

Civil Society Contributions to Myanmar's Peace Process

Catalyzing Reflection

3/2014

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swisspeace is an action-oriented peace research institute with headquarters in Bern, Switzerland. It aims to prevent the outbreak of violent conflicts and to enable sustainable conflict transformation. swisspeace is an Associated Institute of the University of Basel and a member of the Swiss Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences (SAGW).

The Shalom (Nyein) Foundation

From its humble beginning eleven years ago, the Shalom (Nyein) Foundation (SF) has continued to work toward the attainment of peace and development for the people of Myanmar, successfully creating spaces for constructive dialogue between the government and the ethnic groups with a vision of: a peaceful and just society for all the people in Myanmar; a society that practices good governance; and a culture that rejects violence as a method for dealing with differences. The goal of the organization is to build sustainable peace with justice and a state that protects diversity by supporting an inclusive peace process.

Cover Photo

Public Consultation in Kayah State, 2012

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Printed in Yangon, Myanmar

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Catalyzing Reflection Series	2
Acknowledgements	3
Acronyms	4
Map of Myanmar	5
1 Introduction	6
2 Civil Society Contributions to Myanmar's Peace Process	9
3 Overview of Civil Society Actors Currently Working on the Peace Process	16
4 Case Studies	24
5 Reflection and Analysis	32
6 Recommendations	35

List of Tables and Figures

Map of Myanmar	5
SF Public Consultation Project	20
Annex 1: Peace Process Overview	39
Annex 2: List of Interviewees	40

Catalyzing Reflection Series

Civil Society Contributions to Myanmar's Peace Process is the third paper in a series of publications in which local actors involved in the ongoing peace processes in Myanmar step back and reflect on different dimensions of the ongoing process. Each of the publications in the series provides a deep analysis of different dimensions of the peace process: the importance of a gender analysis, the complexity of the ceasefire process, and the necessity of civil society in current peace efforts.

With the government of Myanmar and multiple armed groups now engaging in peace talks after more than 60 years of conflict, this series, aptly entitled Catalyzing Reflection on Dialogue Processes among Parties in Myanmar, addresses the urgent need to document these dimensions in order to better understand the country's complex and rapidly shifting peace process.

The authors are Myanmar nationals, whose expertise in the respective topics is based on their direct involvement on the ground. Their research and analyses speak directly to other actors in the process, the larger Myanmar community, and international actors in supporting roles. We hope that this series catalyzes more discussions and reflection to support current local, national and international peace efforts.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks go to the interviewees who provided input for this paper, as well as those who helped make these interviews possible.

This paper was made possible through the close collaboration between the Shalom (Nyein) Foundation staff and the support of swisspeace. We would like to thank Rachel Gasser and Sara Hellmüller for their support of this project all along its development. We would especially like to acknowledge the extended support in the drafting process by Julia Palmiano.

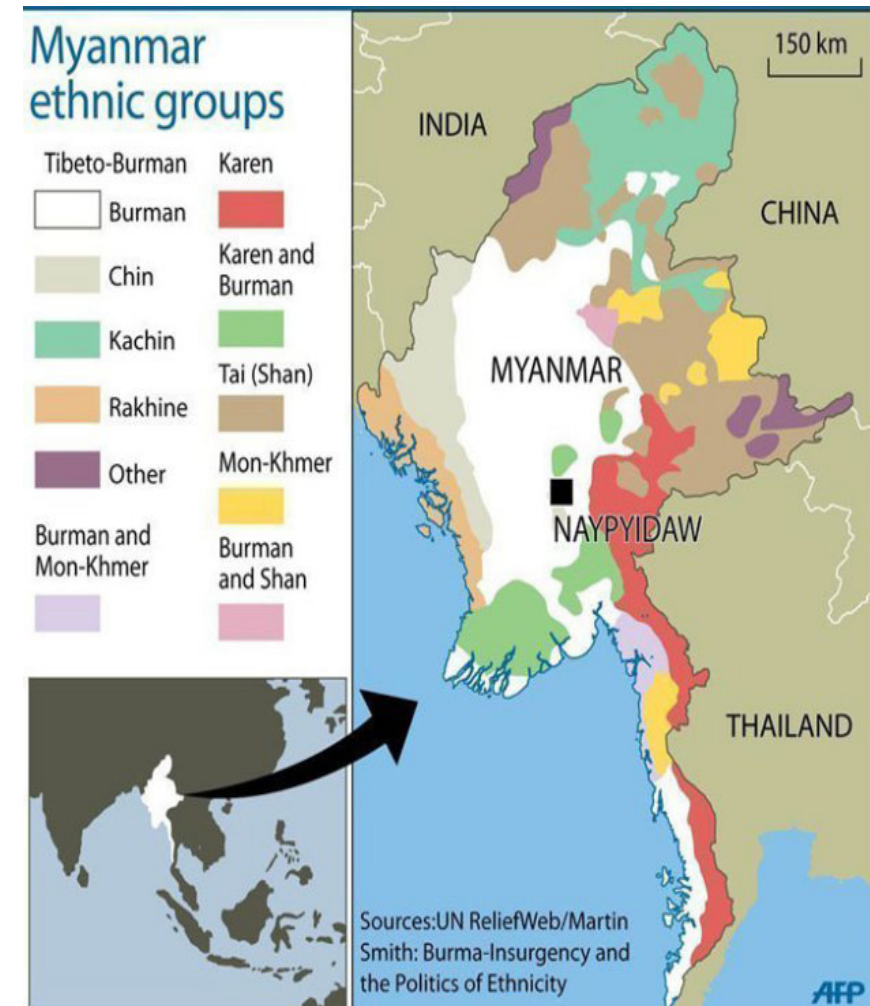
We gratefully acknowledge the financial support from the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, without which this paper would not have been possible. We would also like to extend our thanks to Thania Paffenholz and Katia Papagianni for their useful review of the text, as well as to Bryan Tomlinson for his editorial review.

Lastly, we would like to thank all the staff at the Shalom (Nyein) Foundation for their understanding and support for this project.

Acronyms

BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CBO	Community-based Organization
CNF	Chin National Front
CPCS	Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies
CPTC	Chin Peace and Tranquility Committee
CR	Conciliation Resources
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EAO	Ethnic Armed Organization
GoM	Government of Myanmar
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
KPST	Karen Peace Support Committee
KIC	Karen Information Center
KNPP	Karenni National Progressive Party
KNU	Karen National Union
KSPMN	Kayah State Peace Monitoring Network
MPSI	Myanmar Peace Support Initiative
NCCT	Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team
NMSP	New Mon State Party
PPSP	Peace Process Support Program
SF	The Shalom (Nyein) Foundation
TNI BCN	Transnational Institute Burma Center Netherlands
UPWC	Union Peace Working Committee

Map of Myanmar



“Civil Society is alive in Myanmar today. In fact, it never died...” (Kramer 2011)

No analysis on the current peace process in Myanmar is complete without some reflection on the role of the country’s civil society organizations (CSOs). Since President U Thein Sein’s official 1/11 Call to Peace, the space for civil society to contribute to the peace negotiations between the government of Myanmar (GoM) and ethnic armed organizations (EAO) has widened considerably. The ongoing peace negotiations are no longer the exclusive, closed-door enterprises concerning only top-level decision makers that have characterized past attempts to solve the six-decade conflict. However, due to the fast pace and complexity of the peace process, many questions remain about the nature of civil society in Myanmar and its impact on current peace efforts.

This publication, meant for those already acquainted with Myanmar’s peace process, attempts to pragmatically provide insight on the richness of civil society in Myanmar and CSO contributions to the current peace process. Through original research, it aims to present ways in which CSOs have contributed to the peace process before and after 2010, in light of the country’s post-2010 ongoing political transition. The paper also reveals obstacles to meaningful participation and looks at the road ahead.

This publication is organized as follows: Chapter One lays out important concepts and definitions, while giving an overview of CSO contributions to the peace process before 2010 and from 2010 until present. Chapter Two describes the methodology behind this research paper. Chapter Three hones in on the current landscape of civil society activities regarding the peace process: which organizations are involved, what types of activities are being done, and what elements are still missing. This chapter highlights the activities of the Shalom (Nyein) Foundation (SF) as a prominent organization in this context. Chapter Four presents case studies that outline civil society contributions to peace processes between the GoM and four different EAOs: the Chin National Front (CNF), the Karen National Union

(KNU), the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) and the New Mon State Party (NMSPP). Chapter Five offers reflection and analysis on lessons learned, current challenges, and possible opportunities. Chapter Six closes the research paper with a set of recommendations.

