

Ethnic Conflict and Social Services in Myanmar's Contested Regions



Kim Jolliffe

JUNE 2014



The Asia Foundation

Improving Lives, Expanding Opportunities

Ethnic Conflict and Social Services in Myanmar's Contested Regions

Kim Jolliffe



The Asia Foundation

JUNE 2014

Kim Jolliffe is an independent researcher, specializing in security, development, and humanitarian affairs in Myanmar. The author would like to thank everyone who contributed to this study, particularly the Karen Department of Health and Welfare and associates, and the Mon National Education Committee/Mon National Education Department.

The Asia Foundation is a non-profit international development organization committed to improving lives across a dynamic and developing Asia. Informed by six decades of experience and deep local expertise, the Foundation works through a network of 18 country offices in Asia on programs that address critical issues affecting the region in the 21st century—governance and law, economic development, women's empowerment, environment, and regional cooperation.

Preface

A bewildering number of ethnic conflicts have persisted in varied forms and intensity in Myanmar since independence from Britain in 1948. Numerous small militias still operate in the border areas, and over 20 ethnic armed groups control parts of the country, primarily in remote and frontier regions. The quasi-civilian government that came into being in 2011 has made a concerted effort to reach a comprehensive solution to the ethnic conflicts, including the signing of 16 bilateral ceasefire agreements in the past couple of years.

The current push is to achieve a national ceasefire in 2014 that would provide the context for political dialogue to address more systematically the critical issues that stand in the way of genuine peace. The process won't be easy; the core issues are about fundamental power and wealth sharing arrangements at the heart of any lasting solution that are notoriously difficult to define, negotiate over, and find compromise acceptable to key stakeholders in the conflicts. The test for Myanmar is now, with the momentum of the peace negotiations reaching a critical stage. The process currently includes all the major stakeholders – government, parliament, the army, and the ethnic armed groups – and there is sufficient faith of forward movement to consider those very core issues of power and wealth sharing arrangements that were unimaginable for decades.

The international community has a strong interest in supporting Myanmar's effort to find a lasting solution to the ethnic conflicts. As development aid is increasingly available for a range of programs in the conflict-affected areas, it will be important to be fully aware of and consider how state institutions, processes, and services will intersect with what already exists on the ground, in ways that would build trust and local capacity toward effectively meeting the needs of communities in these areas. Given the long duration of the ethnic conflicts and the existence of ethnic armed groups in parts of the country, administrative and social services have long been delivered by their political structures and associated networks of service providers and social organizations, rather than by the state. If not carefully considered, well intentioned aid-supported programs may inadvertently fuel conflict rather than contribute to peace at a particularly delicate moment in the process.

In light of this situation, The Asia Foundation commissioned this research to examine the dynamics of social service delivery in contested regions of Myanmar, in order to contribute to a more informed analysis and discussion of how aid can strengthen relations between the state and alternative service providers and support the evolution of legitimate and inclusive institutions necessary for peace. Much more analytical work is needed on a range of thorny issues that the political dialogue will have to take into account, and we hope that the Foundation's research agenda, of which this paper is a part, will make a useful contribution.

The research paper is authored by Mr. Kim Joliffe, an independent researcher who specializes in security, development and humanitarian affairs in Myanmar. This report was generously funded by the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID). The opinions expressed in this report are solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of DFID or The Asia Foundation.

Dr. Kim Ninh
Country Representative
The Asia Foundation

Contents

Acronyms	i
Executive Summary.....	iii
ONE: Introduction	1
TWO: Social Services, politics, and conflict in Myanmar	5
2.1 The fight for the right to govern	5
2.2 The role of social services	7
2.3 Social services and contested legitimacy in Myanmar’s transition	7
2.4 The struggle for self-reliance	8
2.5 Negotiating for a role in governance	9
THREE: Mapping territories and existing services in non-Burman areas	11
3.1 Complex territory.....	11
3.2 Overview of endogenous social services in contested areas	12
Chin	15
Kachin.....	15
Karen (southeast Myanmar)	17
Karenni and Kayan	19
Mon.....	20
Shan.....	21
FOUR: Aid as a driver of conflict or peace	23
4.1 Myanmar’s new aid paradigm	23
4.2 In aid of conflict or peace	25
4.3 Threats to confidence in the peace process	25
4.4 Peacebuilding – building confidence in the ceasefires	29
4.5 Peacebuilding – Institutional transformation	30
FIVE: Lessons from the ground	32
5.1 Case one: Mon national education	32
5.2 Case two: Health Care in contested Karen-populated areas.....	36
SIX: Lessons learned and implications	42
6.1 Considerations for national service providers	42
6.2 Guidance for aid actors	45
Bibliography	50
Endnotes	54

