionalisation. This involves well-structured issue-based networks at Union level, cross-border networks, State-level networks, and loose partnerships between organisations.[109] Inside the country, networks started to form during the 2000s, first in response to the issue of HIV/AIDS and then around environmental issues. More networks were founded following cyclone Nargis in 2008. With the opening of space for civil society since 2011, numerous policy-advocacy networks

LINKAGES BETWEEN CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS AND NETWORKS
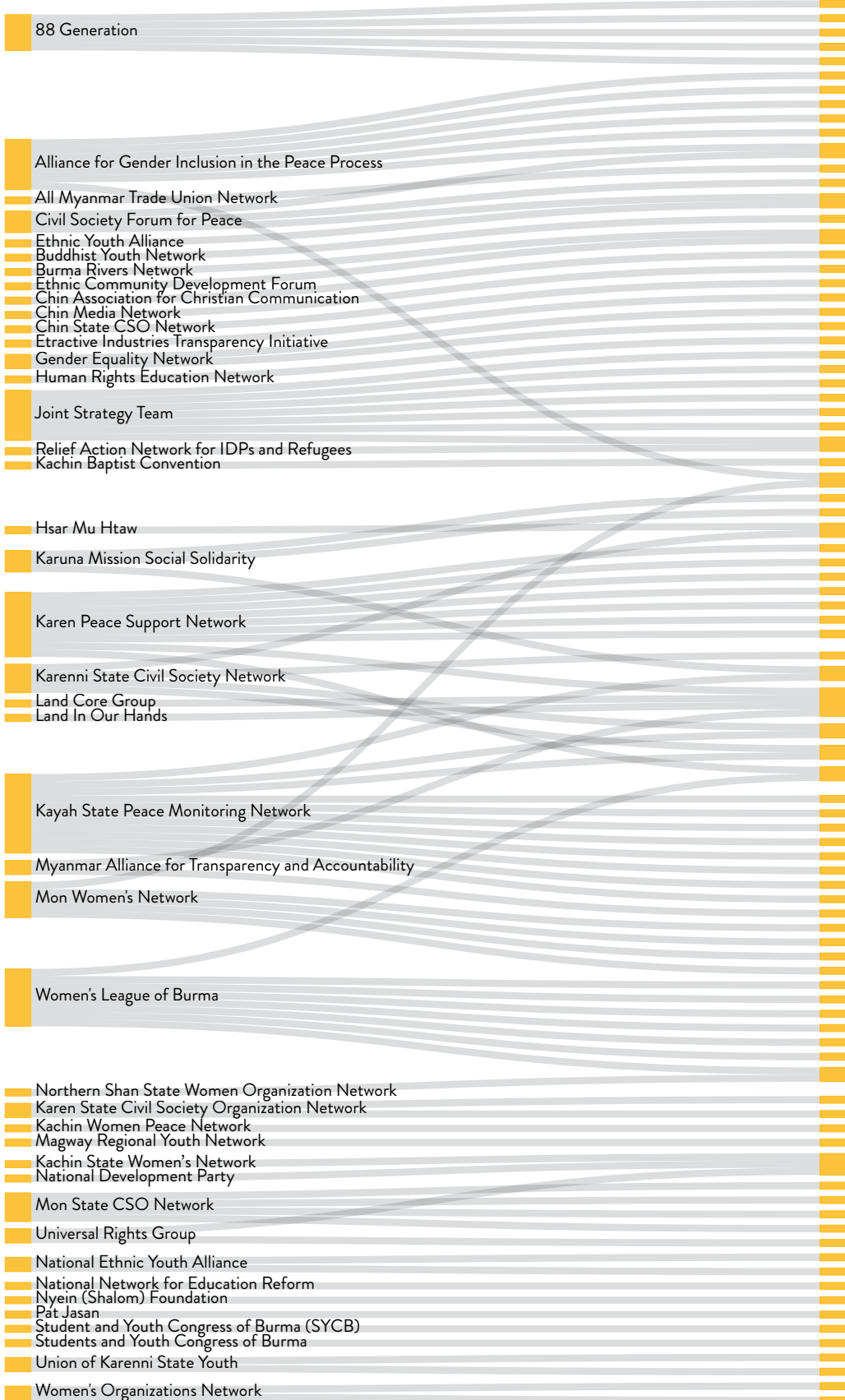
Civil Society Networks

Civil Society Organisations

Each yellow block on this side represents a civil society network.

Each yellow block on this side represents a CSO.

Thickness represents number of network members. For example, this network has 7 members.

Thickness represents number of networks each CSO is a member of. This CSO is a member of 2 networks.

88 Generation

Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process
All Myanmar Trade Union Network
Civil Society Forum for Peace
Ethnic Youth Alliance
Buddhist Youth Network
Burma Rivers Network
Ethnic Community Development Forum
Chin Association for Christian Communication
Chin Media Network
Chin State CSO Network
Etractive Industries Transparency Initiative
Gender Equality Network
Human Rights Education Network

Joint Strategy Team

Relief Action Network for IDPs and Refugees
Kachin Baptist Convention

Hsar Mu Htaw

Karuna Mission Social Solidarity

Karen Peace Support Network

Karenni State Civil Society Network
Land Core Group
Land In Our Hands

Kayah State Peace Monitoring Network

Myanmar Alliance for Transparency and Accountability

Mon Women's Network

Women's League of Burma

Northern Shan State Women Organization Network
Karen State Civil Society Organization Network
Kachin Women Peace Network
Magway Regional Youth Network
Kachin State Women's Network
National Development Party

Mon State CSO Network

Universal Rights Group

National Ethnic Youth Alliance

National Network for Education Reform
Nyein (Shalom) Foundation
Pat Jasan
Student and Youth Congress of Burma (SYCB)
Students and Youth Congress of Burma

Union of Karenni State Youth

Women's Organizations Network

were formed, often by leaders or organisations that already had the trust of CSOs.[110] Overall, the impact of networks varies and depends on many contextual factors.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) provided support to nine civil society networks and three media networks across all States, except Rakhine, between 2015 and 2017. Several of these networks existed already and intend to continue their networking activities after funding ends, even if it is unclear how they will sustain their operations. In some States, the move towards institutionalisation with external support has reportedly increased divides between local organisations. As with stand-alone organisations, the functionality of networks, among other factors, depends on their leadership and governance structures, which is prone to competition. There is also some resistance from State and Region-based organisations to networking initiatives born in Yangon as some sub-national leaders highlight that these networks are driven by urban elites who sometimes have limited understanding of sub-national communities.[111]

In the field of peacebuilding, a few networks stand out. In 2012, Nyein started to convene the Civil Society Forum for Peace (CSFoP), which was later extended to States and Regions as the Civil Society Network for Peace (CSNeP).[112] Despite providing an opportunity for regular information sharing at Union level, this appears to be seldom anchored at the local level. The coming together in networks is a response to the proliferation of new CSOs, but also a conscious attempt to join forces in order to strengthen policy-advocacy and fund-raising efforts.[113]

Trend 5: Women are advocating for more inclusion

Women and gender-focussed CSO are among those with the clearest organisational profiles.[114] Unlike those in other peacebuilding arenas, they often ground their work in international standards such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)[115], the Beijing Platform for Action (1992) and the UN Security Council Resolutions (UNSCRs) that form the Women, Peace and Security agenda.[116] Many Myanmar CSOs working in this field advocate for more and better roles for women in the peace process.[117] Organisations like the Karen Women's Empowerment Group (KWEG) and the Gender and Development Institute (GDI) also work on monitoring and responding to gender-based violence (GBV). The Thingaha Gender Organization (TGO), meanwhile, actively engages with men and their attitudes towards gender equality with a focus on *"positive masculinities."*[118]

Gender based and women's networks have emerged in line with more general CSO networks. Both the Gender Equality Network (GEN) and the Women's Organizations Network (WON)[119] emerged after cyclone Nargis out of the Women Protection Working Group. Two networks stand out in relation to peacebuilding: the Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process (AGIPP) and the Women's League of Burma (WLB). AGIPP[120] was started as a "*network of networks*" in 2014 with seven member organisations or partners[121] to enhance the inclusion of women and gender in the peace process. They have published and circulated policy papers and undertaken outreach and advocacy targeted at government, EAOs and donors. Now AGIPP is co-chair of the Technical Working Group on Women, Peace and Security established by the Myanmar National Committee for Women's Affairs (MNCWA) as part of the framework to implement the National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women (NSPAW). One senior leader said: *"I really feel that the network brings us together and makes us stronger.*

Karen woman attending a gender peace and security training workshop.

We really believe that AGIPP can shape the situation of Myanmar from women's perspectives. This is creating value for our organisations. But AGIPP has limited sharing mechanisms." [122]

The Women's League of Burma (WLB), one of the oldest cross-border networks with 13 members, was founded in 1999 in Chiang Mai and still maintains an office in exile.[123] Although its member organisations are heterogeneous, they are all formed around ethnic identity and some have connections to EAOs. The Kachin Women's Association Thailand (KWAT), founded in 1999 and still operating out of Chiang Mai, grew in response to human trafficking and provides health services to vulnerable communities.[124]

Trend 6: Youth organisations are becoming more prominent[125]

"Youths are also one of the stakeholders. They have the willingness and capacity to engage in the country's development starting from the peace process."

—Youth Leader in Yesagyo, March 2017

Data from the interviews conducted for this *Discussion Paper* suggest that people over 35 years of age still dominate the CSO landscape, but that the inclusion of youth is on the rise. Youths are engaging in every sector of Myanmar's development. Many of the longer-established youth groups originate from chapters of EAOs, but have since formed their own independent identities. The political transition has encouraged new youth groups in all States and Regions. These youth organisations are often politically active. For example, the Shan State Peace Task Force, a loose network involving several youth organisations, organised a signature campaign calling for an end to fighting in Monshu and Kyethi in 2015. They shared their request with the Tatmadaw and the Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS) and with the media. They also went to the front line and brought wounded civilians to hospitals.[126] Some youth groups have also engaged in inter-

faith activities *(see Section 3.1, 'Social Cohesion')*, but youth of different faiths generally do not know much about others' ritual spaces and beliefs.[127]

Initiatives like that of the Shan State Peace Task Force are fluid, have minimal institutional-backing, and are often driven by individuals who might not have strong networks behind them. They resemble a low-key movement rather than a formal organisation. To some extent, the same is true for the National Ethnic Youth Alliance (NEYA). NEYA dates back to small-scale initiatives in northern Shan State in 2010 and grew after the outbreak of violence by providing *ad hoc* humanitarian assistance and collecting donations for survivors of conflict in their communities. In 2012, several Shan, Kachin, and Palaung youth groups met for discussions on how to collaborate better in China, as this was still not possible for them at home. Since 2013, their movement has gained traction in Yangon and Mandalay. Their efforts resulted in a National Ethnic Youth Conference in July 2016, which brought together nearly 800 youths from across the country.

Like AGIPP, NEYA was invited to participate in the second and third iterations of the Union Peace Conference (UPC) as observers. Speaking at a Myanmar Youth Forum held in Monywa, a veteran student highlighted low levels of youth inclusion in the peace process.[128] One CSO leader in Tanintharyi Region said: *"If the future generation cannot stand on their own feet, some of these children might join armed organisations. If we cannot sustain our peace process, they will return to fighting."* [129]

Nai Hong Prize, Mon Youth Progressive Organization.

Trend 7: Bi-lateral ceasefires transformed relations with armed groups

Many CSOs, particularly in States, have varying degrees of proximity to EAOs and armed groups often form a centre of gravity for their peacebuilding activities. This is true not just of organisations that originated as bodies of EAOs. Many women's and youth organisations were at least historically part of EAO structures. For instance, the Karen Women's Organization (KWO) is mandated by the KNU's constitution, and is essentially the equivalent of a government-organised NGO (GONGO) such as the Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation. The Karenni National Youth Organization (KNYO), one of four members of the Union of Karenni State Youth (UKSY), is still a part of the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) and meets them regularly.[130] These and similar organisations operate with various degrees of dependency on and allegiance to their parent organisation, but are also critical of their policies.

Before ceasefires, open relationships with EAOs often did not exist, in part due to the Unlawful Associations Act. When relations did exist, it was across international borders or under the radar of the government. Bi-lateral ceasefires, and subsequent signing of the NCA, which legally ended the EAO signatories' status as *"unlawful"*, triggered a significant transformation of EAO-CSO relations. Although many CSOs continue to be critical of EAOs, they also reportedly often find more open doors for policy and advocacy with EAOs than with the government, and feel that they stand for a common cause. The UPDJC framework appears to reinforce these relations, particularly in States where ethnic-based national dialogues are taking place.

The situation is different in Kachin State where the KIA's bi-lateral ceasefire with the Tatmadaw broke down in 2011. Both CSOs and the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO) consider that they are in opposition to the government, forging alliances between some civil society groups and the KIO to the extent that they appear at times inseparable. It is very important to note, however, that many CSOs have no relationship with EAOs. Such relationships are indeed common in the context of the peace process, but this tends not to be the case for CSOs working on inter-communal harmony, social cohesion and other issues related to Myanmar's transition.

Trend 8: Cross-border organisations are still relevant

Long-standing civil society capacity building in Chiang Mai and other locations supported by the international community has had a lasting influence on CSOs inside Myanmar. This is thanks to individuals bringing home their skills and experiences and also to continued cross-border advocacy. Cross-border activities in southeastern Myanmar have, some feel, become less prominent since the space for civil society has grown inside the country, though not all civil society leaders share this view. Such activities, though, remain influential. Service delivery to conflict-affected communities, including health and education, remain especially important.

Since 2010, the notion that exiled advocacy groups would no longer be necessary has gained traction. Increasingly facing of shortfalls in funding, these groups do not appear to have the influence they held before.[131] One Yangon-based senior civil society activist said that *"cross-border activists were unprepared for 'inside'"*, meaning that their expertise and approaches did not match the skill-set required in a rapidly changing Myanmar.[132] Some leaders and members of cross-border organisations remain uncertain over the future of the political transition and the peace process in particular, choosing to remain in hubs like Chiang

Some leaders and members of cross-border organisations remain uncertain over the future of the political transition.

Mai and Mae Sot. A number of border CSOs are actively engaged in peace. These groups include the Karen Environmental and Social Action Network (KESAN), which monitor the peace process and environmental conservation. In 2013, KESAN opened an office in Yangon, but remains based in Thailand. They now direct their policy-advocacy campaigns to the Myanmar government, the KNU, and the international community.[133]

Saw De Htoo, Kayin Culture and Literature of Thandaung Township.

Trend 9: Groups that preserve ethnic culture are transforming

The ethnic literature and culture groups widespread across most ethnic communities in Myanmar are a form of civil society. Many of these associations or committees date back to the administration of U Ne Win, when they were used to contain civil society energies under the watch of the state, but some are even older and others were formed very recently. Traditionally, they are dedicated to the preservation and teaching of ethnic languages and culture, such as traditional costumes and dances. However, they can also be entangled in much larger societal and political dynamics, including relations with political parties, EAOs, or other armed groups.

> ❝ *Chin literature and culture associations exist in every township of Chin State, each propagating a different language.* ❞

Ethnic literature and culture associations can serve political ends and social projects. In Kayah State, the Karenni Literature and Culture Association has been instrumental in preparing now officially used text books for native language education,

and CSO leaders actively take part in the association.[134] The situation is similar for the Mon Literature and Culture Associations and CSOs around the Mon National Education Committee.[135] Chin literature and culture associations exist in every township of Chin State, each propagating a different language. The Chair of the Shan literature and Culture Association represented Shan State at the second UPC in 2016.[136] The Kachin Literature and Culture Association, situated at the ritual Manaw grounds in Myitkyina, provides a venue for political dialogue events.

It appears these associations are also in a state of transformation because of the political transition. The leader of the Karen Literature and Culture Association in Mawlamyine, Mon State, explained that since 2012, they have expanded their committees to every township in the State. They also want to formalise and are in the process of registering at the State level. The Boards of these entities are traditionally dominated by older men but some literature and culture groups are inspired by the debate about quotas in the peace process and are looking to increase the numbers of women and youth involved. The learners in the group's language classes and summer camps are usually youths. This Karen group is a member of the Mon State Civil Society Network (MSCSN), and its leader was part of the 30-member delegation to the CSO Forums in Taunggyi and Nay Pyi Taw.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How has civil society contributed to Myanmar's history?

2. How has Myanmar's transition impacted civil society?

3. Which factors help and hinder civil society in Myanmar?

4. What is the relationship between media and civil society?

5. How is civil society advancing gender equality?

6. How has cross-border civil society evolved throughout Myanmar's transition?

Section 3: Civil Society's Role in Peace

This section considers civil society's role in peacebuilding in Myanmar using a framework of peacebuilding functions[137] developed by Thania Paffenholz. The aim is to offer food for thought and analysis to discuss civil society's diverse contributions to peace in Myanmar, rather than a comprehensive overview.

3.1. Civil Society Functions: Contributing to Peace

There is no universal definition of peacebuilding. It can be broadly defined as efforts that increase the chance of peaceful coexistence and decrease the likelihood of conflict. It is often noted that peacebuilding is most effective when *"driven by internal actors… it cannot be imposed from the outside."* [138]

> **Most people interviewed appeared to related peacebuilding to a negative peace rather than a positive peace.**

One way to understand and analyse civil society's contributions to peacebuilding in Myanmar is through research led by Thania Paffenholz and others. Building on a three-year comparative project in sixteen countries, they have proposed seven functions of civil society in peacebuilding.[139] These seven functions are: protection, monitoring, advocacy, socialisation, social cohesion, mediation and facilitation, and service delivery.

These categories are loosely defined, and there is overlap between them, meaning that peacebuilding functions do not operate in isolation from each other. [140] In Myanmar, civil society organisations (CSOs) are responding to a fast-paced transition, often in creative ways. In some instances they lack specialisation, and try to do several things at the same time. Therefore, fitting civil society organisations and their activities neatly into

one of these seven categories can be difficult, but nonetheless offers a starting point for disaggregating a flurry of activity related to peace.

The activities of CSOs are fluid and functions do not occur in isolation but rather in clusters. For example, protection is often done in tandem with monitoring. Similar patterns of clustered functions are also observed in groupings around monitoring and advocacy, socialisation and social cohesion, facilitation and mediation. As Paffenholz and her colleagues point out, it is sometimes difficult to distil different activities using the lens of these functions. Nonetheless, analysis of civil society functions provides a starting point rather than an end point for analysis.

Another element to keep in mind is that the relevance of peacebuilding functions changes over time. Certain peacebuilding efforts, for example, come and go depending on whether there is violence or not. *(See Section 2.4, 'The level of violence'.)* With some exceptions, most people interviewed for this *Discussion Paper* appeared to relate peacebuilding to a *negative peace* – the absence of violence – rather than a *positive peace*, which refers to the larger potential of peaceful society.[141] This perception appears to be grounded in what people face in everyday life – violence or peace or a hybrid of both peace and conflict. Many people working on the peace process or peacebuilding are focussed on stopping violence, preventing new violence, alleviating suffering and long-standing inequalities, or supporting negotiations. While positive peace is a longer term aim, civil society in Myanmar has already significantly contributed to peacebuilding in valuable and meaningful ways.