The term ‘civil society’ has been defined in different ways. The scholar Francis Fukuyama defined civil society as “the realm of spontaneously created social structures separate from the state that underlie democratic political institutions,” (Fukuyama 1995) while Charles Taylor defined civil society as, “A web of autonomous associations independent of the state, which bind citizens together in matters of common concern, and by their existence or actions could have an effect on public policy” (Kligman 1990). The advantage of this kind of definition is that civil society can be both operationalized and empirically tested. In this publication, civil society is viewed as a community closely knitted by common interests and shared activities separate from the state, while public denotes ‘ordinary people in general.’ While this publication focuses mainly on contributions from CSOs, it also illustrates peace activities conducted by community-based organizations working in different states. CSOs and CBOs in Myanmar working in and around the peace process interact regularly and, in many instances, work together towards contributing to a peaceful end to the decades-long armed conflict. In her 2009 Working Paper, Thania Paffenholz lists seven ways civil society can contribute to peacebuilding (Paffenholz 2009). Some of these functions are relevant to Myanmar’s civil society, as described later in the publication: the monitoring of human rights violations; the implementation of peace agreements; advocacy for peace and human rights; the socialization towards values of peace and democracy as well as developing the in-group identity of marginalized groups; facilitation of dialogue on the local and national level between a variety of actors; and service delivery to create entry points for peacebuilding.

The content for this research paper is based on three elements: desk research on theoretical frameworks and

1 On August 18, 2011, President Thein Sein officially offered to enter into dialogue with all EAOs, pledging to make the ethnic issue a national priority. He dropped pre-conditions for talks, particularly ending the requirement that all ethnic armed groups become border guard forces before talks could take place. See BNI 2013: 38.

conceptual debates surrounding public participation; interviews with the SF staff, activists and EAO representatives; and results of a questionnaire distributed during civil society forums.

The timeframe for the data collection was from 8 October 2013 – 14 March 2014. From the current ceasefire processes in Myanmar, four EAOs (CNF, KNPP, KNU and NMSP) were selected to be case studies. Because of the improved security situation in these areas, these groups have more proactive civil society networks. Consequently, the SF was able to conduct public consultations and thereby obtain better access to information from these particular groups.

The interviews took place with individuals from the CNF, KNPP, KNU and NMSP as well as activists who are especially interested in the peace processes in order to get a more critical view of their expertise. Other data sources include research on the peace talks currently being conducted, the lessons learnt from SF's activities explored later in the paper, critical analyses continuously done by the SF, and other news centers and relevant books. The responses were recorded, written and analyzed by a SF and a swisspeace staff member. Interviews took place in Burmese and English.

The questionnaire was developed by a SF staff member, and was distributed at the Chin National Front civil society forum, which was attended by EAO representatives, civil society leaders, and professionals supporting the peace process. The data from these questionnaires were collected and analyzed. The questionnaire respondents' identities remain confidential.

For a list of interview participants, see Annex 2.

2 Civil Society Contributions to Myanmar's Peace Process

2.1 Civil Society Contributions to Myanmar's Peace Process before 2010

The decades-long armed conflict in Myanmar has been described as one of the longest-running civil wars in the world. Since Myanmar gained independence from the United Kingdom in 1948, the country has been embroiled in armed conflicts between EAOs and different government configurations, from post-colonial parliamentary democratic governments to a one-party military-governed state. During this parliamentary period, various ethnic nationalities sequentially took up arms to fight against the government. The main reasons for the violence stemmed from EAOs claiming self-determination and ethnic equality. However, other significant reasons also included the announcement of Buddhism as the state religion and incidences of state-sanctioned discrimination. Roughly 30 per cent of the population regard themselves as distinct ethnic nationalities with their own rights for self-determination and ethnic equality. Many of them further view themselves as controlled by the Burmese, the majority ethnic group (CFR 2013, MPSI 2014). Many ethnic groups stand by the guidelines stipulated in the 1947 Panglong Agreement signed by General Aung San and ethnic leaders, and continue to strive for the political rights of ethnic groups as outlined in this agreement (UN Peacemaker 2014). The armed conflict between the government and the ethnic groups entrenched itself through generations of mistrust and fear, exacerbated by the increasingly militarized nature of the state. In 1962, General Ne Win led a military coup to establish the 'Burmese Way to Socialism.' This was followed by the establishment of a new constitution in 1974 that would transfer power from armed forces to a People's Assembly, albeit still headed by military leaders. In 1988 a major uprising of students and youth against the regime was violently quashed by the military, prompting the formation of the State Law and Order Restoration Council, and martial law was declared in 1989 (The War Report 2013: 136).

Between 1989 and 2010, over 30 EAOs entered into ceasefire agreements with the then-military government (Muk Yin and Khen 2014: 14). However, trust eroded gradually

between the parties when the government did not accept ethnic representatives' demands for political dialogue toward a federal union. Bilateral trust broke down between some large EAOs with strong political agendas and the then-military government as a result of governmental proposals for the EAOs to transform themselves into Border Guard Forces or militia under the control of Tatmadaw (Myanmar Armed Forces) commanders. Furthermore, for the EAOs, a 'military tool' is the only tool they see as giving them strength and achieving their aspirations vis-à-vis the government.

In the previous ceasefire process led by the Military Intelligence Chief, civil society contributions were minimal. There was limited space for civil society to function, and very few civil society leaders were involved as the Military Intelligence Chief would handpick preferred religious leaders and local business actors.

The 2010 election transformed Myanmar's government from an autocratic military dictatorship into a quasi-civilian government, albeit with numerous accompanying economic and political changes. Despite this major political development, some ethnic leaders have accused President U Thein Sein of lacking the will to start real political discussions (Burma Partnership 2013: 7 -9).

In 2014, the picture is markedly different. Significant political and social changes have taken place in Myanmar and as a consequence the number of local and national organizations that are being formed increased substantially. Tom Kramer (TCN BNI 2011) suggests several reasons. First, the series of ceasefire agreements has created spaces for local organizations to operate in former conflict areas. Second, CSOs have expanded their roles as service providers due to declining government services. Third, the increased interest from the international community in Myanmar's political and economic transitions has resulted in more capacity building programs for local organizations. Fourth, the aftermath of Cyclone Nargis in May 2008 (resulting in the deaths of over 130 000 people) prompted a large-scale emergency response, thus spurring the creation

of new formal and informal organizations (Kramer 2011: 3).

Kramer argues that civil society never died under the Burma Socialist Programme Party, but "continued to exist under the military regime and further developed in the last two decades" (Kramer 2011: 3). He also writes that social formations are not new in Myanmar, but have a long history of traditional religious informal networks that still exist today. These formations have influenced civil society in the context of Myanmar, though they differ in the standards that characterize formal Western NGOs. A genuine discussion on civil society should take this differentiation into account.

2.2 Civil Society Contributions to Myanmar's Peace Process – 2010 to Present

2.2.1 The Complexity of the Current Peace Process

The multiple processes currently unfolding with no unifying forum of dialogue and mediation makes Myanmar a unique and complex case. Indeed, it provides civil society actors the space to create and advocate for their own models of inclusion and mechanisms for participation. Several factors underpin this complexity.

The first factor is the sheer number of the actors involved. The government's Union Peace Working Committee (UPWC) is currently in talks with 16 different EAOs. Thus, the complexities of inclusion or exclusion become central when considering that each EAO has its own constituency, its own affected population, and its own civil society network.

The second factor is the timing of the talks in Myanmar's history, such that the current peace process is placed in the midst of an ongoing process of political democratization and economic reform. President U Thein Sein's political and economic reforms play a crucial role in the political will behind the peace talks. This has also created the space for strong voices from civil society groups, and the development of civil society mechanisms. Furthermore, the tremendous speed of reform means that parallel processes

are also occurring within the peace process itself. This also opens up a new role for civil society actors, as ceasefire agreements require monitoring, and the prospect of a nationwide ceasefire occurring in the near future means that preparations for a national dialogue must be undertaken.

The third factor is the nature of the players involved. Myanmar's peace processes were originally initiated by key individuals, such as business community representatives, but failed to include neutral mediators or third party facilitators, thus adding an additional layer of complexity. This context has however created opportunities for national and international civil society to function as facilitators, and has prompted the international community to support the peace process through alternative means.

These factors, coupled with the surge of business activity from international players seeking to access the resource-rich country, do not exist in silos. Rather, their mutual interactions and influences are more complex than peace process actors are often willing to admit, and in some cases, elude their understanding altogether.

2.2.2. Civil Society Contributions to the Current Peace Process

Unlike the previous ceasefire process in the military government era, the current peace process is showing a greater demonstration of political will by the government towards embracing civil society contributions. However, the strength and sincerity of this political will has yet to be verified through concrete action. In the second bilateral agreement between the UPWC and the KIO, both parties agreed on organizing an Ethnic Armed Organizations' conference. In that first ever Ethnic Armed Organizations' Conference in Myanmar, a new negotiation strategy was set up with the formation of Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team (NCCT), which received the support of 14 out of 17 EAOs. The mandate of the NCCT is to coordinate and negotiate with the UPWC until a Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (CSA) is formulated and signed by all key stakeholders.

This institutionalization of the negotiation process creates more room for civil society and the public at large to directly participate in the peace process. A few civil society leaders from local CSOs have become part of the technical team of the NCCT supporting the process and contributing to technical matters. This inclusion may add a degree of balance to the negotiations. Moreover, NCCT members were invited to the quarterly Civil Society Forum for Peace to update participants on the peace process and to listen to the public voices from seven states and four regions of Myanmar. Such forums at various levels raise hopes of initiating wider public awareness of the current peace process.

The role of civil society in Myanmar's transition towards democracy has been well acknowledged by the new government in power. The government's top levels recognized civil society as a key player, inviting participation of CSOs in both peacebuilding and statebuilding processes. Certain CSOs have focused on providing livelihood, education and health services, while others are increasing their emphasis on rights, democracy and governance. Some youth-focused CSOs have even conducted various kinds of capacity building programs. Since the peace process began to gain momentum in early 2012, many CSOs started inserting peacebuilding components in their existing activities or initiated new peacebuilding activities in the communities they are assisting.

2.2.3 Obstacles for Greater Civil Society Involvement in the Peace Process

The social organization of Myanmar is complex and diverse, impacted by many years of severe repression by the military regime imposed under Ne Win's military coup in 1962 all the way to the political system's current shift towards a democracy. Broadly speaking, these historical and political factors have created several obstacles for greater civil society involvement in the peace process. The first of these is some CSO's unwillingness to engage in direct political action due to years under the military regime. There are two types of CSOs in Myanmar. The first of these are small CSOs that keep a low profile, and focus on providing

services, such as integrating education and other needs into communities. These types of CSOs still experience pervasive military control over their activities, and do not take an active role in engaging the government politically. The other type of CSOs in Myanmar are those that 'ask for permission'² from the government to play a greater role in decision-making and policy shaping. For these CSOs, even 'getting permission' constitutes their whole understanding of what participation is – obtaining permission to operate and nothing more. The post-2010 reform period has seen CSOs discovering their potential beyond simply permission-seeking, but as organizations whose roles stretch beyond community service providers. The new political landscape has created space for greater and more meaningful participation that they are now working to claim.

The lack of robust collaboration and communication between EAOs and their respective constituencies can also be considered an obstacle to greater civil society involvement. The current ceasefires across the country are creating greater opportunities for CSOs to engage in activities such as public consultations with ethnic communities. This is bolstered by the creation of the NCCT, an institutionalized body that is working towards a Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement. This breaks tradition with past ceasefires that were agreed upon verbally behind closed doors. While this arrangement signifies greater communication and collaboration between the EAOs themselves, it can compromise EAOs' efforts to liaise with their respective public constituencies due to the nature of the ceasefire negotiations as technical and discreet talks between the two parties. Thus, even though trust may be increasing between the EAOs and the government's negotiation team, more is needed to underpin negotiations. According to an SF staff member, trust needs to be built in a three-fold manner: the government towards EAOs, the EAOs towards the government, and the local communities towards the EAOs (as the government has no current mechanism for formal public participation in the peace process).³

Even if ceasefire agreements and other documents are signed and celebrated in public, this achievement will not

be implementable if there is no three-fold trust, especially because local communities have experienced these public signings before, with little concrete results to show for it. Local peoples' mistrust of the government and EAOs can risk the implementation of any ceasefire agreement and in turn, the chances for a meaningful national dialogue in the future. As one respondent noted, "people are frightened. I am not quite satisfied."⁴

This 'three-fold trust' can be built by greater security for local communities and space for participation. For example, in Karen state, local communities have expressed their unwillingness to participate in the peace process as long as they do not have a secure environment. For many years, many individuals in Myanmar that have spoken out against the military regime were arrested as political prisoners and faced years in exile or in harsh prison conditions. Thus, "the people are afraid of the gun,"⁵ and until individuals and local communities feel more secure, they will not engage. The third obstacle is the lack of direct links to the peace table. Many CSOs and CBOs are working to facilitate more options for people to participate in the peace process. These include sending letters to negotiation parties, giving informal suggestions in community level projects, participating in more formal meetings, or participating in public consultations with EAOs. The increased activity of international organizations working in Myanmar has also created this space for participation for CSOs and CBOs, who for so many years did not have communication with outside groups and had little exposure to civil society structures in other contexts. However, this is contingent on this space being linked directly to the peace table: "The people feel more secure with the EAOs and the government, but the problem is the meeting itself: if the EAOs do not take the suggestions from the people to the table, the people are observing this – if the EAOs do not take action from these suggestions, then the people feel like it's just like the government anyway."⁶

4 Saw Kyaw Swa, Interview 24 October 2014.

5 Maran Jaw Gun, Interview 12 March 2014.

6 Maran Jaw Gun, Interview 12 March 2014.

2 Maran Jaw Gun, Interview 12 March 2014.

3 Maran Jaw Gun, Interview 12 March 2014.

3 Overview of Civil Society Actors Currently Working on the Peace Process

3.1 National and Local Actors

There are several local organizations working with ethnic groups that are promoting peace talks between EAOs and the government as well as attempting to bolster public participation in the peace process through public consultations. The following local organizations have undertaken prominent work in the peace process, including the organization of capacity building on peace-related topics, advocacy campaigns on various peace-related issues, community organizations and local peace seminars. Although this work is associated in various ways with current peace processes, there is variation across the thematic areas of work and target groups.

1. The Yangon-based Karen Development Network works with CBOs imparting peace awareness training for the general public. They have facilitated peace-related seminars and dialogues for youth and women, provided technical assistance by supplying documentation at the Ethnic Armed Organizations Conference, facilitated the provision of basic needs in conflict affected areas, and provided community development training.

2. Similarly, the Gaia Sustainable Management Institut (GSMI), based in Yangon and different parts of the ethnic states, has been working on sustainable development issues in Kachin, Karen and Shan States as well as Bago and Thaninthari Regions. They provide participatory awareness training, sustainable development advocacy training, and local level peace seminars that help enhance public participation such as civilian ceasefire monitoring.

3. The Karen Affairs Committee, based in Karen State, has made contributions as a network that supports the Karen peace process by engaging the wider Karen public that resides in different parts of Myanmar.

4. Another CBO, New Generation Shan State, has operated specifically in Shan State, and works on advocacy for building sustainable peace and democratization.

5. A network composed of Kayah CSOs, namely the Kayah State Peace Monitoring Network (KSPMN), aims to collectively participate in the current Kayah peace process through civilian monitoring on the ceasefire agreements between the Karenni National Progressive Party and the government.

6. In Chin State, the Chin Peace and Tranquility Committee (CPTC), a local CBO formed by a group of pastors, has been instrumental for the peace process as a facilitating body, between the Chin National Front (CNF) and the government since the previous regime.

7. The Kachin Women's Peace Network has been working on women's rights issues as well as sexual and gender-based violence in the war affected areas in the Kachin State by building capacity and conducting research and advocacy activities.

8. The Kachin Peace Network has been actively advocating for justice and peace in the ongoing Kachin conflict since its resumption in 2011, through organizing seminars and campaigns.

9. Another CSO, the Peace Network, composed of youth mainly from Yangon, Mandalay and elsewhere, has been actively calling for peace in Myanmar. It has organized advocacy campaigns and events on peace related issues and the Kachin conflict.

10. Sit-taung Than-sin is a local CBO network for peace-building in the Bago region and northern Karen State. It conducts awareness-raising campaigns to increase public participation in the current peace process and other peace training in collaboration with national NGOs.

According to some members from the KSPMN, a Mon activist group as well as a Karen CSO, many social organizations are: conducting ceasefire monitoring; taking care of IDPs and cooperating with the government and armed groups for their return to their villages; working on projects related social and cultural development; and conducting health and education programs. Acknowledging and under-

standing the diversity of civil society and the public is key to their effective involvement in the peace process.