This section will now look at the seven functions identified by Paffenholz and others and analyse how they apply to civil society in Myanmar.

ASSESSING PEACEBUILDING FUNCTIONS IN MYANMAR
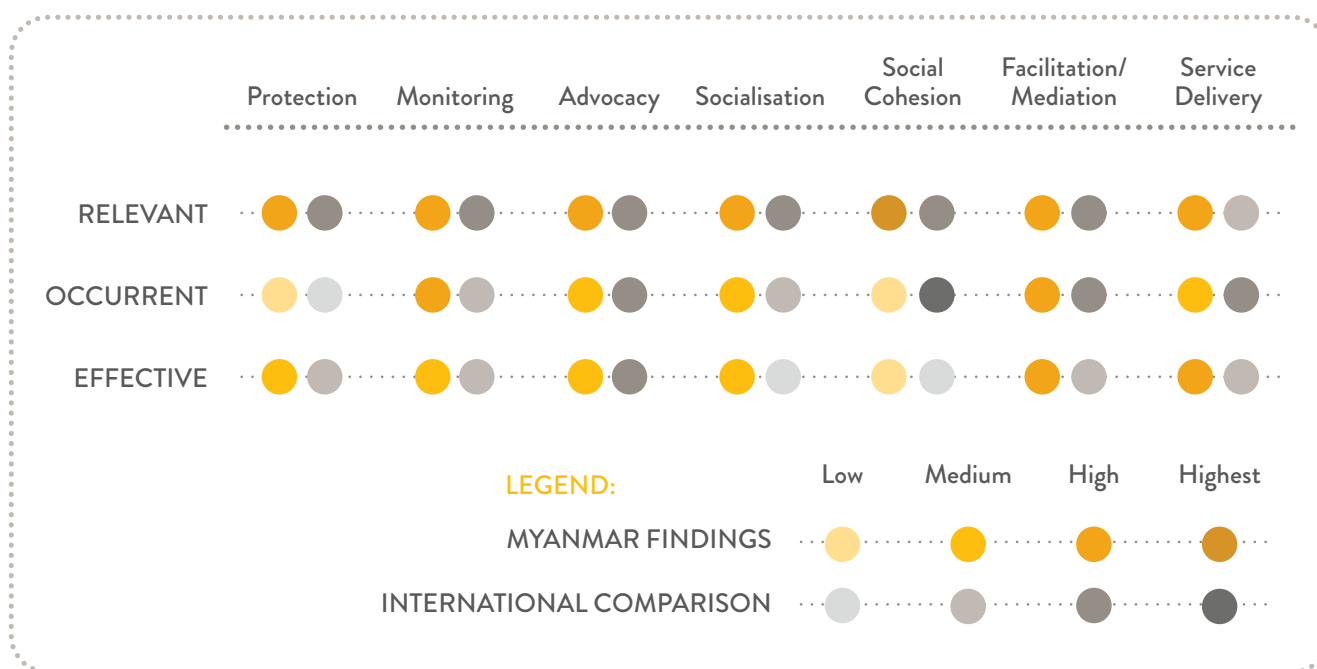
HOW TO READ THIS INFOGRAPHIC:

For the purpose of this *Paper*, '*relevant*' is defined as how applicable a civil society function is when performed in society. '*Occurent*' refers to the frequency of which the function is performed. '*Effective*' demonstrates the changing power of each function when undertaken in a given context.

Circles in different shades of yellow show from high (bright yellow) to low (pale yellow), the relevance of different peacebuilding functions in the Myanmar context. The different shades of grey show, from high (darkest) to low (lightest), international trends of each peacebuilding function. International comparison is drawn from Paffenholz's research.

Function 1: Protection

	Protection
RELEVANT	🟠 ⚫
OCCURRENT	🟡 ⚪
EFFECTIVE	🟡 ⚪
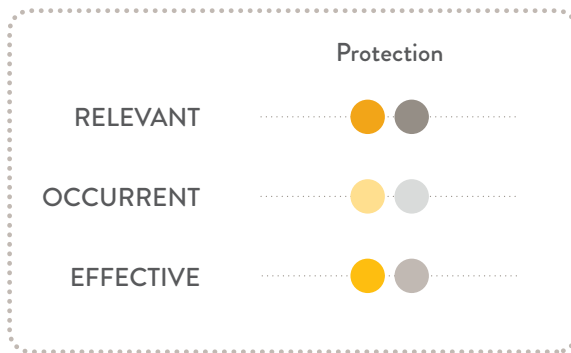
One function of civil society in peacebuilding is to protect people from violence by armed actors. This can mean, among other things, offering legal protection in the form of pro-bono advocacy, or offering safe-havens and shelters. According to Paffenholz, *"during and after armed conflict, protection becomes almost a precondition for fulfilling other roles and functions."* [142] They found in their research that although protection was a function highly relevant to civil society, that CSOs carried out fewer protection activities than one might expect. Where protection activities occur, their effectiveness is often mixed, influenced by the level of violence, the ability to act, and availability of funding for initiatives.[143] Internationally, the main protection activities of civil society are accompaniment, the creation of peace zones, watchdog activities, and humanitarian aid, and human security.[144]

In Myanmar, the role of civil society in protection is currently limited; as the main responsibility for protection usually lies with the state. National and international actors often step-in to provide protection services and humanitarian aid. The protection services most in demand in Myanmar include protection against forced recruitment, displacement, gender-based violence (GBV), child protection, and other localised effects to end armed conflict.[145] Migration and refugee movements resulting from a lack of protection have led to the departure of cohorts of thousands since the early 1990s, with recent population movements including those related to the humanitarian situation in Rakhine, Kachin and northern Shan.[146] The government has allowed

the establishment of internally displaced persons (IDP) camps in Kachin, Shan, and Rakhine that are serviced by national and local organisations including faith-based CSOs *(see Section 4.2 'Kachin State')* and international groups including international non-governmental organisations (INGOs).[147] Internally displaced persons (IDP) camps can be interpreted as zones of peace, but during the initial years of setting up those camps, authorities often visited and arrested IDPs suspicious of links to armed groups. CSOs providing services in IDP camps and legal activists condemned such arrests, advocating for the human security of civilians. These CSOs also experienced hindrances in humanitarian access themselves.[148] Both CSOs and individual leaders provide and organise safe havens and shelters. An example of protection in this context is the work of U Zinn Pain, a monk from the Yadanar Oo Monastery in Meiktila in Mandalay Region. He protected the lives of nearly 1,000 Muslims who sought refuge there during riots *(see Section 4.8, 'Regions')*.

> ❝ *There is a need for protection against violent rhethoric and hate speech.* ❞

Some legal aid networks in Myanmar focus on protecting people during armed conflict. Shingnip, a network of over twenty Kachin lawyers, most of whom are women, formed in 2012 as a response to the breakdown of the bi-lateral ceasefire in Kachin State. They concentrate on human rights issues including gender based violence and land rights. One of the issues they aim to tackle is that *"95% of the people are not aware of the existing law."* [149] One of the more prominent populations needing protection is the stateless Muslim population in northern Rakhine *(see Section 4.6, 'Rakhine State')*. Across the country, there is also a need for protection against violent rhetoric and hate speech, in addition to the risk of inter-communal violence.

Function 2: Monitoring

	Monitoring
RELEVANT	⬤ ⬤
OCCURRENT	⬤ ⬤
EFFECTIVE	⬤ ⬤
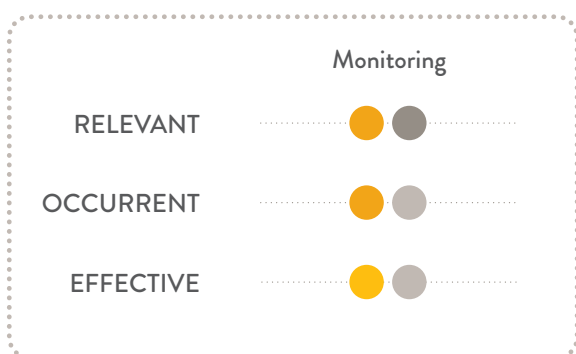
"Civilian monitoring at the grassroots level is crucial to maintain the ceasefire agreements by contributing to a relatively stable and peaceful situation for political dialogue."

Nyein Foundation Senior Staff, Yangon, March 2017

The monitoring function refers to civilian ceasefire monitoring, media monitoring, or parliamentary observation. Monitoring is closely related to the functions of protection and advocacy, as well as early warning activities. It is therefore most effective when these links are well explored. In the cases studied by Paffenholz, the need for monitoring does not always correlate with the level of activity.[150]

For Myanmar, the monitoring of human rights has long been part of civil society activities, particularly in diaspora groups, including monitoring of resource extraction and environmental issues. The work of national monitoring organisations, in particular in the field of human rights, often goes hand in hand with national and international reporting on Myanmar. National CSOs and INGOs continue to provide important information and analysis on the dynamics of the political transition.[151] Some of the exile-based monitoring and advocacy organisations have meanwhile started opening offices inside the country *(see Section 2.5, 'Cross-border organisations are still relevant')*.

Unlike other countries, Myanmar's peace process does not have any internationally mandated monitors, but since the signing of the bi-lateral

ceasefires, several Civilian Ceasefire Monitoring (CCM) initiatives have emerged. These initiatives were inspired and informed, in part, by international exposure and in collaboration with INGOs. There are approximately 300 informal community peace observers operating across two Regions and six States.[152] In some instances, monitoring efforts by larger CSOs overlap with existing initiatives on the ground. This results in hybrid peace observation actors who develop monitoring practices that vary from place to place. Their work changes depending on-going conflict and the presence or absence of a ceasefire agreement. The role of peace observers is dynamic and changes over time mirroring broader peace and conflict dynamics experienced in different parts of the country.

Peace observers aim to deter violence with their presence and by reporting incidents. Monitoring is also, though, a tool for engaging the public in the peace process[153] and raising awareness at the local level. In Kachin State alone, peace observers have conducted over one thousand awareness raising activities about the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) and the 2013 cessation of hostilities agreement between the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and the Tatmadaw.[154]

> ❝ *Monitoring is a tool for engaging the public in the peace process.* ❞

For example, 'Thwee' is a local network supported by the Gender and Development Institute (GDI). Thwee created their own approach to monitoring, which includes elements of human rights monitoring and monitoring of GBV. Since its formation, Thwee envisaged its monitors could become complementary to, or an integral part of, the formal NCA mechanism, the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC). *(See Section 3.2. 'Alternative functions: Building a bridge and providing a voice.)* Although informal communication channels exist between civilian JMC members and trained monitors, there is not yet any formal exchange

Saw Peter Thein Htu, Hsar Mu Htar.

at the local level. There is an opportunity to potentially merge these two elements in some way.

Monitoring can also support democratic processes. For instance, civil society mobilised several thousand citizen election observers in 2015 *(see Section 2.2, 'Civil society in Myanmar's transition').* There are also on-going media monitoring activities that occurred during the April 2017 by-elections. The Open Hluttaw initiative, created by Myanmar Fifth Estate (MFE) in collaboration with Open Myanmar Initiative (OMI) and others, is a recent example of parliamentary monitoring that aims to help citizens get in touch with their representatives.

Function 3: Advocacy

	Advocacy
RELEVANT	● ●
OCCURRENT	● ●
EFFECTIVE	● ●
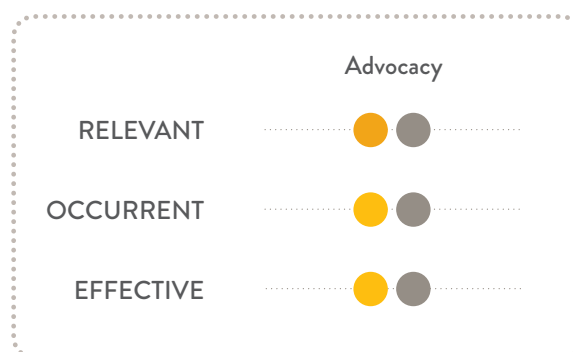
Paffenholz describes advocacy as a core function of civil society in peacebuilding, relevant in all phases of conflict, with the importance of different advocacy issues changing over time. Advocacy can be public or be pursued through informal channels and at various levels. Its effectiveness is highly context-dependent, but overall, Paffenholz found that advocacy was the most effective function of all. Paffenholz also distinguishes several forms of advocacy, ranging from mass mobilisation to agenda-setting for peace negotiations. Paffenholz'

research also found that in many cases CSOs were effective in bringing issues to peace negotiations and post-settlement agendas.

> " *Paffenholz found that advocacy was the most effective function of all.* "

In Myanmar, civil society does not yet appear to have reached its full potential in the area of advocacy. There is a history of issue-driven advocacy with significant successes as the campaign to stop the Myitsone hydropower project and advocacy to shape the new Associations Law showed. Other advocacy efforts have been less successful, or moved at a slower pace, such as policy-advocacy around the implementation of a 30% gender quota in the peace process. Myanmar has a long history of mass mobilisation around public issues and there are many examples of civil society-organised peaceful public demonstrations to end violence.

Civil society continues to advocate for the formal inclusion of CSOs in the peace process. That is, in the specific channel of the issue-based CSO Forum. However, advocacy targeting the CSO Forum seems to have limited CSO leaders to seeking official recognition through a seat at the peace table. In other contexts, such as the one in Guatemala, civil society has sought to influence negotiations outside formal channels. Outsider tactics have not yet been fully explored by civil society in Myanmar. In this area there are opportunities to learn from other countries.[155]

Function 4: Socialisation
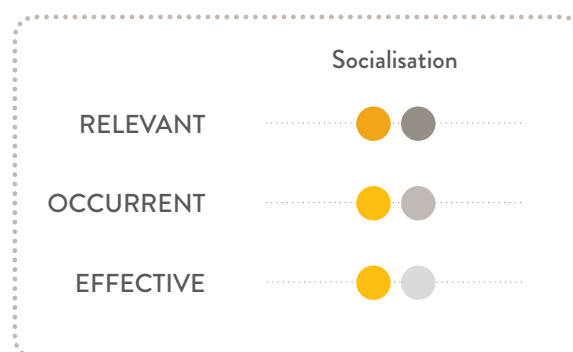
Socialisation is the process of individuals learning to follow societal norms. The most important socialisation institutions are families, schools, faith-based communities, associations, clubs, and workplaces. In peacebuilding, socialisation can be understood as efforts to promote a culture of peace, which includes areas such as peace education civic education and teaching democratic values. Activities that fall under this function are often sporadic, lack coordination, face difficulties in reaching scale, and do not often influence macro-level peace processes, according to Paffenholz.[156] Nonetheless, her research showed that *"people can be socialised to deal with conflicts constructively."* Long term endeavours to foster democratic values and a culture of peace lie beyond CSOs or NGOs and ought to be addressed as a part of national education reform, she argues.[157]

Successive administrations in Myanmar limited the teaching and dissemination of democratic values and ideas. Civic education took place under the umbrella of faith-based institutions and in exile *(see Section 2.1, 'A brief history of civil society in Myanmar')* and has socialised a younger generation in thinking about democratic alternatives to previous administrations. Since 2010, CSOs promoting democratic values have proliferated, with many short and longer-term courses and schools founded. For instance, the Nyein (Shalom) Foundation pioneered peace education with a particular emphasis on civic education, as has the Center for National Diversity and Harmony (CDNH). CSOs have carried out various awareness raising activities about democratic

standards and federalism, human rights, and gender equality, and voting. Some of these activities also educate people about the contents and mechanisms of the formal peace process. With considerable international support, civic education activities increased ahead of the 2015 elections and continue with the 2020 general election in mind.

> *People can be socialised to deal with conflicts constructively.*

Many CSOs also hold trainings and workshops on conflict resolution and peacebuilding. The often sporadic and uncoordinated character of these efforts is similar to that in the countries that Paffenholz studied. It is difficult to measure the effectiveness of these types of activities in Myanmar as workshops are often one-off in nature and, ultimately, their reach is limited. With that in mind, national education reform could present an opportunity to reach a broader population than the current CSO-driven activities. Universal education is the primary socialisation agent in any country, with the potential to instil a culture of peace and tolerance grounded in democratic values. Effective awareness raising about the peace process in particular would range from village-level meetings to mass media, and involve the majority of the population.

Function 5: Social Cohesion
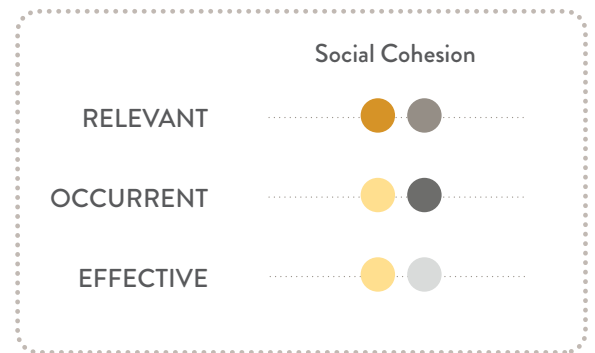
Social cohesion is about how to live together peacefully in a way that creates a sense of belonging, promotes trust, and offers all members of the community the opportunity to prosper and advance peacefully. What social cohesion means in practice depends on the context. This function is not always directly related to formal peace processes, but provisions in peace accords can address social cohesion or the root causes of divisions within and between groups[158]. This is the peacebuilding function that concerns inter-communal harmony. Paffenholz identifies three ways to focus on social cohesion. The first to think in terms of relationships, bringing different people together to bridge social divides. The second is to focus on the outcome, such as stopping or preventing violence. The third, also related to outcomes, looks at how social cohesion goes hand in hand with economic development.

In Myanmar, the activities under the social cohesion function tend to be less effective in the short term but could produce catalytic, lasting results over time. Activities also often focus on the major lines of inter-group conflict sometimes overlooking more subtle dynamics.[159] Many people in Myanmar describe concerns about inter-communal violence as relatively recent. [160] Responses to this issue range from tackling rumours and countering hate speech as well as youth-led inter-faith activities. One example is the Smile Education and Development Foundation (SEDF).[161] SEDF organised an Interfaith Youth Tour, where youth from different faith groups visited each other's religious sites in several States and Regions across Myanmar. In Kayin State, a

group of young Muslims founded a group to prevent radicalisation among their peers. They invited youths from other faith groups to their mosque for Eid celebrations.[162] This type of activity is rare, as youth from different faith backgrounds normally know very little about each other.

> ❝ *Social cohesion was a key issue nearly everywhere.* ❞

Social cohesion is more effective when initiatives are formed around shared goals or common interests. In Rakhine state, a fisheries project run by a social welfare association brought communities together to advocate for changes in the law to improve livelihoods. The project bridged not only divides among communities, but also between communities and local authorities.[163] The Metta Development Foundation, often viewed as apolitical, works along similar lines. Activities that foster social cohesion through a vehicle that is, on the surface, unrelated to social cohesion are unique in Myanmar and could be an avenue to invest in further. Further analysis is required to understand the private sector's role in fostering social cohesion.

Social cohesion is key to addressing the causes of conflict in Myanmar. This goes beyond faith and geography and includes all forms of identity politics, including ethnic, gender and age identity among others. Interviews with people in all States and Regions showed that social cohesion was a key issue nearly everywhere and relevant to a wide range of group identity constructions. Yet these inter- and intra-group tensions remain largely unaddressed and unexplored even though they are vital to overcoming latent divides across and preventing future episodes of violent conflict.