While these organizations are doing commendable work on a broad range of peace activities, there are two important activities in particular that need greater support and development: public consultations on the peace process and ceasefire monitoring. Firstly, there are still very few organizations that are creating space for public consultations among CSOs and CBOs regarding the current peace process. This is an important gap: armed groups are working on consultations of their own, but civilian-to-civilian consultations can be much richer than those organized on behalf of the EAOs or the government. Secondly, local organizations are also becoming increasingly involved in ceasefire monitoring. For example, in Mon State, there is some progress, but nothing concrete has been done with respect to ceasefire monitoring. There is a group of CBOs in Mon state, but they have not formed a committee to monitor ceasefires yet – there are many active leading organizations in Mon state that are given high levels of capacity building for service provision, but none of them is focusing on the peace process. Civil society is gaining traction in this regard, but many of them are still bound by fear, a lack of capacity, or a lack of will to get directly involved in bringing more public voices into the peace process.

3. 2 The Shalom (Nyein) Foundation

The Shalom (Nyein) Foundation (SF) is a non-governmental organization that was established by Reverend Dr. Saboi Jum in 2000, and is highlighted in this section because of their exemplary contributions to the peace process, specifically in light of their peace process public consultation and ceasefire monitoring activities. Rev. Saboi Jum, who was General Secretary of the Kachin Baptist Convention (KBC), played a central role in the ceasefire negotiations between the government and the Kachin Independence Organization (TNI BCN: 26). After his retirement, he founded the SF to promote peace and reconciliation within the multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multilingual communities in Myanmar.

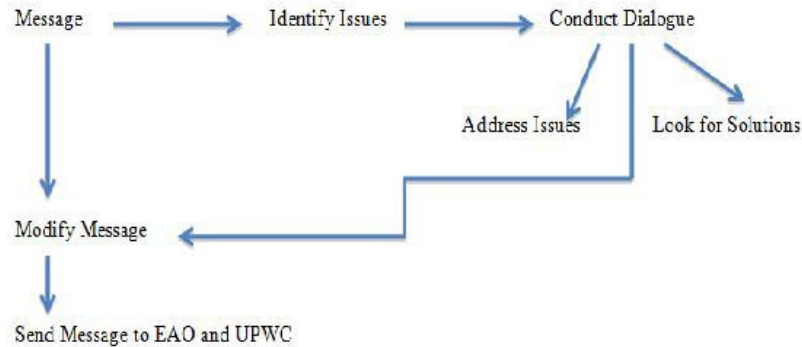
The SF started peace education and mediation activities in 2000, established the Ethnic Nationalities Mediator’s Fellowship in 2002, and gradually expanded by responding to the needs of the ethnic groups. Since 2009, at the dawn of the 2010 elections, the SF’s activities have developed into three main programs including peace education, dialogue and governance, and development. The various activities of these programs range from peace education training courses, youth capacity development, interfaith youth activities, trauma healing, to ethnic related policy research and civic education to promote peace.

Besides these regular activities, the advent of the current peace process has spurred the creation of a new program, the Peace Process Support Program. The SF, as a leading track 2 organization⁷ on account of their experience working within peacebuilding, is working towards bringing the voices of the affected population to the peace process. A key element to this program is their work on public consultations. Unsatisfied with the government’s inaction to launch consultations with the public, and wanting greater transparency and quality of the public consultations held by the EAOs, the SF launched a project promoting inclusive, grassroots-level public consultations. The aim of these consultations is to send messages from local communities directly to EAOs and the UPWC, thereby increasing the voice of the public in high-level decision making. The SF has been conducting this project in Kachin, Karen, Chin, Kayah/Karenni, Mon, Shan, and Rakhine states. They sent 42 facilitators (6 facilitators in each state)⁸ and conducted two cycles of public consultations, identifying issues, questions and concerns on 19 different issue areas based on the current talks between the NCCT and the UPWC (e.g. resource extraction and revenue sharing). They targeted a range of individuals, including respected persons in local communities, such as former government officers and priests. The messages filled up 300 pages and depicted a complex and diverse conversation, filled with both urgent and long-term needs, grievances and issues. The following chart gives a visual depiction of the project’s conceptual framework.

7 "In track 2 activities; elites and decision-makers (e.g. civil society representatives, religious leaders, business leaders etc.) are involved, but not the top leadership of the conflict parties" (Peace Mediation Platform 2014).

8 The project at first could not get access to Rakhine state because of security conditions. Maran Jaw Gun, Interview 12 March 2014.

Figure 2: SF Public Consultation Project



The SF is a leading track 2 organization because of its 14 years of experience working with armed groups and working on peacebuilding. While there has been a proliferation of peace-focused CSOs within the last couple of years that are working in specific niches, they remain newcomers to the situation. Thus, SF's added value is their ability to engage in long-term strategic vision mapping informed not only by their years of experience, but also their years of experience in a climate where civil society has been severely repressed. They hope to make a lasting impact on the peace process, going beyond short-term gains.

Aside from organizing public consultations and ceasefire monitoring mechanisms, the SF also creates informal dialogue spaces for track 2 and track 3⁹ individuals to connect to track 1. These dialogue spaces aim to create links between political actors, EAOs, and Members of Parliament (whose part as a civil society actor is often forgotten). They simultaneously set up a peace process 'safety net:' track 1 negotiations can stop at any time, abruptly and without warning. However, if they prevent informal dialogues from collapsing as well, the substance is not lost if talks are resumed.

⁹ In track 3 activities, grassroots actors are involved. In multi-track activities, multiple actors from at least two tracks participate in peacemaking activities (Peace Mediation Platform 2014).

These informal dialogue spaces were created in the form of the Civil Society Forum for Peace (CSFoP). These forums hosted hundreds of representatives of CSOs over seven sessions between August 2012 and March 2014. The objectives of the forums were to strengthen the coordination among CSOs involved in peace processes; expand the role of CSOs and participate effectively in the current peace processes; and increase the capacity of grassroots public and civil society to engage in meaningful informal political dialogue. Pertinent issues discussed ranged from national dialogue processes, ceasefire monitoring processes, internally-displaced persons (IDPs), the role of CSOs, the 2014 census, and drug elimination (CSFoP Brief 2014).

After the 2nd forum, a Working Committee was voluntarily formed by 12 CSOs and two individuals to continue the CSFoP. The Working Committee gradually expanded at every forum and the following list is, as of 7th Forum, as follows:

1. Gender and Development Initiative
2. Gaia Sustainable Management Institute
3. Justice and Peace, Catholic Bishop Conference of Myanmar (CBCM)
4. Kachin Women Peace Network
5. Kalay Chitthu Myar's Network
6. Karen Affairs Committee
7. Nyein Foundation
8. Peace Studies Center, Myanmar Institute of Theology
9. Smile Education
10. Spectrum
11. Swe-tha-har
12. Tedim Youth Fellowship
13. Women Organizations' Network
14. Yangon School of Political Science
15. Youth Circle
16. Daw Khon Ja
17. Nan Mya Thida
18. Nant Khin Aye Oo
19. Naw Kanyaw Paw
20. U Minzai Dau Lum
21. U Yan Kaw (CSFoP 2014)

The above shows that public participation in Myanmar exists in many different forms: it is diverse, expanding, creative, and continuing to find its voice and place in the current peace process. The SF and other local, national, and international organizations are working for greater representation in the peace talks, but they are also working among themselves to promote greater understanding and collaboration amongst each other.

3.3 International Actors

The lack of an international third-party mediator has propelled international actors supporting the peace process to bypass conventional support and search for alternative methods of support. Given the strength of many domestic CSOs in partially filling this vacuum, many international supporters have chosen to focus their efforts and resources on supporting relations between EAOs and/or government and ethnic civil society networks and deepening participation in the peace process to include communities, civil society, and political parties. International supporters in Myanmar face an extremely complex and constantly shifting political, economic and social context. Myanmar's multiple transitions, (from a military to civilian government, closed to open economy, and conflict with EAOs to peace) have ushered in a 'gold rush' (Alluri et al. 2014) of international actors establishing a presence in the country. Whether they are businesses entering Myanmar's emerging market or INGOs and UN agencies opening up offices or scaling up their operations, it is undeniable that the space to participate and support Myanmar nationals and the peace process has become crowded and increasingly complex to navigate.

To counter this and enhance collaboration between international actors, an interesting initiative had been put in place: the International Peace Support Program (IPSG) which was formed to support actors involved in the current Myanmar peace process. The IPSG is an informal network of about 20 members that hold coordination meetings monthly (Myanmar Peace Monitor 2014). Members include the Center for Peace and Conflict Studies (CPCS), the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, and the Euro-Burma Office.