Function 6: Mediation and Facilitation

Facilitation/Mediation

RELEVANT	🟠 ⚫
OCCURRENT	🟠 ⚫
EFFECTIVE	🟠 ⚪
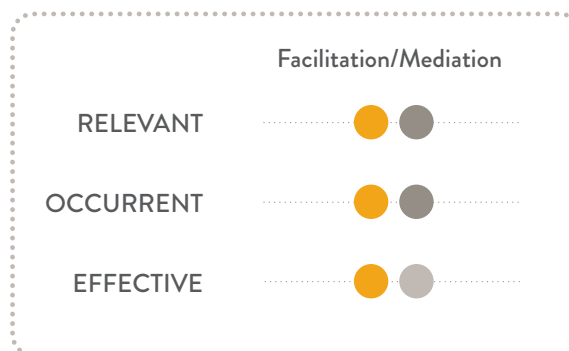
This function describes activities that support communication between two parties with the view of preventing or ending violence. Paffenholz mixes facilitation and mediation and describes these actions as taking place at various levels – between citizens and the state, between armed groups, and between communities and INGOs, either formally or informally.[164] Internationally, this function is considered highly relevant to civil society. Paffenholz notes, though, that *"the contribution of civil society to diplomatic conflict management activities is limited and is taken up only in exceptional cases, as conflict management is a government function best undertaken by states or the United Nations."* [165] Civil society mediators from across the region have also provided capacity building to conflict parties,[166] albeit without third-party mediation.[167] Some INGOs that have contributed to high-level mediation efforts in other countries also operate in Myanmar, but not in this role.

Paffenholz's research found that mediation at the national level is usually limited to individuals.[168] Civil society has a long history of mediating in Myanmar, but this role was often confined to influential male leaders rather than to organisations.[169] Their individual impact depends on personal trust, access and legitimacy rather than neutrality. Religious and business have also taken up facilitation and, to a lesser extent, mediation roles. Conflict mediation seems to be largely confined to conflict management—making truces or reaching a ceasefire—rather than longer-term peacebuilding. Myanmar has a loose network of mediators, the Ethnic Nationalities Mediators Fellowship (ENMF), which emerged in the 1990s.

Now, newer initiatives are arising as CSOs at local levels seek to facilitate negotiation between warring parties and communities in conflict zones. Other civil society leaders have mediated between Buddhists and Muslims in Rakhine State and some Regions. Local mediation if often restricted to brokering and acting as messengers without a clear role or formal mandate.

Civil society also helps facilitate negotiations in Myanmar by offering technical assistance –a trend that began during President U Thein Sein's administration and continued under Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's government. This can mean helping organise peace process events, providing specialised knowledge, or offering training to build skills in areas like negotiation techniques. Few individuals in CSOs, however, have the relevant expertise to fulfil this role. With technical expertise in high demand more actors are describing themselves as capable experts or as wanting to become such experts. More often than not, the role of offering technical assistance is assumed by individuals with trusted access to the government or Ethnic Armed Organisations (EAOs). A few CSOs are fulfilling this role professionally and independently. These entities could benefit from further institutional and technical support.

Function 7: Service Delivery
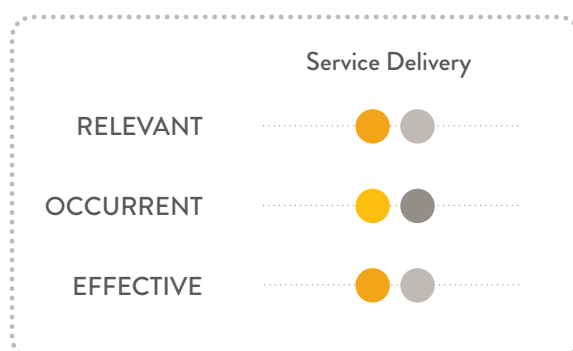
Service delivery covers health, education, and humanitarian assistance, among other activities.[170] Paffenholz notes that *"NGOs often become the de facto providers of services within war zones and unstable post-conflict settings."*[171] Paffenholz's research found that service delivery is the function undertaken most often by civil society, but is not often done under the label of peacebuilding. Paffenholz in fact suggests that service delivery is not a peacebuilding function per se but instead creates important entry points for other functions like protection, monitoring, advocacy, and social cohesion.[172]

> **" Service delivery is not a peacebuilding function per se but instead creates important entry points for other functions. "**

Civil society organisations in Myanmar have frequently performed service delivery functions and roles in response to violence or natural disasters, at times in conjunction with the health, education and humanitarian wings of some EAOs. Civil society in Myanmar is engaged in humanitarian aid where needs arise. Service delivery is a specific niche equipped with considerable donor funding. At the same time, there are gaps in the areas of psychosocial relief and trauma healing that lie beyond the basic needs of food, shelter, and physical protection. Compared with all other functions, service delivery in the form of humanitarian assistance exceeds others in terms of personnel and spending by far. Service delivery in Myanmar is concentrated in areas with the highest humanitarian needs stemming from protracted conflict. In Kachin State and northern Shan State, CSOs are both implementers of international aid and primary aid agencies themselves. There are continuous reports about hindrances to humanitarian access, in particular around aid for IDPs. CSOs have raised concerns about the Tatmadaw restricting access to humanitarian aid.[173]

In Kachin State, where CSOs are crucial providers of humanitarian assistance and other services, service delivery is a function in peacebuilding in as much as it serves vital needs of conflict-affected populations. As is the case with Somalia in Paffenholz's research, service delivery is the most

Boi Nu (left) and Nga Ngai (right), Kuki Women Human Rights Organisation.

important function in Kachin due to the minimal availability and access to government services in some areas, particularly in remote and conflict-affected areas.[174] The situation here contradicts Paffenholz's finding that *"service delivery does not create entry points for advocacy due to the apolitical nature of aid NGOs and organisations."*[175] In Kachin State service delivery has a political angle and this appears to help, rather than hinder, those civil society groups doing it. Collaboration in service delivery serves as the basis for collective advocacy around improving the conditions for vulnerable populations, in particular IDPs *(see Section 4.2, 'Kachin State').*

3.2. Alternative functions: Building a bridge and elevating voices

Beyond Paffenholz's seven functions, a key role of civil society in Myanmar is to build bridges and elevate voice of communities. Local CSOs across the country help to inform communities, whom often have minimal access to information, about the peace process and transition more broadly. These efforts also provide an opportunity to collect information about the needs and perspectives of local communities, particularly in remote and conflict affected areas. When this information is shared with government agencies, EAOs, members of parliament, INGOs, donors, diplomats, or as part of national dialogues, it connects different stakeholders. In the words of one civil society leader: *"We can be like a bridge*

between communities, government, and other stakeholders. We know what's happening on the ground, but we also know the policy level." [176]

Providing communities with information about the country's multiple reform processes and then sharing community perspectives upwards with leaders in decision-making positions appears as a widespread civil society peacebuilding activity across *all* States and Regions in Myanmar. While CSOs have increasingly exercised this information-sharing role in recent years, there is certainly a need to continue building bridges and elevating voices creatively.

While channelling perspectives of communities upwards is common, it is nevertheless important to reflect on the ability of CSOs to speak for their communities. Many CSOs feel they understand local people's needs and thus have a responsibility to communicate them to decision-makers. Access to local knowledge, however, does not necessarily mean that CSOs are representatives or interlocutors for communities in the areas where they operate. The question of representation is particularly salient when urban CSO leaders advocate on behalf of rural or conflict-affected communities. One CSO leader acknowledged this disconnect, saying that CSOs can be *"self-righteous […] we are not political parties but we behave like political parties… We want to have fame, we want to be recognised by the people."* [177] Such statements are rare, but similar sentiments were shared by an NGO worker in Hpa'an who believes – contrary to many CSO leaders across the country– that CSOs should not take part in the Union Peace Conference and should work on the process through a separate track. [178]

While practice and literature globally suggests civil society can contribute to more sustainable peace, civil society is not a panacea for achieving lasting peace, and CSOs are not led by elected representatives who can speak on behalf of their constituencies. In other words, it is erroneous to equate communities with civil society. In a situation where parliamentary democracy is yet to

fulfil its potential, particularly in local legislatures, some CSOs see the need to fill this vacuum. While CSOs can play an important supporting role from the outside in Myanmar, seeking to replace governmental institutions, instead of working with them to improve efficiencies and accountability, is not always a sustainable option given countrywide governance reforms.

3.3. Myanmar has only just begun its journey to peace

Based on Paffenholz's framework, civil society's peacebuilding efforts in Myanmar fit a pattern seen elsewhere around the globe and are confronted with similar challenges, although the way these obstacles manifest themselves depends on the unique context of each country. [179] There is one key difference in the Myanmar context to highlight: there is still room for more to be done in Myanmar related to social cohesion. The table below analyses each of the seven peacebuilding functions identified by Paffenholz's framework, looking at international findings stemming from Paffenholz's research and the Myanmar context based on findings emanating from analysis in this *Discussion Paper*.

> ❝ *We can be like a bridge between communities, government, and other stakeholders.* ❞

It is important to note that Myanmar is at a comparatively early stage of peacebuilding when compared to other case studies internationally. Currently, the context is predominantly occupied with reducing violence, negotiating ceasefires alongside moving a national dialogue process forward. Myanmar has yet to finalise a peace accord and the NCA remains a partial agreement. Inter-communal tensions, meanwhile, are not addressed under the auspices of the formal peace process. Efforts to establish conditions for addressing conflict in society at large are nascent. [180] The factors hindering peacebuilding are complex,

Nan Mya Thida, Research Institute for Society and Ecology.

ranging from actions of the state to competition and non-collaboration among civil society. It is possible that, despite widespread peacebuilding efforts, the overall prospects for everyday peace in Myanmar could recede significantly despite current efforts and processes underway. Civil society alone cannot create sustainable peace, but it can contribute to strengthening the foundations and conditions for it.
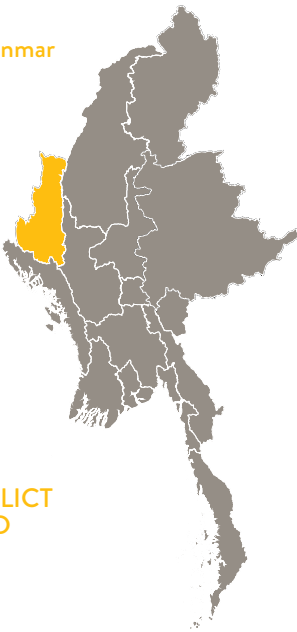
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How does civil society influence the peace process from the inside and outside?

2. Are there gaps in civil society's contributions to social cohesion and peace in Myanmar?

3. How do peacebuilders currently coordinate their efforts (national and sub-national)? What channels are needed to improve collaboration?

Section 4: Snapshots of States and Regions

Visualisations created for each snapshot use data from the 2014 Population and Housing census undertaken by the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population with technical support from UNFPA. The 2014 census was Myanmar's first national census in 30 years with enumerators visiting over 12 million households. Data sets and analysis of the census is available in Myanmar and English.[181] Analysis of the census process and data produced is outside the scope of this *Discussion Paper*, though ample public analysis is available.[182]

4.1. Chin State

5%
of Myanmar

CONFLICT TREND

TOTAL POPULATION
478,801

URBAN
20.8%

RURAL
79.2%

♂ 229,604

♀ 249,197

112,967

140,767

279247

YOUTH

15-29 years old	24%
15-34 years old	29.4%
Over 15 years old	58.3%

RELIGION

Buddhist	13%
Christian	85.4%
Islamic	0.1%
Animist	0.4%
Hindu	0%
Other	1.1%
No Religion	0%

EMPLOYMENT 15-64 yrs

Unemployed
5.4%

Employed
94.6%

LITERACY 15+ yrs

57,389
21%

221,858
79%
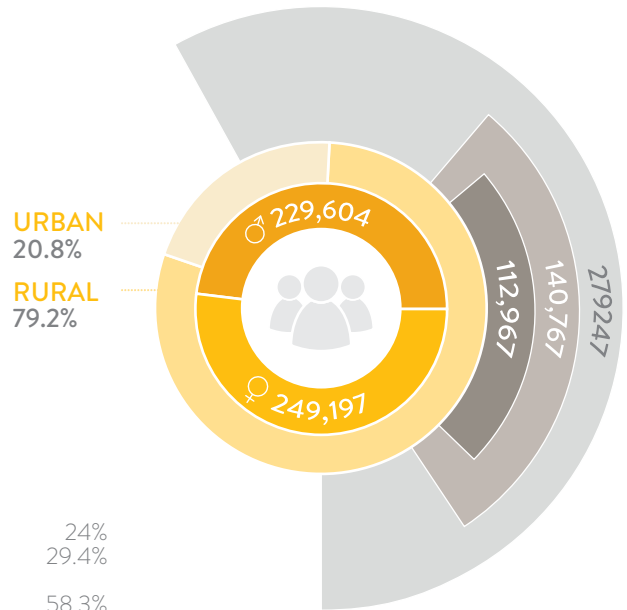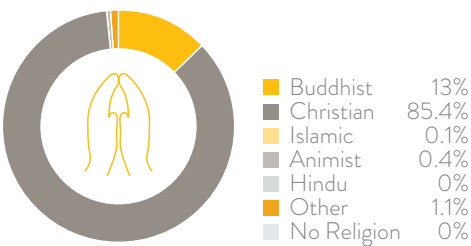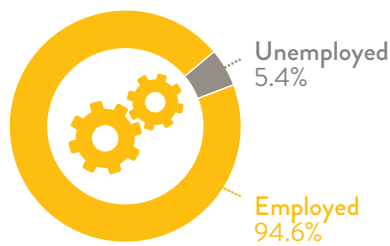
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Illiterate
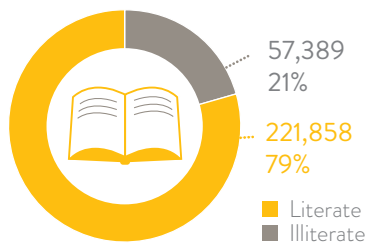
Chin State, a mountainous northwestern province bordering India, is one of the most remote and least developed parts of Myanmar. Jobs and education opportunities are scarce – it is the only State or Region without a university and many young people feel compelled to leave in search of work.

The State's infrastructure is also underdeveloped, with residents navigating mountain roads that are often unpaved and hazardous, especially in the rainy season. There are, however, signs of progress, including major

road upgrades on the route to the state capital, Hakha, and a planned airport there.

Observers say that reported human rights violations in Chin have fallen since U Thein Sein's government came to power, but a perceived lack of freedom of religion in the mostly Christian province remains a challenge. Unlike those in other States and Regions, civil society organisations (CSOs) in Chin say their relations with local government have improved since 2016.

Chin is linguistically diverse, with people in neighbouring towns often speaking different languages. This, along with poor transport, appears to make it difficult for CSOs to form strong connections with each other. Most CSOs in Chin are informal community based organisations (CBOs) with limited ability to reach remoter areas. They lack resources and training and are often fragmented into groups based on their ethnicity, language and which Christian denomination they belong to. Women are also underrepresented in most civil society groups.

Most locally-founded organisations have little donor support. Funding for Chin CSOs appears to be primarily directed to those based in Yangon. Many urban Chin, however, feel they have a close connection to their home townships. Chin participation in the CSO Forum seems to have been organised largely from Yangon, although the civil society network in Hakha nominated some participants from the State to join at short notice.

> ❝ *They convinced authorities to change the town's street names to Chin-inspired ones.* ❞

Recently, the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO),[183] which has historical roots in the Chin National Front (CNF), has returned to the State with funding from Livelihoods and Food Security Trust (LIFT) for a project on labour migration. The CHRO first got involved in the peace process as an independent observer and now gives guidance on questions concerning the social sector.

Chin has been mostly free of armed conflict for many years. The CNF, relatively small in size when compared with other EAOs, signed a bi-lateral ceasefire with the Tatmadaw in 2012 and the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) in October 2015. CSOs joined the CNF at the Chin State National Dialogue in early 2017, which attracted over 700 participants from both inside and outside Chin State.

The Chin Ceasefire Monitoring Team (CCMT), which monitors the terms of the 2012 bi-lateral ceasefire agreement between the CNF and the Tatmadaw, is the only Chin CSO with a formal monitoring role.

Chin Media Network: Journalists who tackle the issues they write about

The sixteen independent publishers that make up the Chin Media Network (CMN) do not just report on the challenges facing their readers – they hold meetings with residents across the State and work out how to improve things.

Founded in 2014 with funding from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the network includes newspapers, radio and television stations that publish in various languages, including four different Chin dialects, Myanmar and English.

Services available in multiple languages helps them to overcome linguistic barriers faced by other CSOs to reach communities across the State. Over the course of two years, the Network held six meetings in different towns. In Mindat, they invited people to discuss land rights; in Tedim, the limited water supply was on the agenda, and in Hakha they fielded views on government-media relations.

After the meetings, they sought to address the concerns that people had raised. In Falam, Chin's second largest town, they worked with authorities to change most of the Myanmar-language street names to Chin-inspired ones after holding a meeting there on the issue. In Matupi, mobile phone users now have access to more networks after discussions about a lack of choice in telecommunications.

Before each meeting, the CMN did an assessment to find out which issues were most significant in each community. After the meetings, CMN held press conferences that all sixteen members covered in their outlets to keep communities informed and encourage local authorities to take action. CMN also held meetings with officials on the issues, and they now say some local ministers are more approachable. While support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has now ended, CMN say they will keep holding meetings and hope to discuss issues such as the lack of access to education in future.