The Myanmar Peace Support Initiative (MPSI) also illustrates a creative form of international support to the peace process. The MPSI was launched in 2012 following a request from the Government of Myanmar to the Government of Norway to lead international support for the peace process. The MPSI has focused on building trust and confidence in the ceasefires and strengthening local and international coordination in the peace process (MPSI 2014: 4). The MPSI has conducted a community consultation workshop with EAOs and also holds monthly interactive sessions with CSOs, providing the opportunity for the EAOs and CSOs to convene, and also for them to give feedback on the MPSI's activities for greater accountability and transparency. They have also supported regional conferences for larger sections of the population in these regions. The Shan, Chin, and Mon State peace conferences that have recently taken place provided platforms for increased dialogue between EAOs, political parties, and civil society actors (MPSI 2014: 17).

In responding to the financial need of the Myanmar Peace Center and other organizations in supporting the peace process activities, several countries have come together in responding to the Norway's initiative forming up the "Peace Donor Support Group" (PDSG). Currently, it is composed of countries and institutions - Norway, Australia, United Kingdom, United Nations, European Union, World Bank, United States, Japan, and Switzerland, still chaired by Norwegian Government. It works through two-level meetings: the first level consists of policy meetings attended by ambassadors and senior personnel. The second level meetings discuss implementation issues and coordination. The group has been the main financial resource for both government entities and CSOs working on the current peace process in Myanmar. It is understood that the PDSG has a clear understanding of the need to diversify their financial assistance to the whole spectrum of the organizations on board.

In sum, efficient and effective cooperation between international actors in Myanmar is of the utmost importance. International organizations in Myanmar should approach their work with conflict sensitive lenses, tread lightly, and aim that their programs and projects 'do no harm' to stakeholders and affected populations. However, due to the nature of political mandates and funding issues, many organizations do not take the time or have the capacity to take these in mind. As Stefan Baechtold argues, the gold rush in Myanmar bears a considerable risk of overstretching national actors, neglecting good practice in programming and of encouraging unsustainable 'quick fix' solutions (Alluri et al 2014: 8).

4.1 Civil Society Contributions to the Peace Process between the Chin National Front and the GoM

The Chin National Front (CNF) was formed on 20 March 1988. It was constituted to secure “the self-determination of the Chin people, to restore democracy, and to establish the federal Union of Burma” (Chinland 2014). Between 1998 and 2012, between 70 soldiers of the Chin National Army (the armed wing of the CNF) were killed during fighting with the Myanmar military. A new ceasefire agreement was signed in January 2012, making the CNF the 11th EAO to sign a ceasefire agreement with the government. Currently, the CNF is taking part in Union Level peace talks with the government (BNI 2013: p.94). The CNF is also a member of the NCCT of the EAOs.

The Chin Peace and Tranquility Committee (CPTC) exemplifies how CSOs can engage in the current peace process in Myanmar. The CPTC is a CSO that is supporting the peace process between the CNF and the government. It was created as a reaction to the violence that was wracking Chin communities. Over the course of the conflict, community villages were destroyed and many civilians lost their lives. The communities pushed for the restoration of peace, and began to engage with the CNF: the community and religious leaders of Falam, Hakha and Thantlang agreed to meet them for talks. Fearing repercussions from the government, the public assigned these duties to community religious leaders. Thus, the religious leaders of Chin state created the CPTC in 1996. They met with the CNF four times: twice in India in 1997, once in Bangladesh, and once in Bangkok. With the permission of the CNF, they then began to liaise with the government. Besides taking on the function of a ‘liaison’, the CPTC also worked to prevent the CNF from engaging in destructive actions that would derail any efforts for peace, for example the plan to disrupt a student festival in Hakha, or the plan to destroy the Laivar Hydroelectric power plant.¹⁰ In 2007, the CPTC also supported a meeting for a future ceasefire in Reed and has been one of the signatories in bilateral ceasefire agreements between the CNF and the UPWC.

¹⁰ Rev. Paul Tluang Ceu, Interview 13 October 2013.

Besides activities by the CPTC and other CSOs and CBOs, the space for public consultations was formally enshrined in the first Union level talk between the government and the CNF resulted in a 15-point agreement.¹¹

Point of Agreement (No 6) On Public Consultation, stipulates that:

The parties agreed that the Chin National Front can freely hold consultations with relevant responsible persons and the larger public towards durable peace in the Union of Myanmar based on its three objectives and the ‘Three National Causes’ (Chinland 2014).

This resulted in the creation of three liaison offices in Tedim, Thantlang, and Matupi. The CNF’s public consultations have been robust, and have revealed the strong public desire for peace by thousands of voluntary attendees participated in those meetings. They also took the opportunity to inquire after their lost family members and voice specific needs, such as education and better opportunities for income. Through these consultations, the CNF was able to directly hear and address some of the grievances of their constituency. In responding to one of the needs of poorly equipped schools, the CNF consequently initiated a computer-based education system in nine schools in the townships of Tunzan, Tedim, Thantlang, Hakha and Falam. Responding to food security needs of the poor communities, the CNF distributed rice in coordination with a Japanese organization, the Nippon Foundation.

Implementing the 15-point Ceasefire Agreement (Chinland 2014) was beset with a number of challenges, as Dr. Sui Khar points out.¹² Due to bureaucratic red tape and the inefficient circulation of information, the CNF struggled to implement the points in the agreement, including that on public consultations. Despite this, all the efforts of the CNF, the CSOs, and activists since 2007 have brought the Chin people to a stage where peace processes can be relatively open to include public participation compared to processes under former regimes.

¹¹ See Annex 3 for an overview of the current peace talk structure.

¹² Dr. Sui Khar, Interview October 14, 2013.

4.2 Civil Society Contributions to the Peace Process between the Karen National Union and the GoM

The Karen National Union has been fighting for freedom, human rights, self-determination and autonomy in one of the world's longest running conflicts. Following independence from the British, Saw Ba U Gyi founded the KNU, formerly the Karen National Defense Organization, in 1948 to fight against the central government (BNI 2013: 120).

To cite the entire history of the Karen's struggle against the central government is beyond the scope of this paper, but put succinctly, the KNU has been fighting for determination and autonomy since the infancy of Myanmar's independence. This long struggle has been punctuated with some peace efforts between the KNU and former governments, but these have given way to violence as the seemingly most viable option for both sides.

However, the window for peace reopened with U Thein Sein's 1/11 Peace Call. In January 2012, the KNU became the sixth EAO to enter into a ceasefire agreement with the government with a 13-point agreement (Myanmar Peace Monitor 2014) covering the ceasefire and other central issues such as land confiscation. Interestingly, the Dawei Princess Company facilitated the peace process dialogue between the government and the KNU (BNI 2013: 75), highlighting the key role of some members of the business community in pushing the peace process. CSOs were excluded in the first set of talks, with both sides carrying out the process without public knowledge.¹³ In suit, CSOs pushed for greater participation in the talks, and were able to participate in the following Union Level Peace Talks in April 2012 concerning IDPs and ceasefire monitoring. National and international CSOs participated as observers, including Naw Susana Hla Hla Soe, representative of the Karen Peace Support Team (KPST); Nan Myint Tin, Dr. Anna May Say Pha, Bishop Pho Reh, and Rev. Mathew Aye, as representatives from the Karen Affairs Committee. Naw Susana was also able to participate in the second Union Level Peace Talks in September 2012, which discussed codes of conduct.¹⁴

13 Naw Susana Hla Hla Soe and Saw Kyaw Zwar, Interview 24 October 2013.

14 International CSO representatives were also allowed to participate in these talks as observers, including Kristine Gould from PACRIM Research Associates, Emma Leslie from the CPCS, Craig Haltmeier from the Embassy of the United States in Myanmar, and Meghan Stewart from Public International Policy Group.

The KPST also worked to bring the peace process to the affected communities through public consultations. While these are giving the Karen people the opportunity to meet with KNU leaders, many challenges remain. The public, undergoing decades of suffering caught in the crossfire of one of the world's longest-running civil wars, have been reluctant to directly participate in the peace process. Marred by fear and mistrust of the central government, they long for peace but "are taking things with not just a pinch of salt, but a great amount of it."¹⁵ While CSOs and CBOs can play an important role in the ceasefire implementation process conducted by the KNU, DKBA and DKBA-5's communication liaison offices in Pa-an and Myawaddy have caused uncertainty among the public. Human rights violations and increased business activity enabled by the improved security and mobility of fighting groups have caused suspicion among the public that there would be no difference in the situation under civil war and ceasefire. As U Saw Khuti points out at the KNU Kawkaireik congress to the KIC (Karen Information Center), "in previous days, we were in trouble due to the fighting. At the present too, there is no particular change at all. Due to development activities, we are still in trouble" (Karen National Union 2014).

Despite these challenges, CSOs, CBOs and NGOs are taking on the role of service providers in relation to the peace process. They carry out development assistance programs, monitor human rights and development issues, and try to mitigate problems that have arisen after the ceasefire agreement. They also play a large role in education issues, many feel that education should be carried out in their own language. Regarding Karen literature, Pado Saw Beelel said, "the commander of the Taninthari Region, the State Minister, and other ministers approved to include teaching the Karen Language in Karen village schools without affecting the normal school curriculum"(Kwekalu 2014). The Township Education Officer Naw Chit May told the KIC that even though the Karen Language Teaching Committee was formed and the Karen language was being taught outside state school hours in the Nyaungglaybin township in Bago Region, there are still some difficulties faced.

15 Daw Susana Hla Hla Soe, Interview 24 October 2013.

4.3 Civil Society Contributions to the Peace Process between the Karenni National Progressive Party and the GoM

The KNPP began its armed struggle against the central government in Kayah (also known as Karenni) on 9 August 1948. The KNPP itself was formed in May 1957 and is operational in Loikaw, Shar Daw, Ho Yar (Pharu So township) and Daw Tamagyi (Dee Maw So) (BNI 2013:112). Throughout recent history, there have been several attempts at securing peace, including peace talks between the Burma Socialist Programme Party government and the KNPP that eventually broke down. A ceasefire agreement was also signed in 1995, but the breach of agreements and continued violence has resulted in the KNPP's deep distrust of the central government. The long-running armed conflict has also displaced thousands of civilians from their homes, causing them to seek shelter in Thai refugee camps (BNI 2013: 112). After three decades of civil war, some of the displaced have lost hope of returning to their homelands and have resettled in third countries (BNI 2013: 112).

Civil society has played a large role in peace efforts – since an early stage in the conflict, a self-organized informal group of religious leaders, business leaders, and cultural leaders worked to create peace in Kayah state. Because of their constant efforts, both the government and the KNPP began to return to the table for talks. In fact, a petition campaign signed by 700 Karennis conducted by the aforementioned group also made a partial contribution to having both sides return to the table. It showed the willingness of the public to participate in the peace process. Although the talks did not yield any concrete results, it allowed the KNPP (along with the support of national and international NGOs) to prepare itself for effective participation (informed by the public's voice) in any future peace dialogues that would come with a political transition. Thus, after U Thein Sein's 1/11 Peace Call, the KNPP conducted public consultations with the help of CSOs in preparation for the talks.

The KNPP signed a new ceasefire agreement with the government in 2012, making it the fifth EAO to enter into a

ceasefire with the government. As a result of the agreement concluded in the talks (Myanmar Peace Monitor 2014), the KNPP opened liaison offices in Loi kaw, Shadaw, and Hpa-saung in 2012. Besides opening liaison offices, other points in the agreement that were to be jointly implemented remain immaterialized – one Karenni liaison officer sees this as a weakness of the peace process.

The ceasefire monitoring mechanism for the KNPP, a classic avenue for CSO/CBO participation differs from other EAOs. There are currently two groups: the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) organized by the government and KNPP, and the KSPMN monitoring group organized by civil society organizations. The KSPMN was formed soon after the bilateral ceasefire was signed between the KNPP, but the JMC was formed later during the talks between KNPP and the government. By nature, to be effective, any ceasefire-monitoring group must be an independent body that can act as an unbiased ceasefire watchdog. Additionally, distrust of the government and the possibility of the government's dominance in the JMC has resulted in an unwillingness by some CSOs to acknowledge the JMC as a legitimate monitoring committee.

Technical support for ceasefire monitoring was received from the civil society forum organized by the SF. Even though no practical implementation has been carried out yet, state and township level sub-groups were formed and capacity building work has been carried out. As it was CSO-based and formed locally, it still has to take time to build capacity at the local level. The KNPP fully approved of the KSPMN and wanted to coordinate with it. The JMC had made some offers, but discussion is still underway within the KSPMN on whether it should be co-opted or not. At the same time, the KSPMN's core team sees their monitoring team as a form of substantive participation of the public under the leadership of CSOs in the peace process of the government and KNPP.

4.4 Civil Society Contributions to the Peace Process between the New Mon State Party and the GoM

The New Mon State Party (NMSP) was founded in July 1958, a reformation of the Mon People's Front, a separatist movement. Since 1949, the eastern hills of Mon state (as well as portions of Thaninthayi Region) have been under NMSP control (BNI 2013: 144). It is operational in Thaton, Paung, Chaungson, Moulmein, Hpa-an, Kawka-reik, Kyeikmayaw, Mudon, Thanbyuzayap, Ye, Yayphyu, Three Pagoda Pass, Mergui-Tavoy, and Kyar-Inn-Seik Gyi (BNI 2013: 144). In 1995, a verbal 'gentlemen's agreement' was forged between the NMSP and the Myanmar government. Since then, 10 liaison offices were opened in Mawlamyaing, Kyaikmayaw, Zinchyaik village (Paung Township), Myeik and Myawaddy under the agreement between both sides. But after the refusal to transform into Border Guard Forces (BGF) under the concept of a single national army (Min Zaw Oo 2014: 8), communications broke down, the peace agreement failed and the liaison offices were closed in April 2012. After U Thein Sein's 1/11 Peace Call, the NMSP returned to negotiations with the government. Though the new ceasefire agreement was signed with the government in 2012, the NMSP does not support the 2008 Constitution and is strongly pushing for its reformation. Despite this, after the new ceasefire agreement and 4-point Union-level peace agreement (Myanmar Peace Monitor 2014), liaison offices were reopened on 26 February 2012.

International observers had a chance to take part in the peace talks. Civil society representatives participated as activists and consultants in peace processes before and after peace talks and for urgent issues as representatives of NMSP and CSOs advising and coordinating among one another. Presently, the idea of ceasefire monitoring had emerged from the CSO forum and the Ceasefire Monitoring Committee Formation Team was formed after the meeting among CSOs, CBOs, the SF and Sanghas. SF is facilitating the process of formation and capacity building of the current committee members. The Committee is coordinating with both Mon State Government and NMSP to understand the importance and concept of a ceasefire. However,

16 A community of ordained Buddhist monks and nuns.

although some data collection has already been underway for the NMSP and the government, most of the actual tasks of ceasefire monitoring have not yet been implemented as the monitoring body is still in its formation period.

In terms of service provision, after the ceasefire agreement there have already been some activities: road construction and changes to education curriculum are underway. For example, Mon literature is now being studied at Yephyu, Taintheri Region.

4.5 The Shalom (Nyein) Foundation's Support to Civil Society in Ethnic Areas

The SF has been supporting the above four peace processes in several ways. The most prominent are the public consultations organized through the PSPP as mentioned earlier in this publication. However, they are also supporting many community-based projects not directly supportive of the political peace process. Instead, they address the negative effects of the protracted conflict through rebuilding and creating capacity (e.g. through education and forestry projects). The SF is also involved in building capacity for local civilian ceasefire monitors. The SF is not directly working with the CNF and the NMSP, but is supporting the Mon committees that are monitoring the agreements. The monitoring is just in the beginning of its implementation stage, but the SF is working to mobilize the community members who will be committed to taking part. This entails linking up with both the government and EAOs to spread awareness on the importance of civilian ceasefire monitoring; training volunteers; building capacity; and then actually doing the monitoring, report-writing, and fact-checking. This is no easy task, and many individuals see this as a sensitive and risky endeavor. Thus, from the SF's point of view, given the fear that still hampers greater public participation, they have to find ways to be supportive of communities by linking networks and coordinating between them. Things are currently being done on an *ad hoc* level, and the SF sees their role as a connector (given their resources) and hopes to reach out to both network groups that are fully established (e.g. KNPP) and those who haven't established a network group for monitoring (e.g. KNU).

The following section outlines the SF's lessons learned in the last few years of the peace process, challenges they faced, and opportunities they foresee in this window of opportunity for peace.

Current Challenges

The greatest challenge that the SF sees regarding public participation in the peace process is creating local ownership. Civil society wants to know what is happening in the peace process, and they know that public participation is directly linked to their work; but if they call for volunteers to participate in peace process activities, the communities hesitate. A large part of that is residual fear, embedded by years of a repressive regime and laws such as the Unlawful Associations Act (Burma Library 2014). Especially in smaller areas, local communities feel that the smaller the area, the stronger the 'radar' for actions punishable by this act. Related to this, another challenge has been translating the strong role that religion plays in Myanmar into one that works towards greater public participation in the peace process, not against it. Many people who practice Buddhism may translate core values such as the acceptance of suffering and the liberation from attachment as a reason not to engage in active political resistance. Similarly, many communities strongly practicing Christianity believe that either the power of forgiveness or punishment in the afterlife obviates the need to participate in the present process. Another challenge is the ongoing disconnect between the capital and the outlying communities. The political, economic, and social system seems to be changing at the country's center, but at the grassroots level in many ethnic and border areas, it feels like nothing has changed. This corresponds to the fact that financial assistance remains an ever-present challenge. A sustainable solution to the conflict entails locking in a long-term source of funding to get the proper resources for capacity building and preparation for present activities and a possible national dialogue process in the future.