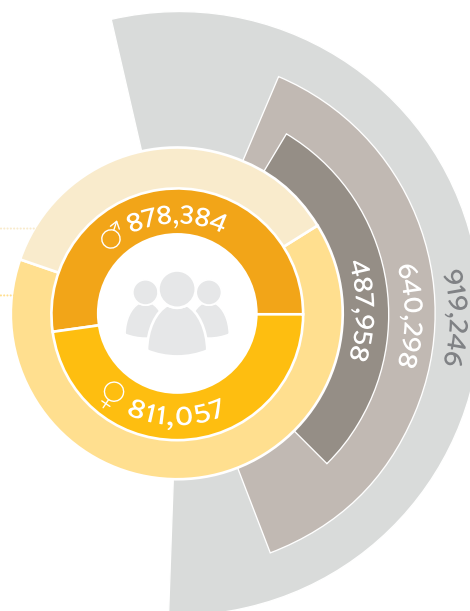## 4.2. Kachin State

13%
of Myanmar

TOTAL POPULATION
1,689,441

♂ 878,384

♀ 811,057
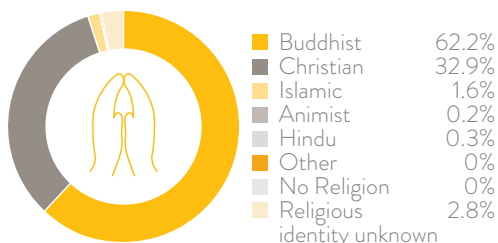
487,958
640,298
919,246

URBAN
36.1%

RURAL
63.9%

CONFLICT TREND

YOUTH

■	15-29 years old	29%
■	15-34 years old	37.9%
■	Over 15 years old	54.4%

RELIGION

■	Buddhist	62.2%
■	Christian	32.9%
■	Islamic	1.6%
■	Animist	0.2%
■	Hindu	0.3%
■	Other	0%
■	No Religion	0%
■	Religious identity unknown	2.8%

EMPLOYMENT 15-64 yrs

Unemployed
3.7%

Employed
96.3%

LITERACY 15+ yrs

76,644
8%

842,602
92%
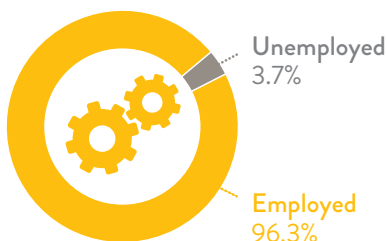
■	Literate
■	Illiterate
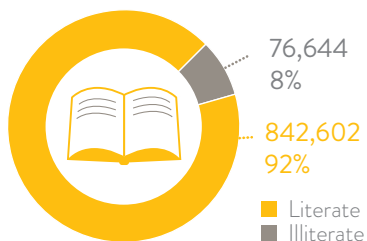
Civil society is considered strong in Kachin State, which has seen increasing conflict since the breakdown in 2011 of a 17-year bi-lateral ceasefire between the Tatmadaw and the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), the armed wing of the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO). Many CSOs are faith-based, some being long-established and others relatively new, forming only after the transition to the U Thein Sein administration in 2010. CSO networks extend to EAO-controlled areas. Faith-based organisations are particularly strong in the humanitarian sector. Two prominent organisations, the Metta Development Foundation and the Nyein (Shalom) Foundation emerged in Kachin after the 1994 bi-lateral ceasefire and now operate nationwide.

There are also emerging CSO networks, such as the Joint Strategy Team (JST), which works in the humanitarian field (see case study below). Other networks cover CSOs working in education, environmental awareness, gender equality, youth and political outreach. These include the Kachin State Civil Society Network (KSCSN) and the Civil Society Network for Peace (CSNeP), both of which emerged in response to the peace process at the Union level, as well as the Kachin State Women's Network (KSWN) and the Kachin National Youth Network (KNYN).

Most CSOs are overtly political and some are critical of developments in the ongoing peace process, or have

raised concerns over the rising number of human rights violations and Internally Displaced People (IDPs) in Kachin.

Since the change of government in 2016, organisations set up to liaise between the previous administration and the KIO say these relationships have been disrupted, and some CSO leaders are unsure if their mandates still stand. These include the Peace Creation Group (PCG), an association of local business people, and the Technical Advisory Team (TAT), a liaison body set up by the KIO under the 2013 cessation of hostilities agreement with the Tatmadaw.

In early 2017, the KIO forged closer relationships with CSOs and, despite being a non-signatory to the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA), held assemblies in Laiza and Myitkyina to elect 100 representatives, including 30 women, for upcoming political dialogue. CSOs in Kachin State also actively participate in the CSO Forum process, but the nomination of delegates to attend the events in Nay Pyi Taw and Taunggyi were reportedly rushed and not fully inclusive.

More women in Kachin are taking leadership roles in CSOs and the peace process at Union level. Yet besides the gender-focussed organisations, few seem to integrate gender analysis into their policies, programs and advocacy.

The conflict and the political transition have brought a new awareness of the need to build bridges between and within diverse ethnic and religious communities in Kachin State. These efforts, while nascent, point to the importance of addressing the root causes of divisions as a mechanism to prevent future episodes of violence between divided groups.

Some of Kachin's CSOs report that they are hampered by the on-going fighting, restrictions to humanitarian access, and the Unlawful Associations Act. Many CSO leaders note that funding is short-term or project specific, and coordination between CSOs and with others such as political parties and government officials is in need of improvement.

Joint Strategy Team: A network to help aid workers do their jobs better

After the resumption of violence in 2011, many disparate groups came together to deliver aid to those in need, often working with international organisations. Despite their efforts, they faced numerous challenges. Not only was humanitarian access restricted for aid groups, but CSOs were not well organised, and struggled to communicate both with each other and with outside aid groups. Many were also short on staff because of limited access to funding.

The answer to these challenges was a network to help different CSOs work together and deliver aid effectively. In 2013, nine local organisations from both government and non-government controlled areas formed the Joint Strategy Team (JST). These included entities like the Metta Development Foundation, Nyein (Shalom) Foundation, Kachin Baptist Convention and Kachin Women's Association.

> ❝ *The answer to these challenges was a network to help different CSOs work together.* ❞

The JST's main activities include communicating with the government and donors to advocate for humanitarian access and to fill gaps, and to make sure services are not duplicated by different groups. *"Coordination has gotten better [...] the JST makes things more effective,"* said Daw Lu Ja of the Metta Foundation.[184]

After the JST joined a consortium led by Oxfam, its members receive funding from the European Union (EU), but some also have other donors. The JST cooperates with other CSO networks to advocate for a durable and meaningful peace, and is now advocating for the government to consult with IDPs to see if they would rather return home or be resettled.[185]
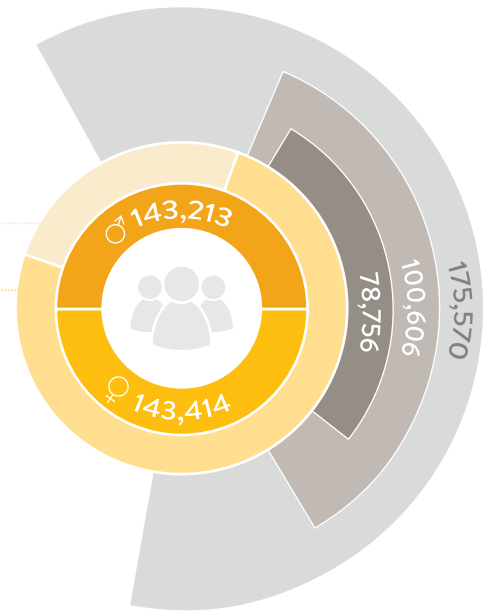
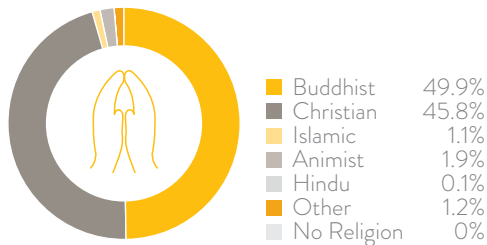## 4.3. Kayah State

2%
of Myanmar

TOTAL POPULATION
286,627

♂ 143,213

♀ 143,414

URBAN
25.3%

RURAL
74.7%

78,756
100,606
175,570

CONFLICT TREND

YOUTH

■	15-29 years old	27%
■	15-34 years old	35.1%
■	Over 15 years old	61%

RELIGION

■	Buddhist	49.9%
■	Christian	45.8%
■	Islamic	1.1%
■	Animist	1.9%
■	Hindu	0.1%
■	Other	1.2%
■	No Religion	0%

EMPLOYMENT 15-64 yrs

Unemployed
2.7%

Employed
97.3%

LITERACY 15+ yrs

31,485
18%

144,085
82%
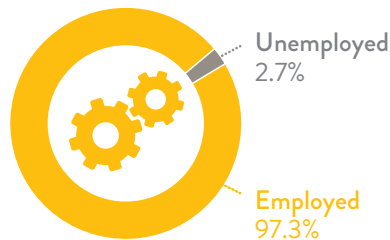
■	Literate
■	Illiterate
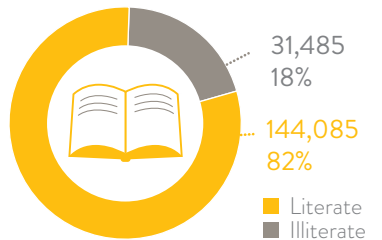
Kayah State, which borders Thailand, is the smallest State in Myanmar, but its residents speak several different languages and follow several religions including different denominations of Christianity. Kayah also under-developed, with many villages lacking access to electricity and water.

The dominant armed group is the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP), but five other groups are also active as militias or Border Guard Forces (BGFs) with overlapping territorial claims. While there has been no fighting between the KNPP and the Tatmadaw since a bi-lateral ceasefire in 2012, there are fears the conflict could reignite. Even so, only a few CSOs engage with the peace process directly.

Most CSOs are formed around ethnic and linguistic identities, though the Free Funeral Service Society (FFSS) works in the State across religious, ethnic, and territorial lines.[186] Many CSOs tend to see EAOs as more receptive to advocacy efforts than the government. Before the political transition began, only Church-based and cross-border organisations were active in the State, providing aid for IDPs, but new CSOs have since emerged. Meanwhile cross-border activism has become less significant in recent years, although there are still efforts to help the thousands remaining in refugee camps in Thailand.

Officially registered CSOs are in the minority in Kayah, with some groups hesitant to sign up for the reporting requirements and regulations official status would

> *The arrival of INGOs has shaken the values of civil society.*

require. This is in issue for some because international donors often only fund registered groups. As one interviewee in Loikaw, put it: *"The arrival of INGOs has shaken the values of civil society."* [187]

CSOs believe that they are seen as biased towards the KNPP despite their efforts to maintain their independence and neutrality.[188] They cite a lack of recognition by the government, and to a lesser extent by EAOs, as a challenge. In the absence of the NCA, some CSOs cite the existence of the Unlawful Associations Act as a barrier to their engagement.

A delegation of CSOs from Kayah took part in the pre CSO-Forum in Taunggyi, Shan State, but did not proceed to the CSO Forum in Nay Pyi Taw. This was partly because they felt unprepared, and partly because neither the KNPP nor the Karenni political parties were represented at Union level, so they did not want to take a representative role for the State themselves.

The Kayah State Peace Monitoring Network: On-the-ground observers keep the peace

The Kayah State Peace Monitoring Network (KSPMN), officially founded in 2012, was formed out of groups that have helped mediate between the KNPP and the Tatmadaw since the 1990s. Made up of 15 member organisations, KSPMN deploys 45 monitors across the State's seven townships to help ensure both sides follow the terms of the 2012 bi-lateral ceasefire.

In 2017, KSPMN reported working with monitors in each township. Ten out of the 45 monitors are women, and KSPMN says monitors hail from all ethnic and religious groups within the State. KSPMN has a team to follow up on reports of cases of violence and human rights abuses unrelated to the bi-lateral ceasefire and refer them to other organisations.

Since 2015, the group's main source of funding has been the EU; before that they collected contributions from their members and other organisations to run their activities.

The network's monitors are also some of the only people providing information directly to villagers about the bi-lateral ceasefire agreement. [189] At the meetings they also listen to the villagers' concerns about the drug trade, land confiscations, illicit taxation, and illegal logging. *"This helps communities feel actively engaged in the peace process,"* says one KSPMN member, *"It gives them a voice."*[190]

In some townships monitors deal with up to six different armed factions, and tensions can run high at times. The KSPMN has successfully diffused tensions between the KNPP and the Tatmadaw on two occasions.

The network says that despite its efforts to maintain impartiality, it is still perceived as partial towards the KNPP. Another challenge it cites is convincing both sides to look into incident reports and address them. KSPMN would prefer to operate under a clearer mandate with formalised Terms of Reference, and wants to be officially recognised.
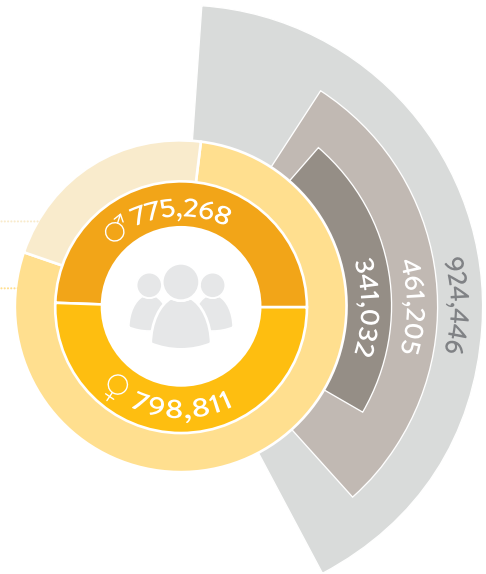
4.4. Kayin State
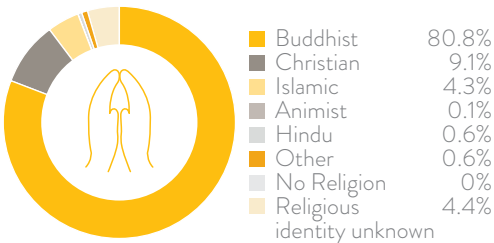
4%
of Myanmar
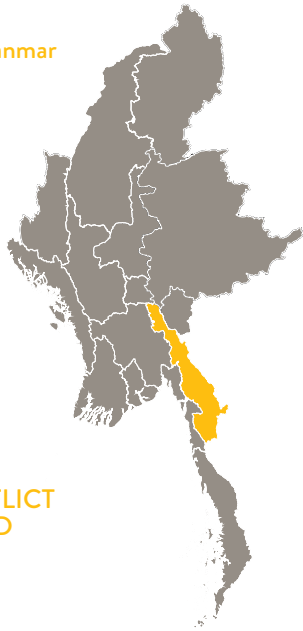
CONFLICT TREND
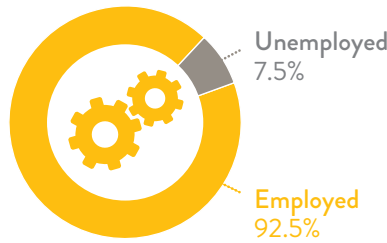
TOTAL POPULATION
1,574,079

URBAN
21.9%

RURAL
78.1%

♂ 775,268
♀ 798,811

924,446
461,205
341,032

YOUTH

■ 15-29 years old   22%
■ 15-34 years old   29.3%
■ Over 15 years old   58.7%

RELIGION

■ Buddhist   80.8%
■ Christian   9.1%
■ Islamic   4.3%
■ Animist   0.1%
■ Hindu   0.6%
■ Other   0.6%
■ No Religion   0%
■ Religious   4.4%
identity unknown

EMPLOYMENT 15-64 yrs

Unemployed
7.5%

Employed
92.5%

LITERACY 15+ yrs

236,575
26%

687,871
74%

■ Literate
■ Illiterate
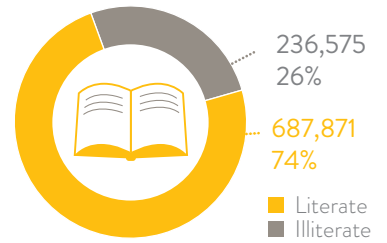
Many parts of Kayin State have faced protracted armed conflict, in some areas since to the onset of conflict between the Tatmadaw and the Karen National Union (KNU) in 1949. The emergence of KNU splinter groups, militia and Border Guard Forces (BGFs) since the 1990s has also complicated relations between communities and armed actors.

Prior to the 2012 bi-lateral ceasefire between the Tatmadaw and KNU, most organisations worked on the border as few international organisations could officially access the State from inside the country. Since 2010, however, there have been signs of change. *"Before 2010 we could not say peace. We could not feel peace. We did not dare to think about peace,"* said one young man who is active in civil society in Kayin.[191]

Various civil society organisations have emerged in tandem with Myanmar's political transition, especially since the Tatmadaw and various EAOs signed bi-lateral ceasefires in 2012. These CSOs work on a range of issues, including humanitarian assistance, community development, gender equality, youth services, education, inter-religious dialogue, peacebuilding, and community cohesion.

While the KNU's decision to sign the NCA in October 2015 was met with some concern, the group is widely regarded as a representative political actor, and recent internal elections have re-confirmed the KNU leadership's support for signing.[192] Most CSOs are politically motivated and enjoy good relations with Kayin's various armed groups.

Kayin State has been relatively peaceful since the 2012 ceasefires, but skirmishes—such as those along the Asia Highway—between smaller armed factions have made the situation look volatile, while human rights advocates have raised concerns about ongoing militarisation in the State.[193] Civil society has also raised concerns about resource extraction by armed actors in ceasefire areas. Some areas of Kayin are still largely inaccessible to outsiders, including those under mixed control.

Census data shows that people in Kayin State are mostly Buddhist or Christian. Some armed groups who adhere to Buddhist nationalist idea have been involved in tensions between Buddhist and Muslim communities,

though peacebuilding efforts in Kayin continue to focus mostly on addressing issues related to the civil war rather than promoting communal harmony to date.[194]

Before 2010 we could not say peace. We could not feel peace. We did not dare to think about peace.

Several Kayin initiatives are based in Yangon and address the needs of Kayin communities outside Kayin State, including in the Ayeyawady delta and in Tanintharyi Region.

The Research Institute for Sociology and Ecology: Peacemakers keep the public informed

The Research Institute for Sociology and Ecology (RISE) was founded by a Karen woman in the State capital Hpa'an in 2015 to support the peace process and promote accountability and transparency. Its main objective is to contribute to peace education, awareness raising, and advocacy to strengthen governance and the State legislature, and to encourage public engagement.

With just seven staff, RISE has developed a niche for keeping the public informed about the peace process and local governance developments. In 2016 and 2017 it documented public consultation meetings, the Karen national dialogues, Hluttaw sessions and more. The CSO holds press conferences to share its findings from these events.

RISE also facilitates and mediates at events, such as the second Union Peace Conference (UPC) and the 21st Century Panglong Conference. RISE publishes documents that are essential for the peace process in various ethnic languages. These include the NCA, the military Code of Conduct, and draft papers from Karen national dialogues and the Karen CSO Forum.

On the 70th anniversary of the Panglong Conference, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi invited RISE's founder to join a discussion between the State Counsellor and a small group of civil society leaders.

**Hsar Mu Htaw: Messengers act as go-betweens for warring groups**

Hsar Mu Htaw was founded in 2011 and has since been deeply engaged in the peace process. Led by a faith-based community leader from Taungoo, Bago Region and Thandaung Myothit in Kayin State, Hsar Mu Htaw brings together 30 members – ten of whom are women – including former government officials, community leaders and religious leaders.

Hsar Mu Htaw has invited both the KNU and the government to explain the peace process to local communities.