Furthermore, maintaining neutrality remains a constant

challenge. For example, the SF tries to engage with both sides of the conflict, but needs to have more formal mechanisms for contact with each side to avoid the over-politicization by any one side. This is true especially for CSOs in the border regions, who are 'over-accessed' to the armed groups. Related to this is the over-emphasis on ethnic areas. As an organization that has been working on these questions, the SF felt that they had reached out enough to emerging leaders in ethnic areas in the past without reaching out enough to Bamar leaders in Yangon. Thus, they felt that these mid-level leaders, university students and NGO workers who were not in their original target group have dived into the peace process without proper consultations of other civil society networks. They are supported by large organizations that themselves know little about the complex context. Effective coordination and support will remain a challenging but important set of tasks in light of the proliferation of parties with interests in supporting the peace process.

Indeed, the peace process is very fast-paced. Some of the EAOs want to speed up the process, and the government has been hoping for a Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement since last year. From an organizational perspective challenge, the biggest lesson learned for the SF has been how to cope with the sheer pace of the process while continuing their regular programming. Civil society groups often have a regular schedule of providing services to communities, but with the sudden advent of the peace process, there was suddenly a space to engage with activities surrounding the peace talks. The SF, for example, had to continue their regular work with the addition of a massive workload regarding the peace process. Civil society was inadequately prepared, and now some new organizations are jumping into the peace process without sufficient knowledge of the context and important concepts, resulting in some organizations jeopardizing activities.

Opportunities for the Future

The current peace process represents the best window of opportunity in over 50 years for achieving peace. While civil society plays many roles in supporting the peace process, the best opportunity for direct participation lies in a possible future

²⁵ President U Thein Sein outlined these steps in his radio speech broadcasted on October 1, 2013.

6 Recommendations

national dialogue that is supposed to take place after a Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement is signed.

Thus, the fifth CSFoP forum, convened in July 2013 in Yangon, Myanmar, discussed national dialogue frameworks and the role of civil society in any possible future national dialogue. Myanmar's peace process is still deeply engaged in the nationwide ceasefire stage, and any future national dialogue that speaks directly to political issues will only be considered once a nationwide ceasefire agreement is reached. There is no consensus on when this might be, but due to a nearing deadline, CSOs are preparing for a future role in this potential dialogue. The fifth CSFoP identified four key roles that civil society could play:

1. Representation in political decision-making (e.g. in large conferences)
2. Facilitation in dialogue (e.g. management, support structures, capacity building)
3. Providing support as experts (e.g. issue based and interest based organizations have the expertise)
4. Engaging greater public participation (e.g. track 3 level CBOs can conduct consultations and work on civilian monitoring on the ground)

Civil society in Myanmar is diverse and complex. Some CSOs will fit in the second role for example, but not all four. Many CSOs want to stay as neutral as possible, while others will have a political agenda, particularly those with many 88 Generation activist members. Among these four roles, civil society will have to decide where their expertise fits and where they have to be polished. In this context, it is important to step back and look at what is taking place, since it is sometimes hard to see the big picture. This strategic gap has somewhat been remedied with the CSFoPs, but there is still a great deal to be done. For peace to be achieved, different civil society groups will have to work with each other, and the peace process must mobilize civil society as much as possible.

To the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar:

As public participation in the peace process has increased, a ministry within the government that deals directly and specifically with the peace process should be formed. This would address the disconnect between statebuilding and peacebuilding, and create a mechanism to link the government to civil society and the public.

1. The minister of such a ministry would be able to have greater administrative support, and would also be able to coordinate with other ministries working on areas central to the peace process, including education and land reform.
2. The role of the Myanmar Peace Center should be defined and strengthened to provide more than technical support to the peace process, and be empowered as a space to interact with all stakeholders.
3. The government should give a clearer and stronger role to the UPWC in order to actively work to bridge the voices of constituencies to those at the decision-making level at the peace table.
4. Members of Parliament play an important role in bridging these voices. They need to have a mandate clearly and specifically outlining their roles in the peace process. If their role remains undefined, it risks impacting free speech at workshops and other events bridging governments to their constituencies.

To EAOs:

1. The EAOs should create a joint mechanism to interact with civil society as one single entity.

2. EAOs should listen more to their communities and constituencies and allow them to pass on their specific concerns or problems. EAOs often come to the peace table with vague issues, and should instead submit specific requests.

To the Government of Myanmar (specifically the UPWC) and EAOs:

1. Consider that there are parallel processes taking place, including processes on land, education, and investment. Parallel processes means current reforms going on at parliament by making laws; and some at the ministerial level reviewing policies to make a new national framework. Some of the issues in the government reform agenda can be seen in the peace process (at a possible future political dialogue stage).

To Donors:

1. Donors should ensure that there is a strong perception of national ownership by those who they are supporting. In this particularly sensitive process, all stakeholders must have a say – donors should first thoroughly consult with government actors, armed groups, local civil society actors and other political actors before making decisions.
2. Donors should create and support a joint-financing committee to fund the ongoing dialogue processes that would be jointly managed by both sides. This mechanism will create more transparency and encourage both parties to feel that the dialogue processes are funded on equal footing and mutually respected by both sides.
3. Donors should diversify funding at all levels – from the national level with government agencies down to grassroots CBOs.

4. Donors should encourage the government, parliament, and military to engage in public consultations and make peace a national issue.

To International Actors Supporting the Peace Process:

1. While the actors around the peace process do need international support, especially on technical issues, the international community should remember that the national actors are in the 'driver's seat.' Instead of supporting from the front, they can support the process from the back and from the sidelines, by supporting actors, CSOs, and CBOs engaged in the process.
2. International actors should consult with respective civil society actors before implementing peacebuilding activities in an area to avoid overlapping and undermining the local values with respect to the peace process.
3. International actors should support and engage in greater quantitative research to provide requests that are supported with real numbers and data. This would provide more substance to vague concerns brought forward by civil society groups and the public, and thus enhance the possibility of implementation.

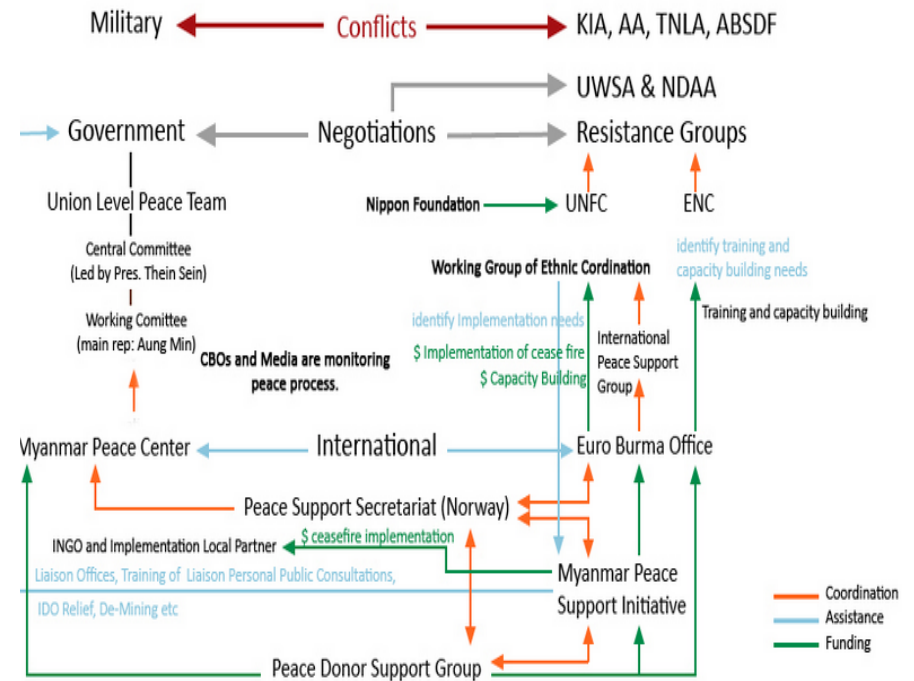
To CSO and CBOs:

1. As the peace process is slowly leading towards a national dialogue, CSOs and CBOs should take up specific roles to contribute to matters in which they hold expertise.
2. CSOs and CBOs should move past 'shouting' for their needs and grievances to be addressed, and instead focus on 'building' their capacity to facilitate clearer communication of their specific concerns and requirements.