Hsar Mu Taw operates in four townships in conflict-affected areas across the border between Bago Region and Kayin State. The CSO's members have acted as messengers or mediators between warring parties. And in 2013, Hsar Mu Htaw began inviting representatives from both the KNU and the government to explain the peace process to communities, an initiative aimed at encouraging transparency and building trust. This activity has now morphed into a program for peace education that is supported by an international non-governmental organisation (INGO).
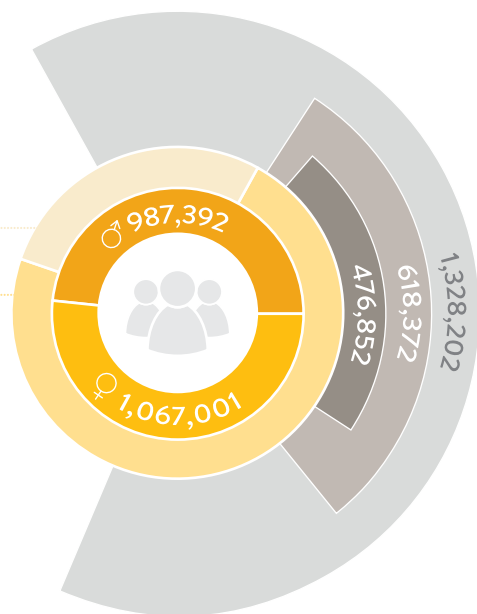
4.5. Mon State

2%
of Myanmar
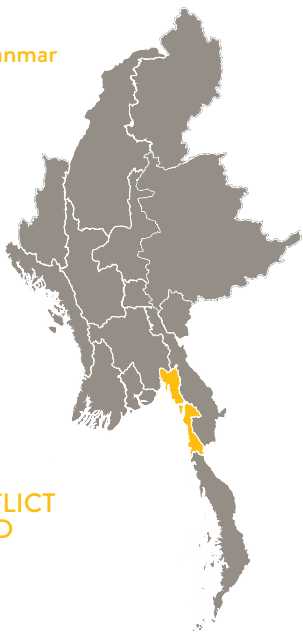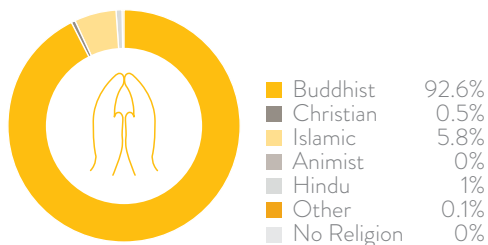
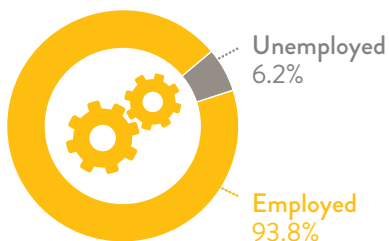**CONFLICT
TREND**

**TOTAL
POPULATION**
2,054,393

URBAN
27.9%

RURAL
72.1%

♂ 987,392

♀ 1,067,001

1,328,202

618,372

476,852

YOUTH

■	15-29 years old	23%
■	15-34 years old	30.1%
■	Over 15 years old	64.7%

RELIGION

■	Buddhist	92.6%
■	Christian	0.5%
■	Islamic	5.8%
■	Animist	0%
■	Hindu	1%
■	Other	0.1%
■	No Religion	0%

EMPLOYMENT 15-64 yrs

Unemployed
6.2%

Employed
93.8%

LITERACY 15+ yrs

178,284
13%

1,149,918
87%

■	Literate
■	Illiterate
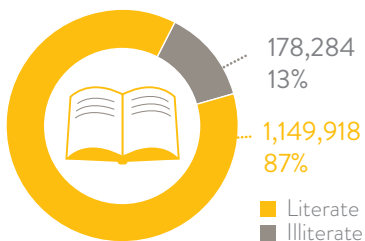
Mon State, which straddles the coast of the Andaman Sea in southeastern Myanmar, has been relatively peaceful and stable since the New Mon State Party (NMSP) and the Tatmadaw agreed to a bi-lateral ceasefire in 1995, an agreement that was re-confirmed in 2012. Civil society organisations have therefore had the opportunity to grow in a relatively conflict-free environment and to provide services in areas of mixed control.

Since 2012, CSOs have worked to rally round a unified position towards the government-led peace process. In alliance with other EAOs, however, the NMSP did not sign the NCA in October 2015. IDPs in ceasefire areas still perceive the situation as volatile and receive assistance from CSOs including the Rahmonnya Peace Foundation (RPF).

Many CSOs in Mon State have political goals and work closely with the NMSP. They work on issues of community development, youth, gender, human rights, ceasefire monitoring, and literature and culture, with a strong focus on Mon language education.[195] As in other States, there are two CSO networks, the Mon State CSO Network and the Mon CSO Network.

Border-based organisations established presences inside the State during earlier ceasefire periods. The Mon Women's Organization (MWO) was established in 2000 and, more recently, the Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM) entered the State in 2013.

Civil society organisations in Mon say they used to engage regularly with the State legislature, but that this has become more challenging since the new government took power in 2016.

Mon Youth Progressive Organization: Former exiles teach villagers about peace process

When members of the Mon Youth Progressive Organization (MYPO) began a programme to raise awareness about the peace process in local communities and rural areas, they realised they had made a big assumption. While they knew there was plenty that the public did not know about this complex topic, they had not counted on people not fully knowing what the peace process itself was.

"When we talked about peace, people didn't really understand," said one member of MYPO. "We realised that the peace process is very alien to […] people in the villages. So we have developed a curriculum that allows us to discuss it with them." [196]

Now, MYPO starts with a discussion about the meaning of peace. Then coordinators try to help people make the connection between inner peace and political developments, including the peace process.

The group was formed by young people from Mon and Kayin States in Thailand in 2001 with the aim of supporting democracy and human rights, and building a strong civil society to help with this. They are a member of the Students and Youth Congress of Burma (SYCB), a network of 15 different exiled youth organisations.

An active member of the Mon Civil Society Network and the Mon Women's Network, MYPO works closely with various other Mon CSOs. MYPO's programmes cover capacity building, women's empowerment, publishing reports, human rights, environmental awareness, and

> ❝*We realised that the peace process is very alien to […] people in the villages. So we have developed a curriculum that allows us to discuss it with them.*❞

Mon language literacy. MYPO, which moved from the border to Mon State in 2012, has about 20 staff and over 150 members, who are mostly volunteers.

Together with their partner organisations, they are involved in the Kroeng Batoi pilot development project in Yebyu township, Tanintharyi Region. The project started under the Myanmar Peace Support Initiative (MPSI) and aims to build confidence in the peace process by supporting infrastructure upgrades and improvement to water services and sanitation.

Now supported by the International Labour Organization (ILO), this project provides labour for infrastructure, salaries for medics, teaching materials, and training. As well as sustaining the bi-lateral ceasefire, the aim is to build trust among IDPs in conflict-affected areas.

MYPO also organised two youth exchanges with other ethnic organisations in Mawlamyine, the State capital, in 2014, and in Loikaw, Kayah State, in 2015. At the conferences, young people discussed issues including federalism, the peace process, democracy, environmental issues, education in mother tongue languages, and illicit drugs.
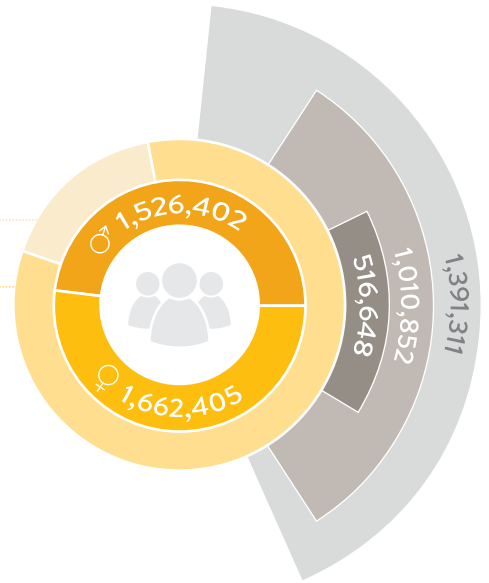
4.6. Rakhine State

5%
of Myanmar

**TOTAL
POPULATION**
3,188,807

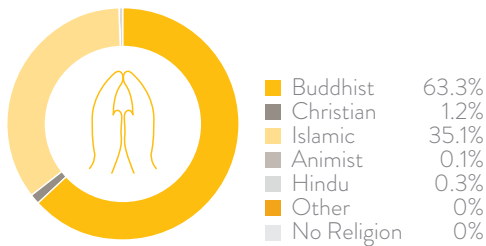♂ 1,526,402

♀ 1,662,405

516,648

1,010,852

1,391,31

URBAN
16.9%

RURAL
83.1%

**CONFLICT
TREND**

YOUTH

■ 15-29 years old	16%
■ 15-34 years old	31.7%
■ Over 15 years old	41.7%

RELIGION

■ Buddhist	63.3%
■ Christian	1.2%
■ Islamic	35.1%
■ Animist	0.1%
■ Hindu	0.3%
■ Other	0%
■ No Religion	0%

EMPLOYMENT 15-64 yrs

Unemployed
10.4%

Employed
89.6%

LITERACY 15+ yrs

213,016
15%

1,178,295
85%
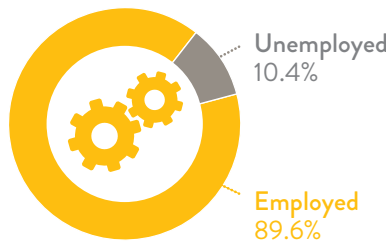
■ Literate
■ Illiterate
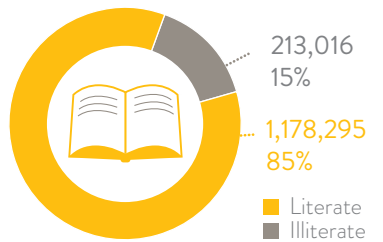
Rakhine has witnessed widespread inter-communal tensions and violence. There are deep and complex divides between and within ethnic and religious groups across the State. Violence that erupted in 2012 led to a protracted humanitarian crisis, displacing tens of thousands and segregating Buddhist and Muslim communities, the latter of which now live in camps on the outskirts of the State capital of Sittwe. Muslim populations in northern Rakhine face restrictions on freedom of movement and assembly.

In October 2016, a group that would later call itself the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) attacked border guard posts in northern Rakhine, triggering a security response that further deepened the complexities of conflict and displacement in Rakhine.[197] The analysis in this *Discussion Paper* extends to June 2017 – so the

aftermath of security clearance operations following ARSA attacks in August 2017 is beyond the remit of the *Paper*, though it is important to note that these events have led to a further deterioration of the security and humanitarian situation in Rakhine.

Rakhine civil society remains nascent, and includes small funeral services and blood donation CSOs as well as some organisations that emerged in response to cyclone Giri in 2010. Several other CSOs were also established in response to the violence of 2012. Interestingly, more CSOs appear to pursue explicit peacebuilding activities than in other States, but this choice of terminology on the side of CSOs might also be a response to donor funding priorities.

Most Rakhine CSOs are composed of ethnic Rakhine members, and there is no institutionalised civil society amongst Muslim communities in northern Rakhine, nor in the IDP camps around Sittwe.[198] There are, however, individual leaders in the camps who act as focal points for interaction with INGOs and help organise training activities. Further south in Thandwe, Kaman Muslims have also been displaced by violence and face travel restrictions. One CBO, the Kaman Social Development and Aid Organization, holds youth sports events with their Rakhine neighbours to promote social harmony.[199]

> *The committees tackle challenges including land grabbing and resource extraction.*

Social cohesion work in Rakhine has long been sensitive and has become even more so since October 2016. In the immediate aftermath of the October 2016 attacks, barriers to engaging on a range of humanitarian, peace and security and development issues increased. For example, some Rakhine CSOs and individuals working for international agencies, whom already faced social costs for carrying out social cohesion activities, were reportedly disinclined to continue engaging with Muslim communities. These individuals cited high-levels of anti-Muslim sentiment amongst ethnic Rakhine communities in particular as a key factor impacting their public organising around social cohesion. Beyond political constraints, CSOs operating in Rakhine also reported limited coordination within civil society, a lack of institutional capacity and minimal access to external funding as key obstacles to their engagement in peace, security and social cohesion.

The Arakan National Party (ANP) dominates the local parliament in Rakhine, but the National League for Democracy (NLD) has led the local government since 2016. The Tatmadaw is also considered to wield strong political influence, to the extent that many CSOs report they are facing two governments. While Rakhine CSOs have participated in the CSO Forum process, the Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC) has yet to approve a national dialogue in Rakhine state.

People for People: Former soldier promotes inter-communal harmony

People for People (PfP) was founded by a former member of the Arakan Army (AA) at the convergence of the borders between India, Bangladesh and Myanmar in 2012. After the launch of the nationwide peace process, the organisation came to Rakhine in 2013 and registered at State level in 2014.

The aim was to engage *"at the social rather than the political level."* [200] The CSO cooperated with the 88 Generation Network (Arakan) and started to offer training on conflict resolution across Rakhine State, which included teaching on early warning and response mechanisms. The group has ten staff in Sittwe and volunteer members in every township and leaders say that women make up 50% in the organisation. In 2017, PfP was undertaking research with Australia's Deakin University and collaborated with a handful of INGOs.

With a short-term grant from an international donor and in collaboration with the Wan Lark Development Foundation and other CSOs, they have established peace-working committees in several townships with eight to nine members each; where possible participants are from different ethnic groups.

These committees deal with a variety of local challenges ranging from land grabbing to resource extraction and problematic drug usage. They work inside the IDP camp in Ramree, with farmers in Rathedaung, and with a minority village in Mrauk Oo. They also had a committee in Maungdaw township in northern Rakhine State that involved Rakhine and Muslim members, but this was suspended after October 2016.

PfP wish to engage their communities more in discussions about the peace process and participate in national dialogue, but at the time of research for this *Discussion Paper* it had no more funding available. PfP is keen to get more exposure: *"The international community is interested in supporting peace and improving inter-communal harmony, that's very positive. We CSOs can work together with them,"* said one member.[201]
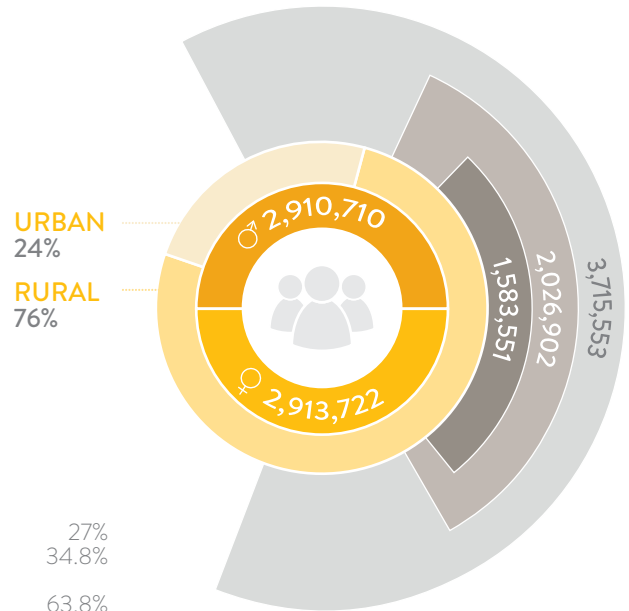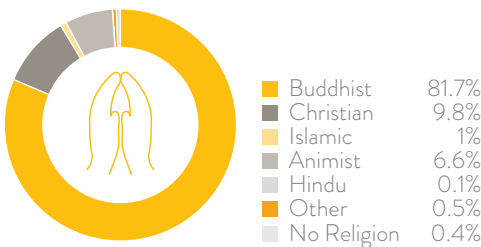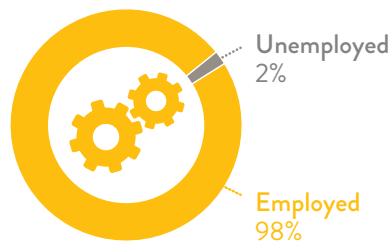
4.7. Shan State

23%
of Myanmar

**CONFLICT
TREND**

**TOTAL
POPULATION**
5,824,432

URBAN
24%

RURAL
76%

♂ 2,910,710

♀ 2,913,722

1,583,551

2,026,902

3,715,553

YOUTH

■ 15-29 years old	27%
■ 15-34 years old	34.8%
■ Over 15 years old	63.8%

RELIGION

■ Buddhist	81.7%
■ Christian	9.8%
■ Islamic	1%
■ Animist	6.6%
■ Hindu	0.1%
■ Other	0.5%
■ No Religion	0.4%

EMPLOYMENT 15-64 yrs

Unemployed
2%

Employed
98%

LITERACY 15+ yrs

1,314,570
35%

2,400,983
65%

■ Literate
■ Illiterate
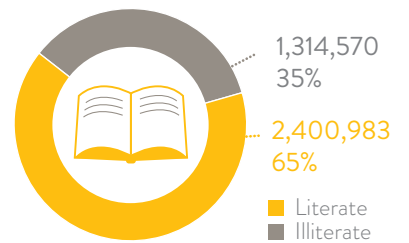
With 55 townships, Shan is the largest State and hosts a variety of ethnic, religious and linguistic groups. The State is often grouped into three sub-regions – north, east, and south – with the State capital Taunggyi located in the southern part.

A kaleidoscope of EAOs and militia is present across the State. Eastern Shan State is relatively peaceful, as is southern Shan, with the exception of Monshu and Kyethi townships. Northern Shan, however, has seen armed conflict escalate since 2011, leading to increased civilian casualties, restrictions on movement, forced recruitment and internal displacement.

Not all armed actors are engaged in the peace process in Shan State. While the Shan State Army-South/

Restoration Council for Shan State (SSA-S/RCSS) signed the NCA in October 2015, armed groups in northern Shan State have not. With the exception of Rakhine, Shan State is the only State or Region where the NLD was not overwhelmingly successful in the 2015 elections; its government and parliament are still dominated by the Union Solidarity and Democratic Party (USDP), but include also a variety of ethnic parties.

Reflecting its great diversity, Shan State has a variety of CSOs with differing interests and organisational capacities. Many CSOs are based on ethnic identity and work along ethnic lines. Most emerged with the transition to President U Thein Sein's administration and started initially as CBOs working on more politically neutral issues such as English language classes, environmental

outreach programs, and libraries and learning centres for the youth. They then expanded their activities to deal more openly with social and political issues such as land confiscation and human right violations.

Due to the ongoing conflict, CSOs in northern Shan engage more pro-actively in politics and often remain more critical of the peace process and transition more broadly. CSOs in Lashio, Kutkai or Muse operate in some of the most insecure environments in the country. The fighting means CSOs sometimes have to cancel or postpone their activities. Despite these challenges, they continue to find ways to sustain their activities and work on behalf of conflict-affected communities.

Some CSOs are informally engaged in the peace process by giving logistical and technical assistance to EAOs. These include the Cooperation for Peace and Development (CPD)[202], New Generation Shan State (NGSS), and the Women and Peace Action Network (WAPAN). Shan State also has two civilian ceasefire monitoring networks, one in the south and one in the north.

Other CSOs document human rights violations and advocate for legal action through the media. While tensions along ethnic lines are numerous, few CSOs work on social cohesion and harmony as a priority. An exception is Inter-Faith Youth (IFY) in Taunggyi, which focuses on bridging divides between different faith-based communities.

As in Kachin State, faith-based organisations dominate the humanitarian sector. Issue-based CSOs have yet to fully develop, and the activities of many appear broad and not always strategic. The presence of cross-border CSOs inside the State is relatively new, but they are often better equipped in terms of office management, human resources, and consistent programming, demonstrating their experience gained outside the country. Younger, more activism-focused CSOs tend to be less organised and volunteer-based, but they play important roles in networking and raising political voices. Youth and women are prominent in the CSO sector across Shan State.

The CSO forums held in Taunggyi and Nay Pyi Taw brought long-standing and newly emerging CSOs

together to find ways to collaborate and take part in the UPDJC framework. Many Shan State CSOs view this development positively, though lack of clarity around criteria for nominating participants led some to raise concerns that they were not consulted.[203]

Conflict Mitigation Committees: Two ethnic groups work together on release of civilians

Months after signing the NCA in October 2015, the SSA-S was involved in a territorial dispute with another EAO, the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA). The standoff led to fighting, followed by reports of human rights violations.
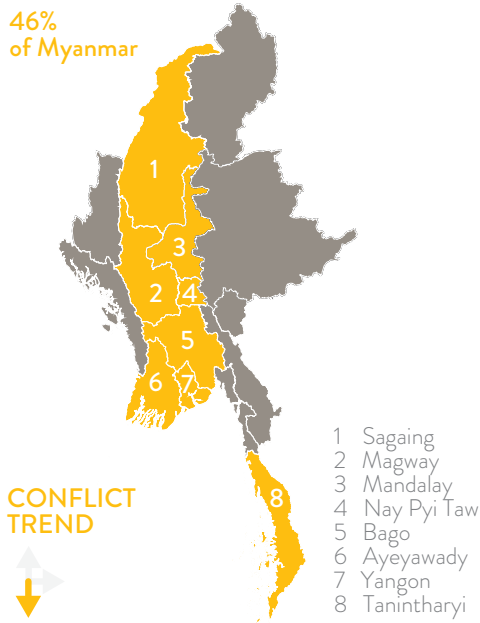
This contributed to a rift between Shan and Ta'ang communities that some community members feared could turn violent. In response, several CSOs came together to ease tensions. These included the Lashio-based Tai Youth Organization, the Ta'ang Student and Youth Union (TSYU) and the Ta'ang Women's Organization (TWO). [204]

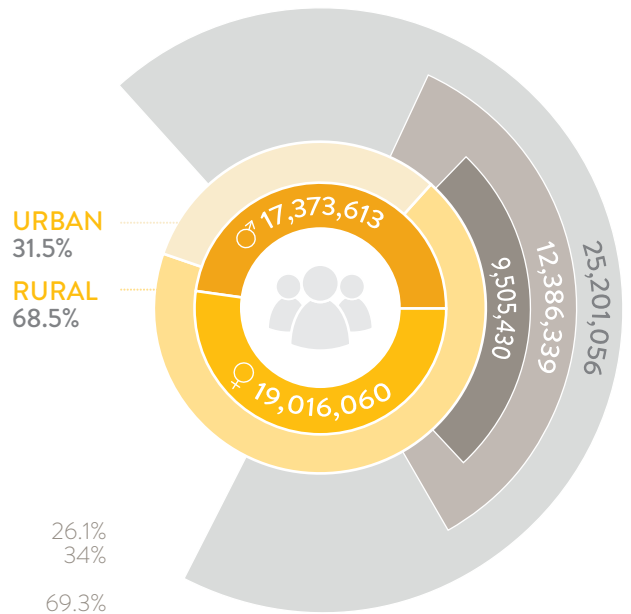> ❝ *Resolving conflicts at the local level is crucial for peace.* ❞

In 2016 the CSOs brought together 50 people from each side. Young people, monks, and community leaders all attended the event in Lashio. Facilitators from both sides, mostly youths, led discussions on how to prevent tensions in the future and formed emergency communication bodies called Conflict Mitigation Committees. Both sides agreed on the importance of protecting civilians.

After the meeting, the committees met with the SSA-S's political wing, the Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS) as well as TNLA commanders to mediate for the release of civilians in custody. Eleven Shan civilians and a group of Ta'ang villagers were freed as a result. The group has also turned its attention to dealing with IDPs, landmines, and the destruction of houses and property. Mai Cyruk, General Secretary of TSYU, said resolving conflicts at the local level is crucial when peace is unattainable at the top.[205]
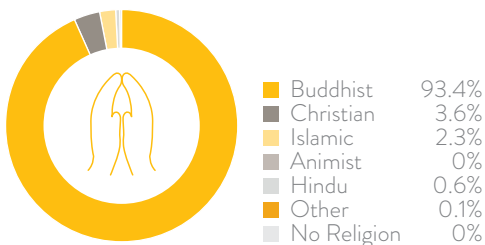
4.8. Regions

46%
of Myanmar

1 Sagaing
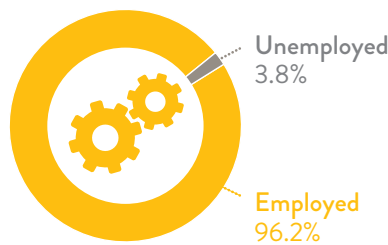2 Magway
3 Mandalay
4 Nay Pyi Taw
5 Bago
6 Ayeyawady
7 Yangon
8 Tanintharyi

CONFLICT TREND

TOTAL POPULATION
36,389,673

URBAN
31.5%

RURAL
68.5%

♂ 17,373,613

♀ 19,016,060

9,505,430

12,386,339

25,201,056

YOUTH

■ 15-29 years old   26.1%
■ 15-34 years old   34%
■ Over 15 years old   69.3%

RELIGION

Buddhist   93.4%
Christian   3.6%
Islamic   2.3%
Animist   0%
Hindu   0.6%
Other   0.1%
No Religion   0%

EMPLOYMENT 15-64 yrs

Unemployed
3.8%

Employed
96.2%

LITERACY 15+ yrs

1,447,849
4%

23,753,207
96%

■ Literate
■ Illiterate
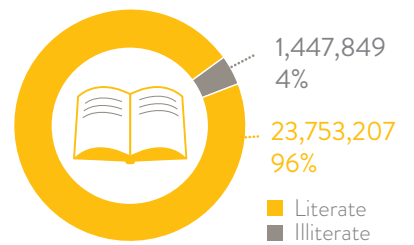
Myanmar's mostly central Regions are home for the majority of the overall population of the country. There are seven administrative Regions in Myanmar: Ayeyawady, Bago, Magway, Mandalay, Sagaing, Tanintharyi and Yangon.

The nature of civil society in these areas, which are largely populated by Bamar Buddhists, is fundamentally different from States on the periphery when it comes to peacebuilding. For the most part, Regions have not been affected to the same extent by protracted conflict. Civil society in the Regions has until recently been much less exposed to, and therefore much less involved in, the formal peace process and peacebuilding at large to date. This is not to say however, that States and Regions are not conflict-affected. Structural violence, economic

exclusion, gender-based violence (GBV), denial of rights and access and poverty all take their toll. In addition, many non-Bamar people live in these Regions; Ayeyawady Region, for example, has a large Kayin population. This can test social cohesion in these areas, and is likely to increase with migration and economic growth.

Community-based organisations and local self-help groups dedicated to social welfare and community services have existed for a long time across Regions in Myanmar. With the political transition, many of these CBOs started to specialise and identify target groups for their activities. Branch offices and chapters of Yangon-based organisations and networks have also started to open.

Following general amnesties for political prisoners soon after President U Thein Sein took office, the 88 Generation re-formed and reactivated its networks across the country. Professional Unions and associations for farmers, teachers, lawyers, and many others also became active again, and new youth groups emerged. Women's groups seem to make up a smaller part of the CSO landscape in the Regions.

After the eruption of inter-communal violence, mainly directed toward Muslim and minority religious communities, in Regions including Mandalay, Bago, Yangon and Ayeyawady[206], faith-based and other civil society groups came together to respond.[207] In Mandalay city, for example, several monks and people from CSOs such as the Metta Campaign and the Seagull Foundation are working together to overcome inter-communal tensions. After 2014, they founded the Mandalay Peacebuilding Committee. Peacebuilding in this context is primarily viewed through the lens of inter-communal harmony. The same people, however, advocate for peace in States and participate in political dialogue.

The start of formalised political dialogue exposed civil society in the Regions to the peace process in new ways. At the time of research, only Tanintharyi had a Regional Dialogue organised by the local government, but all Regions organised preparatory meetings for the issue-based dialogue (CSO Forum). In most cases, members of the CSO Forum working group in Yangon organised these preparations. The few organisations that have started to share information about the peace process in the Regions are linked to NCA signatories.

Htila Thukha Thamagi: After riots, an inter-faith group forms to heal wounds

In 2013, inter-communal violence between Buddhist and Muslims broke out in the central town of Meiktila in Mandalay Region, killing over 40 people, including twenty students and several teachers at an Islamic school.

Thousands more were displaced, finding refuge with relatives or in *ad hoc* camps .[208]. The conflict was resolved after community leaders, Buddhist monks, and CSOs came together to diffuse the situation. The incident had a lasting effect on all communities. Over four years after the outbreak of violence, the situation is still carefully monitored by local residents.

> *They helped ensure safe transport to school for 1,200 students.*

After the violence, the Asia Light Sayadaw from Pyin Oo Lwin and other humanitarian actors came to Meiktila and started to organise inter-faith activities. They met with religious leaders from both sides to support those affected by the conflict. From those efforts, 17 local leaders formed the inter-faith group Htila Thukha Thamagi to work on conflict resolution.

The newly founded CSO first served as a channel for donations and later supported the camps with food, water, health and education services, as well as psychological support. Members of Htila Thukha Thamagi convinced Muslim parents to send their children back to school, despite their fears of discrimination. They also met with the city's education department to advocate for the education of Muslim children, ensure safe transport to school for 1,200 students, and provide school kits and uniforms.

Mi Htaw Nyan, Mon Women's Network.

Annex 1: Methodology

Analysis in this *Discussion Paper* covers civil society in Myanmar's complex transition up to June 2017. This *Discussion Paper* is the result of comprehensive research and analysis conducted from January to June 2017. The research was conducted by Michael Lidauer together with three Myanmar researchers, Saw Chit Thet Tun, La San Aung, and Seint Seint Tun. The research process began in January 2017 with an extensive literature review of reports on the Myanmar peace process and inter-communal harmony in addition to international studies and global lessons learned on civil society and peacebuilding and.[209] All census data referenced in the State and Region snapshots are taken from reports released by the Ministry of Immigration and Population.[210]

Between February and April 2017, the research team conducted 228 semi-structured interviews and three focus group discussions (FGDs) with civil society organisations (CSOs) and leaders, covering all of Myanmar's States and Regions. The research team spoke to Myanmar non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that operate at the Union level and have broad geographical coverage, as well as to numerous local CSOs operating at the grassroots level. To organise the research and to ensure the broadest possible coverage, the team visited the capital of every State and Region and at least one more township in every area. As a result of the research focus on activities that are directed to peacebuilding, there was a sample bias towards States. Civil society in the Regions was nonetheless included to increase understanding around civil society engagement in peace in these areas.

The team approached key individuals, NGOs, various forms of CSOs, and some community-based organisations (CBOs), thought the latter was not a primary target group for interviews. The team tried to sub-group and cluster CSOs along the following, partly overlapping lines: national and sub-national NGOs and CSOs, national and sub-national networks, cross-border organisations and networks, faith-based organisations, youth organisations, women's organisations, literature and culture associations, professional unions and associations, and community-based media initiatives. Although the research team has sought to identify a large representative sample for its qualitative analysis and data collection, results are indicative rather than an exhaustive, representative narrative on civil society and peacebuilding in Myanmar.

Based on common definitions of civil society, the research team largely excluded the following groups: Union and State/Region governments, political parties, Ethnic Armed Organisations (EAOs), business entrepreneurs, and professional media. However, as individuals change their positions over time and civil society is not a clear-cut category, some of these were also included due to the fluid nature of civil society.[211] Donors and international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) were not on the forefront of the analysis; however, to contextualise and complement analysis, the research team also interviewed six donor representatives and held twenty-one informal conversations with INGOs. In addition, the research team organised one validation workshop with civil society representatives from across the country and four more discussions of preliminary findings with the Paung Sie Facility, donors, other funds/facilities, and INGOs. The latter discussion was facilitated by the International Peace Support Group (IPSG) working group on aid and conflict. Two peer reviewers provided inputs on the *Discussion Paper*: Roger Mac Ginty (University of Manchester), and Ashley South (University of Chiang Mai).

This *Discussion Paper* focuses on peacebuilding activities and their enabling or disenabling context, rather than on discourse about peacebuilding. During the research for this *Discussion Paper*, it was not important whether interlocutors would ascribe their own contributions to the term peacebuilding or not. Many involved in peacebuilding do not explicitly identify themselves as such even where they *"play critical roles in de-escalating conflict and avoiding violence."* [212] The research, therefore, focussed on any activities related to the peace process

and inter-communal harmony, as well as activities to seeking to foster social cohesion.

Many important interviews with key individuals took place in Yangon, but to do justice to the diversity of local initiatives taking place across the country, the majority of conversations took place in State and Region capitals and beyond. The case studies provided in Section 4 are chosen to illustrate a broad range of civil society activities, but there are many more that could have been included. The case studies do not alone represent the States or Regions under which they are mentioned. There is certainly no intention to exclude any relevant actor from this *Discussion Paper*, but we hope that those not explicitly mentioned can find themselves in the general trends described. This *Discussion Paper* and the research it is based on cannot replace a full evaluation of the effectiveness of individual organisations and activities that are used as indicative examples.

Conflict in Myanmar takes at least two distinct forms. One involves EAOs and the other is communal, with less distinct actors or formal groups. The difference between these two forms means research on conflict must draw on different bodies of literature. It also explains why international and national responses in terms of peacebuilding have been mostly separate. Most of the civil society actors interviewed for this *Discussion Paper* who are involved in the peace process are not focussed on inter-communal harmony (ICH), and inter-communal violence is not subject to the formal peace process.

Annex 2: About the 'Contributions to Sustainable Peace Series'

This *Discussion Paper* is the third instalment in the Paung Sie Facility's (PSF) *Contributions to Sustainable Peace Series*. The first paper, *The Women Are Ready: An Opportunity to Transform Peace in Myanmar*, analysed women's participation in the peace process and peacebuilding more broadly.[213] The second paper, *Youth and Everyday Peace: Fostering the Untapped Potential of Myanmar's Youth,*[214] focused on the inclusion of youth in peacebuilding.

*Discussion Paper*s in this series offer a starting point for conversation rather than definitive statements. All papers were derived from participatory engagement with key stakeholders to understand the role of different actors, and to identify gaps in knowledge and understanding. Regional and international lessons have clearly demonstrated that sustainable peace in Myanmar will rely on the holistic inclusion of a range of interests, issues, groups, and communities. While much attention is rightly paid to the key decision-makers involved in the formal peace process, these papers seek to broaden discussions on and understanding of peacemakers and peacebuilders upon whom the process will increasingly rely.

The PSF has supported a range of national and sub-national civil society groups and initiatives related to social cohesion and peacebuilding and acknowledges their ongoing contributions and potential. The PSF's current donors – the Governments of the United Kingdom, Australia, and Sweden have detailed commitments to support civil society as a key pillar of their development and peace building programs.

Mar Mar Cho, Thandaunggyi Women's Group.

Annex 3: Overview of contemporary dynamics of peace and conflict

In brief: the peace process

This *Discussion Paper* assumes that the reader has a basic understanding of the history of Myanmar as it relates to peace and conflict in the country. This annex, while not exhaustive, offers a starting point for readers less familiar with country dynamics and how they influence civil society contributions to peace. Analysis in this *Discussion Paper* focuses on Myanmar's transition up to June 2017. Key events, such as the August 2017 attacks in northern Rakhine State, took place after the timeframe of analysis, but have nevertheless impacted the peace and conflict dynamics in the country.

As in other parts of mainland Southeast Asia, Myanmar's territory, particularly the periphery, was never entirely under the control of a central government. Pre-modern Myanmar consisted of kingdoms with shifting relations to its neighbours, vessel states, principalities, and peoples – all beyond the authority of any centralised hegemony.[215] The creation of boundaries around previously fluid identity categories over the course of the British colonial period, turned ethnicity (and to a lesser degree, religion) into a prominent identity marker with more defined, rigid boundaries. Ethnic identity labels have become drivers of conflict throughout Myanmar's complex post-colonial history.[216] Several Ethnic Armed Organisations (EAOs) presenting as representative of ethnic communities have been fighting for their autonomy since the 1940s.

Prior to Myanmar's independence, in February 1947, General Aung San convened the Panglong conference with representatives of several, but not all, ethnic leaders. In principle, the agreement reached at the historic Panglong conference ensured equal rights and participation, including administrative and financial autonomy. The 1947 Constitution included the right to secession. However, the agreement was never realised. Soon after independence, with Myanmar elites establishing their hegemony over the nation, movements striving for autonomy were formed, which challenged the unity of the state; and political independence movements with armed wings formed that still exist today.

After U Saw Maung's administration came to power in 1988, several bi-lateral ceasefires were agreed, including with the United Wa State Army (UWSA, 1989), the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO, 1994), and with the New Mon State Party (NMSP, 1995). Prior to the 2010 General Elections, the outgoing administration introduced a Border Guard Force (BGF) scheme with the aim of integrating ethnic armies into the Myanmar Armed Forces (or Tatmadaw). Only a few small organisations and splinter groups accepted the BGF proposal. Some smaller EAOs also turned into *pyithu sit*, people's militias, which are currently outside the auspices of the formal peace process.[217]

At the outset of his five-year term, in April 2011, President U Thein Sein declared peacemaking with EAOs a political priority for his administration, alongside economic reform. Thirteen bi-lateral ceasefires were agreed or renewed between 2011 and 2012. The bi-lateral ceasefire with the Karen National Union (KNU), signed in Hpa'an in January 2012, paused the world's longest-standing civil war. Minister U Aung Min became the president's leading negotiator, assisted by the Myanmar Peace Center (MPC), which was supported by donors. At the same time, the bi-lateral ceasefire with the KIO broke down in June 2011 after 17 years, leading to a resurgence of fighting in Kachin State and northern Shan State, a proliferation of EAO and militia activity in the north. Sustained escalation of conflict in northern Myanmar has deepened longstanding humanitarian issues and displacement since.[218]

Until mid-2015, the peace process consisted of nine rounds of formal negotiations and numerous informal meetings across the country, in Thailand and in China to prepare the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA). The NCA negotiation process unveiled a range of challenges related to negotiating peace in the country. At

the time, many EAOs sought political solutions ahead of the signing of the NCA rather than afterwards. Political questions, particularly surrounding autonomy and power-sharing, were deferred to a multi-level national dialogue process that started after the NCA's ratification.

Eight EAOs signed the NCA[219] in Nay Pyi Taw on 15 October 2015 and it was ratified in the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw on 8 December.[220] Some EAOs were excluded from the process and other EAOs did not sign the NCA at the time, even where they had agreed to the text. This led to a partial NCA where not all groups were invited to participate in the process[221] and others decided not to join.[222] The NCA signing ceremony took place only a few weeks before the historical General Election on 8 November 2015. The election led to landslide victory of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD).

The NCA created two main implementation structures to move the peace process forward: the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) and the Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC).[223] Towards the end of U Thein Sein's administration, a five-day Union Peace Conference (UPC) was convened in Nay Pyi Taw in January 2016. While initially envisioned as a conclusive step on the roadmap to peace, this event remained largely symbolic. It did, however, include over 700 participants from the Tatmadaw, EAOs, political parties, ethnic representatives and civil society from Myanmar's 14 major administrative units.