3. Civil society networks should reinforce coalitions between and inside states, as there are currently too many fragmented voices.
4. Civil society networks should strengthen ties between groups in Yangon and groups in the regions.
5. NGOs which get space at the peace table need to create opportunities for the CBOs in their respective regions in order to get access so that they can get and give relevant information related to peace process discussions.

Annex 1: Peace Process Overview

Please visit Myanmar Peace Monitor for in-depth explanations, reports, and other documents explaining the peace process structure. Source: Myanmar Peace Monitor 2014



Annex 2: List of Interviewees

Karen

No	Name	Position	Organization	Interview Date
1	Saw Kyaw Zwar	Secretary	KAC	24 October 2013
2	Susanna Hla Hla Soe	Director	KWEG	24 October 2013
3	Man Thein Zaw	Activity Facilitator (Karen State)	Shalom Foundation	24 October 2013
4	Eh Paw Wah	CCT Leader	KYN	21 October 2013
5	Phado Kwe Htoo Win	General Secretary	KNU	22 October 2013
6	Phado Saw Mawng Shwe	Deputy Commander of the Battalion	Brigade No.6 KNU	21 October 2013
7	Phodo Saw Tamala Phaw	General Secretary - 3	Headquarters KNU	22 October 2013
8	Phodo Saw Tamala Phaw	District Officer (TaungNgu District)	Brigade No. 6 KNU	21 October 2013
9	Phodo TawTi	General Secretary - 1	KNU	20 October 2013

Kayah

No	Name	Position	Organization	Interview Date
1	U Daniel	Liaison Office Officer (Head of Health Department)	Loikaw Liaison Office (KNPP)	1 November 2013
2	U Nyay Reh	Assit. Liaison Office Officer	Loikaw Liaison Office (KNPP)	1 November 2013
3	U Se Reh Hla Pe	Chief	Kayah Mediator Group	1 November 2013
4	U Je I	CCT Leader	Word Administrator	1 November 2013
5	Saya Daniel	Pastor and Core Team member	Demoso Baptist Church & KSPMN	2 November 2013

Annex 2: List of Interviewees

Kayah con'td

6	U PluReh	Kayah State Regional Coordinator	Shalom Foundation & KSPMN	2 November 2013
7	Kyaw Wanna	Coordinator	Kayah Legal Aid Group	7 October 2013
8	Lee Reh ANgelo	Core Team Member	KSPMN	2 November 2013
9	Myar Reh	Core Team Member	KSPMN	2 November 2013
10	Sayama Taw Nay Htoo	Core Team Member	KSPMN	24 October 2013

Chin

No	Name	Position	Organization	Interview Date
1	Rev: Paul Tlun Ceo	Secretary Senior Pastor CPTC member	Hakha Baptist Association	13 October 2013
2	Dr. Sui Khar	Assistant General Secretary of Chin National Front	CNF	14 October 2013
3	Pu Rah Nin	Pu Rah Nin	Thatlang Liaison office Officer	14 October 2013
4	Rev. Tlaung Ceu	Secretary of (CPTC)	Chin Peace and Tranquility, CM	12 October 2013
5	Chin Chin	Director	Nationalities Brotherhood Federation Org	8 October 2013
6	Ban Bawi Thang	CM Leader (Thantlang)	CPTC, CM	14 October 2013
7	Pu Thla Hmung	Member	CPTC, CM	14 October 2013
8	Van Cin Thang	Chin State Coordinator	Shalom (Nyein) Foundation	24 October 2013
9	Van Chan Ceo	Chin Public Consultation Project Coordinator	Shalom (Nyein) Foundation	12 October 2013

Annex 2: List of IntervieweesMon

No	Name	Position	Organization	Interview Date
1	Mi kun Chan Nun	Vice-Chair of Mon Women's Organization	Mon Women's Organization	4 November 2013
2	Min Awng Htoo	Manager Mon MAS Prj	Shalom Foundation	2 December 2013
3	Min Bone Ain	Coordinator (PCP)	Shalom Foundation	2 December 2013
4	Min New Soe	Mon LCM member	Mon Local Ceasefire Monitoring Group	24 October 2013
5	Naing Tint Khaing	Mon State Regional Coordinator	Shalom Foundation	24 October 2013

Yangon

No	Name	Position	Organization	Interview Date
1	B. Lum Ze	Ceasefire Monitoring Project Coordinator	Shalom Foundation	8 October 2013
2	Naw Shelta	Public Consultation for Peace Project Officer	Shalom Foundation	9 October 2013
3	Ms Esther	Ms Esther	Shalom Foundation	1 October 2013
4	Naw Ohnmar Shwe	CSFoP Working Group Member	GSMI	1 October 2013
5	Ja Nan Lahtaw	Director	Shalom Foundation	14 March 2014
6	Nang Raw Zahkung	Assistant Director Policy and Strategy	Shalom Foundation	13 March 2014
7	Jaw Gun Maran	Public Consultation for Peace Project Manager	Shalom Foundation	12 March 2014

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About the Authors

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Ja Nan Lahtaw is the Director of the Nyein (Shalom) Foundation, a national non-governmental peace organisation in Myanmar. In Myanmar's current peace process, she initiated the Civil Society Forum for Peace to strengthen public participation in the peace process. In addition to facilitating the development of local ceasefire monitoring mechanisms, which have been accepted at a national level, she advises local peace committees on public peace consultation processes. She also supports women from both parties who are involved in peace negotiations by co-leading dialogue meetings and workshops on gender and negotiation with UN Women and Swisspeace. She attended the 14th Annual Colloquium of The Institute for Inclusive Security, USA, in which strategies were explored for promoting change through policies related to UN Security Council Resolution 1325.

In the current peace process, she is involved as a member of the technical team to the negotiation team of ethnic armed organizations and co-facilitates the peace talks between the government and ethnic armed organizations at a recent talk. She holds an MA in Conflict Transformation from Eastern Mennonite University in Virginia, USA, and she was a Chevening Fellow (2008) at Birmingham University in the United Kingdom. She has taught on the Masters of Applied Conflict Transformation Studies program (ACTS) at Cambodia's Pannasastra University in conjunction with the Center for Peace and Conflict Studies, for four years.

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Nang Raw currently works as the Assistant Director (Policy and Strategy) with the Nyein (Shalom) Foundation, a national non-governmental organization in Myanmar. She has more than 15 years of experience in implementing and managing statebuilding and peacebuilding projects in Myanmar. She has been an active trainer and facilitator of various trainings, seminars and workshops on peacebuilding related issues. She has been instrumental in the initiation of the Civil Society Forum for Peace which has been the unique 'space' of sharing, learning and strategizing civil society's role in supporting the peace process in Myanmar. She has been facilitating and managing the local peace committee activities since 2006 until recent progress of public consultation activities. She has been co-training "Women at and around Peace Table trainings" with the swisspeace and UNWomen since 2012.

Recently, she has been involved in the current peace process as a technical team member in the negotiation meetings of Ethnic Armed Organizations and Union Peacemaking Working Committee (UPWC). She was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship and earned her second Master's degree in International Development Policy (2009) from the Terry Sanford School of Public Policy at Duke University, USA and a Diploma Certificate in Peace and Conflict Resolution from the University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill. She has attended Summer Peacebuilding Institute of Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Virginia, for two summers in 2008 and 2009. Prior to that, she achieved a Master's degree in Public Administration in Yangon, Myanmar.

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About swisspeace

swisspeace is an action-oriented peace research institute with headquarters in Bern, Switzerland. It aims to prevent the outbreak of violent conflicts and to enable sustainable conflict transformation.

swisspeace sees itself as a center of excellence and an information platform in the areas of conflict analysis and peacebuilding. We conduct research on the causes of war and violent conflict, develop tools for early recognition of tensions, and formulate conflict mitigation and peacebuilding strategies. swisspeace contributes to information exchange and networking on current issues of peace and security policy through its analyses and reports as well as meetings and conferences.

swisspeace was founded in 1988 as the “Swiss Peace Foundation” with the goal of promoting independent peace research in Switzerland. Today swisspeace engages about 40 staff members. Its most important clients include the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) and the Swiss National Science Foundation. Its activities are further assisted by contributions from its Support Association. The supreme swisspeace body is the Foundation Council, which is comprised of representatives from politics, science, and the government.

swisspeace is an associated Institute of the University of Basel and member of the Swiss Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences (SAHS).