In brief: inter-communal tensions

Myanmar has seen a resurgence of inter-communal violence since the start of the political transition. This type of violence is largely directed toward minority communities, in particular Muslim communities and often perpetrated by Buddhist nationalists.[224] Buddhism and nationalism became interwoven during the fight for independence under the British colonial administration. The British dethroned the monarchy and significantly reduced the political power of the Buddhist monkhood.[225] Inter-communal violence at that time, however, was mainly directed towards people of Indian descent, who had been brought to Myanmar in great numbers to function as members of the colonial administration.

Some analysis highlights that *"specifically anti-Muslim (rather than anti-Indian) tensions first came to a head in 1938."* [226] Similar clashes occurred between 1958, 2001, and 2010[227] and over time, widely shared anti-Indian and other xenophobic narratives narrowed into anti-Muslim sentiments[228], though many minorities suffer from similar exclusionary practices.

Violence erupted in Rakhine State just as peacemaking with EAOs in other parts of the country increased in momentum. Violence in Sittwe and other cities and centres in 2012 caused over a hundred deaths and displaced approximately 145,000, predominantly Muslims,[229] who were moved to 'temporary' camps.[230] This created a protracted humanitarian crisis and segregation of communities that continues today. It has also led to large refugee movements by land and sea, adding significant regional dynamics to ongoing tensions.[231] Outside Rakhine State communal violence involving Muslim communities took place in the central town of Meiktila, in northern Shan State's Lashio, in Mandalay, and elsewhere.[232] While communal violence is often seen through the lens of Rakhine, identity-based exclusion manifests in different ways across the country, elucidating the structural nature of conflict in Myanmar.

Anti-Muslim sentiments are often associated with a nationalist group called the Organization for the Protection of Race and Religion, or MaBaTha, and its predecessor, the 969 movement.[233] Such narratives are widespread in Myanmar, and efforts to foster inter-faith dialogue, have emerged in response, particularly in areas that have experienced episodes of violence. Under Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's administration, the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee, the highest Buddhist authority in the country, ordered MaBaTha to dissolve,[234] and its most prominent leader, the monk Ashin Wirathu,[235] was banned from preaching in public for one year over comments he made about the assassination of the lawyer U Ko Ni on Facebook.[236]

Significant events since April 2016

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, like U Thein Sein, declared the peace process a priority soon after her government took power in April 2016. The State Counsellor endorsed the NCA and urged non-signatories to sign while her

new government rearranged the peace process' formal institutions.[237] With the change in government and key personnel, informal conversations between the state and EAOs reportedly experienced significant ruptures with negotiators who had built relationships over several years replaced by new personnel.[238] In addition, some report that communications between civilian members of the government and military officers within the government became more difficult than before.[239]

In July 2016 the State Counsellor's office established the National Reconciliation and Peace Centre (NRPC) to replace the Myanmar Peace Centre (MPC). The second Union Peace Conference, also named the 21st Century Panglong Conference in remembrance of the historic event convened by General Aung San, was convened between 31 August and 4 September 2016. United Nations General Secretary Ban Ki Moon attended as a special guest. Around 850 participants attended from the government, political parties, and EAOs including both NCA signatories and non-signatories. A handful of CSOs took part as observers, including the National Ethnic Youth Alliance (NEYA) and the Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process (AGIPP). Prominent figures also raised concerns about a lack of civil society, gender and youth inclusion.[240]

Importantly, more non-signatory groups attended the second UPC than the first in the hope that the State Counsellor would use her significant leverage to find lasting solutions for long-standing problems. Their participation was made possible by declaring the conference an event without decision-making powers. However, with the exception of the KIO, the Northern Alliance – a coalition of EAOs forged in northern Shan State[241] –did not participate. The Wa delegation, which presented detailed proposals, left on the second day citing frustrations surrounding the way the event was organised and managed. While there were 73 ten-minute presentations, several commentators expressed dissatisfaction with the substance of the conference and discomfort with the way it was arranged, highlighting concerns that the peace process was stalling.[242]

In October and November 2016 in Rakhine State, tensions deepened after attacks targeting border guard police posts by an insurgent group called Harakah

al-Yaqin,[243] which later renamed itself the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA). This led to a fear in both Buddhist and Muslim communities *"that deepened mistrust will trigger a return to inter-communal violence similar to that which occurred in 2012."*[244] The attacks were met with security clearance operations that led to large-scale displacement and reports of gender-based violence (GBV).[245] The new government came under increasing internal pressure to respond to the protracted humanitarian crisis, reports of human rights violations and GBV, continued movement restrictions for Muslims, and the unresolved question of citizenship.[246]

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi invited former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to lead an Advisory Commission on Rakhine State. Its mandate was to provide recommendations on measures to find lasting solutions to the crisis. While outside the timeframe of analysis for this *Discussion Paper*, the final report and recommendations of this commission were released in August of 2017, hours ahead of another round of ARSA attacks in northern Rakhine that led to further security clearance operations that caused over 800,000 people to flee to Bangladesh .[247]

At the same time, fighting in Kachin and northern Shan continued to intensify. Following military advances, the Tatmadaw took the KIO's strategic outpost, Gidon, close to its headquarters in Laiza in mid-December 2016. This added to displacement and refugee movements into China that had already occurred from northern Shan State. In 2016, fighting between the Tatmadaw and the Northern Alliance flared up in the Kokang Self-Administered Zone (SAZ). Northern Shan State has also seen inter-group fighting, in particular between the Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS) and the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA). Armed conflict has contributed to heightening tensions between different ethnic communities and groups in Shan State.

Since 2015, divides in Shan state, particularly between areas covered by the NCA and areas that are not, have become increasingly visible. Some note that *"the geographic split reflects very different political-economic realities between the areas, including access to funding and weapons and the distinct policies and approaches of China and Thailand."*[248] In April 2017, a group of seven

northern EAOs came together under the Federal Political Negotiation and Consultative Committee (FPNCC) under the leadership of the United Wa State Army (UWSA). They proclaimed they would no longer recognise the NCA and wanted new peace talks based on a different framework.[249]

Armed conflict remains a risk in other parts of Myanmar too. Fighting between the Arakan Army (AA) and the Tatmadaw broke out at the border between Rakhine and Chin State in 2015 and 2016, and there have been recurring outbreaks of violence involving splinter groups in Kayin State. On 20 December 2016, 125 civil society and faith-based organisations voiced an urgent appeal to end fighting, expressing their concerns about the new government: *"This is not what the people desired or expected when the National League for Democracy was voted into office by popular mandate last year."*[250] Against this background, many civil society leaders interviewed for this *Discussion Paper* expressed a sense of alienation with the new government after its first year in office. The research team notes, however, that expectations were extremely high of the largely inexperienced incoming government.

The UPC is now expected to become a regular, bi-annual event until the agreement on a Union Peace Accord is reached. The second 21st Century Panglong Conference took place between 24 and 28 May 2017. Facilitated by China, participation was again more inclusive than previously as the members of the Northern Alliance attended the opening ceremony. The FPNCC repeated their call for a new peace framework, while the State Counsellor maintained a firm position on the NCA. Negotiators agreed 37 principles to be included in the future Union Peace Accord, including the right of States to have their own constitutions and explicit rights of self-determination for ethnic groups. The UPC conference revealed some flaws in the political dialogue process: most agreed principles were proposed by the government rather than by EAOs or political parties, and there was a lack of space to raise objections or to discuss contentious issues before or during the event. UPC conferences to date have largely been important but largely symbolic, and there is much more work to be done to find lasting solutions for peace.

Annex 4: Endnotes

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[38] The Frontier. 2015. Profile: The 'Flower Speech' movement. 10 October; Oye, Mari Michener. 2014. Using 'flower speech' and new Facebook tools, Myanmar fights online hate speech. The Washington Post. 24 December, and Trautwein, Catherine. 2015. Sticking it to hate speech with 'flowers'. Myanmar Times. 2 March.

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[44] Berghof Foundation. 2017. National Dialogue Handbook. A Guide for Practitioners. Berlin: Berghof Foundation. May.

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[46] Over 90 parties registered to stand for the 2015 elections, but only 13 won seats in the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw.

[47] The UPDJC or its secretariat do not yet have a website. Updates can be found on the websites of the President's Office and the State Counsellor's Office.

[48] https://www.facebook.com/KarenNationalDialogue/

[49] Anon. 2017. Formation of supervision Committees for Political Dialogues at the National-Level for Shan State, Bago Region. President Office Website. February 2017.

[50] Following the State Counsellor's announcement, a four-person committee (U Naing Ngan Lin, Daw Nang Raw, Daw Doi Bu, and U Ye Baw Myo Win) was established under the UPDJC to oversee the forum preparations and develop ToR for the CSO Forum.

[51] In some locations, the organisation of these events was contested over the question of who has the authority to take the lead, in others this was a smooth process without disputes. In Sagaing State, the preparatory meeting had to be repeated due to a lack of participation in the first round. In Chin State, there was no preparatory meeting as this was organised in Yangon – to the surprise of CSOs in Hakha, who only heard about the Pre-Forum in Taunggyi two days before it took place. The delegation from Kayah State participated in Taunggyi, but not in Nay Pyi Taw.

[52] In Shan State, in particular, the CSO Forum and pre-Forum were perceived as Yangon-driven, and several local organisations based in Taunggyi (where the Pre-Forum took place) felt they were unable to influence or shape the process.

[53] Interview in Minbu on 27 March 2017.

[54] Interview in Yangon on 3 March 2017.

[55] Interview in Yangon on 11 February 2017.

[56] He also saw the value in the organisation of the CSO Forum more in its process and mobilising capacity rather than in its potential outcome in terms of issue-based recommendations.

[57] The NCA establishes the mandate for the JMC broadly as follows (paragraph 2.b): *"Implementing provisions of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement, monitoring adherence to the code of conduct, investigating alleged violations, and undertaking conflict resolution."*

58   At the level of townships, wards and villages, the structure foresees that the JMC-Ls will be liaising with civilian peace observers, which are provided by CSOs and/or CBOs.

59   U Pyae Sone, Reverend Saw Matthew Aye, U Ko Ko Gyi, Sai Myo Than, Maung Maung Than, Thura U Thin Hla.

60   The terms of reference (ToRs) and standard operating procedures (SoPs) for the functions of the JMC are still being discussed, and the JMC-Ss are not yet considered fully operational. No JMC-L has yet been established, but the opening of 10 JMC-Ls is foreseen in the course of 2017. At the JMC-S level, four out of 16 members are civilians, with two appointed by the government and EAOs respectively. Seven out of 20 appointed civilian JMC-S members are women. JMC-Ls are expected to include two civilian members, with one nominated from each side. In the course of 2016, five JMC-S were established. The geographical scope of JMCs is expected to expand if more EAOs become NCA signatories.

61   Interview with a civilian JMC-S member on 25 February 2107.

62   Interview with an EAO JMC-U member on 21 February 2017.

63   Interview with a civilian JMC-S member on 20 February 2107. Note that the JMC-U provides office space to three Chairpeople and two Secretaries, but no salaries.

64   Interview with civilian JMC-S members on 20 and 25 February 2017.

65   Interview with a civilian JMC-U member on 6 February 2017.

66   Paffenholz, Thania et al. 2010. Enabling and Disenabling Factors for Civil Society Peacebuilding. In, Paffenholz, Thania (Editor), *Civil Society & Peacebuilding. A Critical Assessment.* Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 405-424.

67   Interview in Yangon on 11 February 2017.

68   Interview with a border-based CSO on Skype on 11 April 2017.

69   Participant in the validation workshop with CSOs in Yangon on 5 April 2017.

70   Interview in Lashio on 8 March 2017.

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82   Interview in Mawlamyine on 17 February 2017.

83   Interview in Loikaw on 10 March 2017.

84   Interview in Yangon on 11 February 2017.

85   Interview on Skype on 2 May 2017.

86   Interview on 20 February 2017.

87   Interview in Lashio on 6 March 2017.

88   Interview in Falam on 26 March 2017.

89   Interview in Taunggyi on 23 February 2017.

90   In their initial conceptualisation, Paffenholz et al related the influence of external political actors in particular to neighbouring countries and differentiated this from donor politics. The sequencing in this *Discussion Paper* follows their example.

91 Yun Sun. 2017. China and Myanmar's Peace Process. United States Institute of Peace (USIP) Special Report 401.

92 Interview in Hakha on 24 March 2017.

93 Interview in Sittwe on 30 March 2017.

94 Matelski, Maike. 2016. Civil Society, Foreign Aid, and Donor Dependency in Transitional Myanmar. In, Kosem, Samak. Border Twists and Burma Trajectories. Perceptions, Reforms, and Adaptations. Center for ASEAN Studies. Chiang Mai University, 93-126.

95 Interview in Yangon on 6 February 2017.

96 Interview in Yangon on 1 February 2017.

97 Interview on Skype on 4 May 2017.

98 Global Perspectives 2016, 26-28 October, Berlin.

99 Daw Seng Raw at an Oxfam event in 23 May 2016.

100 Interview in Yangon on 11 February 2017.

101 For some organisations interviewed, such as monasteries, a foundation year was not recorded.

102 See http://www.ysps-ac.org

103 See https://www.pacemyanmar.org

104 See http://emref.org

105 See http://www.tagaunginstitute.org

106 See https://www.pyidaungsuinstitute.org

107 See http://www.burmaenac.org

108 Interview in Myitkyina on 14 March 2017.

109 Lanjouw, Steven/Choo Phuah/La Phan. 2016. The Art of Networking. A Study of Civil Society Networks in Myanmar, and Rivers, Mary Jane/Clarke, Don/Win Win Myint/Nan Ma Ma Myo. 2016. Synthesis Report. Evaluation of Three Myanmar Networks.

110 Lanjouw et al 2016, 4.

111 This comment was shared by a peer reviewer.

112 Lanjouw, Steven et al. 2016. The Art of Networking. A Study of Civil Society Networks in Myanmar. Christian Aid/ European Union. October 30-33.

113 Lanjouw, Steven et al. 2016. The Art of Networking. A Study of Civil Society Networks in Myanmar. Christian Aid/European Union. October, and Rivers, Mary Jane et al. 2016. Synthesis Report. Evaluation of three Myanmar Networks. Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund (LIFT). 8 April.

114 Paung Sie Facility (PSF). 2016. The Women Are Ready. An opportunity to transform peace in Myanmar. Yangon: PSF.

115 Myanmar ratified CEDAW in 1997 with a reservation on Article 29.

116 Paung Sie Facility (PSF). 2016. The Women Are Ready. An opportunity to transform peace in Myanmar. Yangon: PSF.

117 AGIPP. 2017. Analysis of Myanmar's Second Union Peace Conference- 21st Century Panglong from a Gender Perspective by Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process (Agipp). June.

118 Interview in Yangon on 6 March 2017.

119 WON includes GONGOs, at least to some degree (Interview in Taungoo on 25 February 2017).

120 See https://www.agipp.org

121 GDI, GEN, Mon Women's Network (MWN), Nyein (Shalom) Foundation, Kachin State Women's Network (KSWN), Women and Peace Action Network (WAPAN), and WON.

122 Interview in Mawlamyine on 16 February 2017.

123 Burmese Women's Union (BWU), Kachin Women's Association Thailand (KWAT), Karen Women's Organization (KWO), Karenni National Women's Organization (KNWO), Kayan Women's Organization (KYWO), Kuki Women's Human Rights Organization (KWHRO), Lahu Women's Organization, Palaung Women's Organization (PWO), Pa-O Women's Organization, Rakhine Women's Union (RWU), Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN), Tavoy Women's Union (TWU), Women's`Rights & Welfare Association of Burma (WRWAB).

124 KWAT has nearly 50 staff and around 10 donors. Interview in Myitkyina on 17 March 2017.

125 Paung Sie Facility (PSF). 2017. Youth and Everyday Peace: Fostering the Untapped Potential of Myanmar's Youth. Yangon: PSF.

126 Interview in Yangon on 4 February 2017.

127 Interview with a member of an INGO on Skype on 1 July 2017.

128 Shan Herald Agency for News. 2016. Civil Society Must Be Part of Peace Process, Says 88 Generation Leader. Shan Herald Agency for News. 20 June.

129 Interview in Dawei on 13 February 2017.

130 Interview in Loikaw on 9 March 2017.

131 Interview in Yangon on 11 February 2017.

132 Interview in Yangon on 11 February 2017.

[133] Interview in Yangon on 28 February 2017.

[134] Interview in Loikaw on 8 March 2017.

[135] South, Ashley and Marie Lall. 2016. Language, Education and the Peace Process in Myanmar. *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 38 (1), 128–53.

[136] Interview in Taunggyi on 26 February 2017.

[137] Paffenholz, Thania and Christoph Spurk. 2010. A Comprehensive Analytical Framework. In, Paffenholz, Thania (Editor). *Civil Society & Peacebuilding. A Critical Assessment.* Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 67.

[138] Berghof Foundation. 2012. Peace, Peacebuilding, Peacemaking. Chapter 10. In, Berghof Foundation (Editor) *Berghof Glossary on Conflict Transormation. 20 notions for theory and practice*. Berlin: Berghof Foundation, 62.

[139] Many examples are also available from regional comparison. Examples include, but are not limited to, mass mobilisation in Nepal, inter-communal harmony in India and Sri Lanka, inclusion in peace agreements in Aceh, youth mobilisation and security sector reform in Timor-Leste, donor-driven civil society peacebuilding in Cambodia, grassroots resistance to violence in southern Thailand, and civilian monitoring in the Philippines.

[140] At times, the framework is not precise and mixes up the analysis of its categories, which can also be due to the large quantity of qualitative information. It was also noted that a lack of guidance for measuring effectiveness exists, even though the framework encourages doing so. Although the Paffenholz framework tries to avoid a normative bias on "good" civil society. There also seems to be a bias on civil society *organisations*; the same is true for this *Discussion Paper*. Lastly, it is an outcome of the Paffenholz research that findings according to this framework are highly context-dependent. The Myanmar context is complex, featuring various levels of conflict and formal and informal process with high inter- and intra-regional variation. Nevertheless, research for this *Discussion Paper* confirms the Paffenholz findings in many ways and also shows some interesting deviation. For an alternative look at peacebuilding functions see Barnes, Catherine. 2009. Civil Society and Peacebuilding: Mapping Functions in Working for Peace. *The International Spectator*, 44(1), 131-147.

[141] Galtung, Johan. 1964. An Editorial. *Journal of Peace Resesarch*, 1(1), 1-4, and Walton, Matthew et al 2016 (24).

[142] Paffenholz, Thania and Christoph Spurk. 2010. A Comprehensive Analytical Framework. In, Paffenholz, Thania (Editor). *Civil Society & Peacebuilding. A Critical Assessment*. Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 67.

[143] Paffenholz, Thania. 2010a. What Civil Society Can Contribute. In, Paffenholz, Thania (Editor). *Civil Society & Peacebuilding. A Critical Assessment.* Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 381-384.

[144] Paffenholz, Thania and Christoph Spurk. 2010. A Comprehensive Analytical Framework. In, Paffenholz, Thania (Editor). *Civil Society & Peacebuilding. A Critical Assessment.* Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 67.

[145] UN Office of the SRSG for Children and Armed Conflict. 2017. Myanmar: 849 children and young people released from Tatmadaw since 2012. OSRSG CAAC. 23 June.

[146] The Border Consortium. 2017. Refugee and IDP populations in Thailand: April 2017. April.

[147] South, Ashley. 2014. Commentary: IDPs and refugees in the current Myanmar peace process. New Issues in Refugee Research. Research Paper 271. UNHCR. March.

[148] Interviews in Kutkai on 11 March and in Myitkyina on 15 March 2017.

[149] Interview in Myitkyina on 14 March 2017.

[150] Paffenholz, Thania. 2010a. What Civil Society Can Contribute. In, Paffenholz, Thania (Editor). *Civil Society & Peacebuilding. A Critical Assessment.* Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 384-386.

[151] Prominent examples are e.g. the International Crisis Group (ICG), as used for this *Discussion Paper*, Human Rights Watch (HRW), and the Transnational Institute (TNI). A good example for collaboration between national and international monitors and researchers was provided with the launch of Global Witness. 2015. Jade: Myanmar's Big State Secret. 23 October.

[152] Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP). 2016. *Civilians protecting civilians through ceasefire monitoring. Civilian Ceasefire Monitoring in Myanmar: 2012 – 2016.* 8 October, 11.

[153] Interview in Yangon on 28 March 2017.

[154] Interview in Myitkyina on 20 March 2017.

[155] Paffenholz, Thania. 2010a. What Civil Society Can Contribute. In, Paffenholz, Thania (Editor). *Civil Society & Peacebuilding. A Critical Assessment.* Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 387.

[156] Paffenholz, Thania and Christoph Spurk. 2010. A Comprehensive Analytical Framework. In, Paffenholz, Thania (Editor). *Civil Society & Peacebuilding. A Critical Assessment.* Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 70f.

[157] Paffenholz, Thania. 2010a. What Civil Society Can Contribute. In, Paffenholz, Thania (Editor). *Civil Society & Peacebuilding. A Critical Assessment.* Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 389-393.

[158] Paffenholz, Thania. 2010a. What Civil Society Can Contribute. In, Paffenholz, Thania (Editor). *Civil Society & Peacebuilding. A Critical Assessment.* Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 396.

[159] Paffenholz, Thania. 2010a. What Civil Society Can Contribute. In, Paffenholz, Thania (Editor). *Civil Society & Peacebuilding. A Critical Assessment.* Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 393-398.

[160] Schissler, Matt J et al. 2017. Reconciling Contradictions: Buddhist-Muslim Violence, Narrative Making and Memory in Myanmar. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 47(3), 391.

[161] Interview in Yangon on 28 March 2017.

[162] Interview in Hpa'an on 23 February 2017.

[163] Interview in Sittwe on 31 March 2017.

[164] Paffenholz, Thania and Christoph Spurk. 2010. A Comprehensive Analytical Framework. In, Paffenholz, Thania (Editor). *Civil Society & Peacebuilding. A Critical Assessment.* Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 73.

[165] Paffenholz, Thania and Christoph Spurk. 2010. A Comprehensive Analytical Framework. In, Paffenholz, Thania (Editor). *Civil Society & Peacebuilding. A Critical Assessment.* Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 73.

[166] See Mediators Beyond Borders.

[167] One senior CSO leader has pointed to the need for international mediation (interview in Hakha on 25 March 2017).

[168] Paffenholz, Thania. 2010a. What Civil Society Can Contribute. In, Paffenholz, Thania (Editor). *Civil Society & Peacebuilding. A Critical Assessment.* Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 398-401.

[169] Mubashir, Mir. 2016. Tradition- & Faith-Oriented Insider Mediators (TFIMs) as Crucial Actors in Conflict Transformation. *Case Study: Myanmar/Burma.* Baseline Study. The Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers/Berghof Foundation.

[170] Denney, Lisa et al. 2015. Peacebuilding and Service Delivery. Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium. United Nations University, Centre for Policy Research (UNU-CPC). February.

[171] Paffenholz, Thania and Christoph Spurk. 2010. A Comprehensive Analytical Framework. In, Paffenholz, Thania (Editor). *Civil Society & Peacebuilding. A Critical Assessment.* Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 74.

[172] Paffenholz, Thania and Christoph Spurk. 2010. A Comprehensive Analytical Framework. In, Paffenholz, Thania (Editor). *Civil Society & Peacebuilding. A Critical Assessment.* Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 74f; Paffenholz, Thania. 2010a. What Civil Society Can Contribute. In, Paffenholz, Thania (Editor). *Civil Society & Peacebuilding. A Critical Assessment.* Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 401-403.

[173] Interviews in Lashio on 9 March and Kutkai on 11 March 2017.

[174] Paffenholz, Thania. 2010a. What Civil Society Can Contribute. In, Paffenholz, Thania (Editor). *Civil Society & Peacebuilding. A Critical Assessment.* Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 403.

[175] Paffenholz, Thania. 2010a. What Civil Society Can Contribute. In, Paffenholz, Thania (Editor). *Civil Society & Peacebuilding. A Critical Assessment.* Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 402.

[176] Interview in Dawei on 14 February 2017.

[177] Interview in Hakha on 25 March 2017.

[178] Interview in Hpa'an on 23 February 2017.

[179] Paffenholz 2010 does not offer such an overview, but a similar table is suggested in Paffenholz, Thania. 2009. Summary of Results for a Comparative Research Project: Civil Society and Peacebuilding. The Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding (CCDP/ Geneva). CCDP Working Paper 4, 25.

[180] Paffenholz, Thania and Christoph Spurk. 2010. A Comprehensive Analytical Framework. In, Paffenholz, Thania (Editor). *Civil Society & Peacebuilding. A Critical Assessment.* Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 75f.

[181] Census information is available on the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population website, UNFPA's website and on MIMU.

[182] For analysis of the 2014 census, see: ICG. 2014. Myanmar Conflict Alert: A Risky Census. Brussels: ICG; Associated Press. 2014. Burma census is not counting Rohingya Muslims, says UN agency. The Guardian. 2 April; TNI. 2014. Ethnicity without Meaning, Data without Context. Amsterdam: TNI; Ferguson, Jane. 2015. Who's Counting? Ethnicity, Belonging, and the National Census in Burma/Myanmar. Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde, 171(1), 1-28.

183 See http://www.chro.ca

184 Interview in Myitkyina on 17 March 2017.

185 Joint Strategy Team (JST). 2017. Protection and Humanitarian Needs Assessment. Recent Conflict-Affected Areas in Kachin State. April 2017.

186 Interview in Loikaw on 10 March 2017.

187 Interview in Loikaw on 8 March 2017.

188 Interview in Loikaw on 10 March 2017.

189 Interview in Loikaw on 8 March 2017.

190 Interview in Loikaw on 9 March 2017.

191 Personal conversation with a Karen CSO activist in Hpa'an on 18 February 2017.

192 Saw Yang Naing. 2017. Behind the KNU Election Results. *The Irrawaddy*. 11 April 2017.

193 Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG). 2016. Ongoing militarisation in southeast Myanmar. October 2016.

194 In this case, a border guard force (BGF) group.

195 Local Resource Center (LRC). 2016. Civil Society Mapping Mon State, Myanmar. March 2016.

196 Interview in Mawlamyine on 16 February 2017.

197 ICG. 2016. Myanmar: A New Muslim Insurgency in Rakhine State. 22 December. For recommendations on conflict-sensitive engagement in Rakhine State, see: Aron, Gabrielle. 2016. Reshaping engagement: Perspectives on conflict sensitivity in Rakhine State. CDA Collaborative Learning Projects. May and Aron, Gabrielle and David Gilmore. 2017. Navigating Change: Crisis and Crossroads in the Rakhine State Context. CDA Collaborative Learning Projects. April.

198 Some observers note that there has been an increase in Thet, Mro, and Maramagy CSOs operations in Rakhine.

199 Interview in Thandwe on 1 April 2017.

200 Interview in Yangon on 29 March 2017.

201 Interview in Yangon on 29 March 2017.

202 CPD was previously known as the Pa-O Peace and Development Agency (PPDA).

203 Interviews in Taunggyi on 24 and 25 February 2017.

204 Interview in Lashio on 6 March 2017.

205 Interview in Lashio on 1 March 2017.

206 Adapt Research and Consulting. 2014. Intercommunal Violence in Myanmar Risks and Opportunities for International Assistance; ICG. 2013. The Dark Side of Transition: Violence Against Muslims in Myanmar. Asia Report 251. 1 October 2013.

207 One example is the case of Paungde where CSOs and inter-faith leaders came together in the aftermath of violence in Meiktila to form a network to prevent future outbreaks of violence. For more information, about Paungde, see: CDNH. 2016. Lingering Shadows: Communal Tensions in West Bago Region.

208 ICG. 2013. The Dark Side of Transition: Violence Against Muslims in Myanmar. Asia Report 251. 1 October 2013.

209 All referenced studies are listed in endnotes.

210 http://www.dop.gov.mm/en/publication-category/census

211 The team spoke to three civilian members of the Joint Monitoring Committee at State level, five EAO liaison officers, one State-level Minister, one member of a township development committee, and several journalists.

212 Walton, Matthew J. et al. 2017. Failed riots: Successful conflict prevention in four Myanmar cities. Myanmar Media and Society (M.MAS) project. Working Paper 1, 16.

213 Paung Sie Facility. 2016. *The Women Are Ready: An Opportunity to Transform Peace in Myanmar.* Yangon: Paung Sie Facility.

214 Paung Sie Facility. 2017. *Youth and Everyday Peace: Fostering the Untapped Potential of Myanmar's Youth.* Yangon: Paung Sie Facility.

215 For further readings, see: Heine-Geldern, Robert. 1942. Conceptions of State and Kingship in Southeast Asia. *The Far Eastern Quarterly*, 2(1), 15-30; Owen, Norman G. (Editor). 2005. *The Emergence of Modern Southeast Asia.* Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press; Scott, James C. 2009. *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia.* Yale University Press; Taylor, Robert H. 2009. *The State in Myanmar.* Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press; and Thant Myint-U. 2012. *The Making of Modern Burma*. Cambridge University Press.

216 Taylor, Robert. 1982. Perceptions of Ethnicity in the Politics of Burma. *Southeast Asian Journal of Social Science,* 10 (1), 7-22, summarised and critiqued in South, Ashley. 2008. *Ethnic Politics in Burma. States of Conflict*. Oxon and New York: Routledge, and Thant Myint-U. 2017. Myanmar, an unfinished nation. *Nikkei Asian Review*. 17 June. For further references on ethnicity in Myanmar, see for example Gravers, Mikael (Editor). 2007. *Ethnic Diversity in Burma.* Copenhagen: NIAS and Smith, Martin. 1999. *Burma. Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity.* 2nd edition. London and New York: Zed Books.

217 For a more detailed study of *pyithu sit*, see Buchanan, John. 2016. Militias in Myanmar. The Asia Foundation.

218 More details about the peace process under President U Thein Sein's term can for example be found here: Horsey, Richard. 2015a. *Prospects for the Myanmar Peace Process.* Conflict Prevention and Peace Forum. SSRC. 16 January; Horsey, Richard. 2015b. *Myanmar: What Next for the Peace Process?* Conflict Prevention and Peace Forum. SSRC. 10 June; ICG. 2015. Myanmar's Peace Process: A Nationwide Ceasefire Remains Elusive. Asia Briefing 146. Yangon/Brussels. 16 September; Lidauer, Michael. 2016. The 2015 Elections and Conflict Dynamics in Myanmar. In, Cheesman, Nick and Nicholas Farrelly (Editors). *Conflict in Myanmar: War, Politics, Religion.* Singapore: ISEAS, 137-159; Myanmar Peace Support Initiative (MPSI). 2014. Lessons Learned from MPSI's Work Supporting the Peace Process in Myanmar, March 2012 to March 2014. MPSI; South, Ashley and Charles Petrie. 2014. Peacebuilding in Myanmar. In, Gravers, Mikael and Flemming Ytzen (Editors). *Burma/Myanmar. Where Now?* Copenhagen: NIAS, 223-249.

219 For further reference, see for example CDES. 2016. The significance of NCA: What everyone ought to know about the peace process.

220 All Burma Students' Democratic Front (ABSDF), Arakan Liberation Party (ALP), Chin National Front (CNF), Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA), Karen National Liberation Army-Peace Council (KNLA-PC), Karen National Union (KNU), Pa-O National Liberation Organization (PNLO), and Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army-South (RCSS/SSA-S).

221 Arakan Army (AA), Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), and Ta'ang National Liberation Front (TNLA).

222 Kachin Independence Organizations/Kachin Independence Army (KIO/KIA), Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP), New Mon State Party (NMSP), Shan State Progressive Party/Shan State Army-North (SSPP/SSA-N), among others. The United Wa State Army (UWSA) and it's ally, the National Democratic Alliance Army (NDAA), did not take part in the NCA process from the outset.

223 Interim arrangements mentioned in NCA Chapter 6 refer for example to service provision in ceasefire areas. In a situation where the formal peace process appears to stall, debates about interim arrangements re-emerged in the first half of 2017 inter alia under the aegis of the Norwegian Embassy in Yangon.

224 For further reading, see: Cheesman, Nick. 2017. Introduction: Interpreting Communal Violence in Myanmar. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 47 (3), 335-352, and other articles in the special issue. For developments between 2012 and 2014, see Lidauer, Michael. 2014. Zwischen "kommunaler Gewalt" und "Genozid": Dimensionen religiöser Konflikte in Myanmar. In, Werkner, Ines-Jacqueline et al (Editors). *Friedensgutachten 2014*. Berlin: Lit Verlag.

225 For further readings on Buddhism, politics, and civil society in Burma/Myanmar, see for example Engelkamp, Stephan. 2008. Moral Authority in Burmese Politics. Asien, 109, 37-53; Gravers, Mikael. 2014. Politically Engaged Buddhism – spiritual politics or nationalist medium? In, Gravers, Mikael and Flemming Ytzen (Editors). Burma/Myanmar. Where Now? Copenhagen: NIAS, 293-311; Schober, Juliane. 2011. Modern Buddhist Conjunctures in Myanmar: Cultural Narratives, Colonial Legacies, and Civil Society. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press; and Walton, Matthew J. 2017. Buddhism, Politics and Political Thought in Myanmar. Cambridge University Press.

226 Speers Mears, Emily et al. 2015. Community information flows to reduce inter-communal violence in Burma. Search For Common Ground (SFCG). December, 4.

227 Cheesman (2017, 341) writes: *"(T)he project to conflate the Buddhist nation with the modern state reached its apogee in the period of "Myanmafication" under military dictatorship in the 1990s and 2000s",* following Houtman, Gustaaf. 1999. *Mental Culture in Burmese Crisis Politics: Aung San Suu Kyi and the National League for Democracy. Tokyo: Tokyo University of Foreign Studies.*

228 Egretau, Renaud. 2011. Burmese Indians in contemporary Burma: heritage, influence and perceptions since 1988. *Asian Ethnicity,* 12 (1), 33-54.

229 For background on the connotations of this conflicted term, see, for example, historian Jacques Leider in an interview with The Irrawaddy in 2012.

230 See ICG. 2013. The Dark Side of Transition: Violence Against Muslims in Myanmar. Asia Report 251. 1 October. For southern Rakhine State, see Centre for Diversity and National Harmony (CDNH). 2015a. The Report On The Outbreak of Sectarian Violence During September and October 2013 In Thandwe. 26 June.

231 Lewa, Chris. 2008. Asia's New Boat People. *Forced Migration Review*, 30, 40-42.

232 For further reading see CDNH. 2013. On communal violence in Myanmar. Myanmar Information Services. September, and Government of Myanmar (GoM). 2014. Report of the Investigation Committee on the violence in Sittwe on 26-27 March 2014. 7 April.

[233] Walton, Matthew and Susan Hayward. 2014. Contesting Buddhist Narratives: Democratization, Nationalism, and Communal Violence in Myanmar. Policy Studies 71. Honolulu: East-West Center.

[234] Ives, Mike. 2017. Ultranationalist Monks in Myanmar, Facing Crackdown, Say They're Unrepentant. *The New York Times.* 26 May.

[235] Wirathu, who had been a political prisoner for inflaming anti-Muslim tensions before, was on the cover of the *Times Magazine* on 1 July 2013 as the "Face of Buddhist Terror."

[236] AFP/The Frontier. 2017. Wirathu banned from sermons after celebrating U Ko Ni assassins. *The Frontier.* 12 March.

[237] The Burma News International (BNI) Series, *Deciphering Myanmar's Peace Process. A Reference Guide* (2013-2017) can serve as a reference for the evolution of peace process stakeholders and architecture since 2012; see also http://mmpeacemonitor.org/research/monitoring-archive. ICG. 2016a. Myanmar's Peace Process: Getting to a Political Dialogue. Asia Briefing 149. 19 October.

[238] Aung Naing Oo. 2017. Dialogue or despair: Two futures for the peace process. *The Frontier*. 17 February.

[239] For example, the role of semi-official institutions remains uncertain as to whether their mandates will continue and are no longer in contact with the government. This includes the Myitkyina-based Peace-talk Creation Group (PCG), which facilitated negotiations with the KIO Interview with PCG members in Myitkyina on 17 March 2017.

[240] 88 Generation leader U Ko Ko Gyi: "Civil Society Must Be Part of Peace Process."

[241] Composed of the Arakan Army (AA), the KIO, the National Democratic Alliance Army (NDAA), and Ta'ang National Liberation Army. Since late 2016, the grouping also calls itself Northern Alliance – Burma (NA-B).

[242] ICG. 2016a. Myanmar's Peace Process: Getting to a Political Dialogue. Asia Briefing 149. 19 October.

[243] *"It benefits from the legitimacy provided by local and international fatwas (religious judicial opinions) in support of its cause and enjoys considerable sympathy and backing from Muslims in northern Rakhine State, including several hundred locally trained recruits."* (ICG. 2016b. Myanmar: A New Muslim Insurgency in Rakhine State. 22 December.)

[244] Aron, Gabrielle and David Gilmore. 2017. Navigating Change: Crisis and Crossroads in the Rakhine State Context. CDA Collaborative Learning Projects. April, ii. For previous CDA recommendations regarding conflict sensitivity in Rakhine State, see Aron, Gabrielle. 2016. Reshaping engagement: Perspectives on conflict sensitivity in Rakhine State. CDA Collaborative Learning Projects. May.

[245] McGregor, Fiona. 2016. Dozens of rapes reported in northern Rakhine State. *Myanmar Times.* 27 October.

[246] See Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). 2017b. Flash Report. Interviews with Rohingyas fleeing from Myanmar since 9 October 2016. Report of OHCHR mission to Bangladesh. UN OHCHR. 3 February. For further references, see for example Quinley, Caleb. 2016. Violence Erupts in Myanmar's Rakhine State. *The Diplomat*. 18 October.

[247] See http://www.rakhinecommission.org

[248] Horsey, Richard. 2017. Myanmar's peace conference leaves talks on uncertain path. *Nikkei Asian Review.* 31 May.

[249] Gerin, Roseanne. 2017. Ethnic Militias in Myanmar Form New Committee to Handle Talks With Government. *Radio Free Asia*. 19 April.

[250] See https://www.tni.org/en/article/urgent-appeal-by-civil-society-and-faith-organizations-kachin-and-shan-states-20-december