Acronyms

BGF	Tatmadaw Border Guard Force Battalion(s)
BMA	Burma Medical Association
BPHWT	Backpack Health Worker Team
CNF/CNA	Chin National Front/Chin National Army
EAO	Ethnic armed organisations
HBP	Health as a Bridge for Peace
HCCG	Health Core Convergence Group
HISWG	Health Information System Working Group
IDP	Internally-displaced person
INGO	International non-governmental organisation
IRC	International Rescue Committee
Kachin KBC	Kachin Baptist Convention
KDHW	Karen Department of Health and Welfare
KECD	Karen Education and Cultural Department
KHS	Karen Health Services
KIO/KIA	Kachin Independence Organisation/Kachin Independence Army
KIO-ED	Kachin Independence Organisation – Education Department
KKO/DKBA	Khlohtoobaw Karen Organisation/Democratic Karen Benevolent Army
KMSS	Karuna Myanmar Social Services
KnED	Karenni National Education Department
KNG	Kayan National Guard
KNGY	Kayan New Generation Youth
KnHD	Karenni National Health Department
KNLP	Kayan New Land Party
KnMHC	Karenni National Mobile Health Committee
KNPDP	Karenni National Peace and Development Party
KNPLF	Karenni Nationalities' People's Liberation Front
KNPP/KA	Karenni National Progressive Party/Karenni Army
KNSO	Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army
KNU/KNLA	Karenni National Solidarity Organisation
KNU/KNLA-PC	KNU/KNLA-Peace Council
KSEAG	Karen State Education Assistance Group
KTWG	Karen Teacher Working Group
KWA	Kachin Women's Association
KWAT	Kachin Women's Association of Thailand
MMK	Myanmar Kyat
MNE	Mon National Education
MNEC	Mon National Education Committee
MNED	Mon National Education Department
NMSP/MNLA	New Mon State Party/Mon National Liberation Army
NSAG	Non-state armed group
OECD DAC	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development- Development Assistance Committee
PSLF/TNLA	Palaung State Liberation Front/Ta'ang National Liberation Army

RCSS/SSA	Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army
SAZ/SAD	Special Administered Zone/Special Administered Division
SSDF	Shan State Development Foundation
SSPP/SSA	Shan State Progressive Party / Shan State Army
UCH	Myanmar University of Community Health
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
\$US	United States Dollars
UWSP/UWSA	United Wa State Party /United Wa State Army
VTHC	Village Tract Health Centre
WHO	World Health Organization

Glossary

Tatmadaw	Myanmar Armed Forces
Pyithu Sit	Tatmadaw-backed ' <i>People's Militia</i> '
Chief Minister	Chief executive of state or region government
Union Government	Central government of Myanmar

Executive Summary

With aid commitments on the rise, Myanmar has the potential to greatly strengthen the delivery of health, education, and other social services. However, while it is established practice for aid agencies to back state-led development strategies, this presents complications in some of Myanmar's conflict-affected areas where ethnic armed organisations (EAOs) and associated networks have been the primary social service providers for decades.

At the same time, aid interventions in social sectors have significant potential to contribute to peacebuilding. In particular, coordination and collaboration efforts between state and EAO-linked service providers could improve the quality of service provision, while also supporting the war-to-peace transition. These 'convergence' efforts demonstrate a key contribution to the peace process that could be enhanced by international aid actors through both peacebuilding and mainstream development funds.

Since the country's foundation, Myanmar's mostly non-Burman-populated border regions have been heavily contested, with the Burman-led state facing an extreme deficit in legitimacy. Ethnic conflicts have been fought primarily over claims to establish patron-client relations with non-Burman populations—meaning that the core drivers of conflict are related to armed actors' roles in governance. As a result, the provision of social services in these areas is fraught with political complications, and attached closely to the competing nation-building agendas that shape subnational armed conflicts.

A fragile peace process is currently underway (mid-2014) that has shown limited but noteworthy potential to achieve a political settlement. Meanwhile, the country's aid environment is being dramatically transformed as relations between donor countries and the Myanmar government are normalised.

In some conflict-affected areas, confidence in the peace process is being actively undermined by the conflict-insensitive expansion of government service delivery, as well as internationally implemented projects. At the same time, EAO-linked services face severe funding cuts as donor priorities shift.

Encouragingly though, 'convergence' efforts have led to collaboration towards a wide range of mutually-beneficial goals between state and EAO-linked service providers, demonstrating significant potential for peacebuilding. Tangible improvements in access to services that enhance relations between conflicting parties can build confidence in the peace process and address grievances among conflict-affected populations and EAOs. Improved relations can also contribute to the establishment of social sector institutions conducive to peace in the long-term.

This study explores the significance of collaboration between the state and EAOs to peacebuilding and provides broad guidance on how international aid agencies can direct social service spending to support peace in this way, and avoid further exacerbating conflicts.

ONE: Introduction

Since the country's foundation, Myanmar's mostly non-Burman-populated border regions have been heavily contested, with the Burman-led state facing an extreme deficit in legitimacy. In the absence of government assistance, networks linked to ethnic armed organisations (EAOs) have utilised international aid to provide education, healthcare and other basic social services,¹ helping to firmly institutionalise their roles in society beyond the realm of security.

Ethnic conflicts have been fought primarily over claims to governance,² meaning the core drivers of conflict are related to legitimacy and power over populations. As a result, the provision of social services in these areas is fraught with political complications, and attached closely to the competing nation-building agendas that shape subnational armed conflicts.

Since the Thein Sein administration came into power in 2011, Myanmar has begun liberalising its economy and attempting to build a more legitimate and responsive state, backed enthusiastically by the West and its regional allies. This has led to dramatic increases in aid to the country, and a normalisation of aid relations, meaning that funds are increasingly aligned with government priorities, as required by key international accords.³ Meanwhile, aid commitments to EAO-linked service providers have declined, particularly those to aid actors with head offices in neighbouring Thailand.

At the same time, Nay Pyi Taw has set out decisively to consolidate the country's contested regions under its administration. Most visibly, it has initiated a multilateral peace process that has brought more than 20 contemporary EAOs to the negotiating table.⁴ Meanwhile, the Myanmar Armed Forces (Tatmadaw) has increased its presence in key ceasefire areas, sustaining regular counterinsurgency operations in some, while the government expands its administrative reach to areas not previously governed by the state. For the time being, the 2008 Constitution has ensured not only that the military maintains a stake in governance, but also that most governmental power remains highly centralised, providing little space for alternative power structures in contested areas.

However, the Tatmadaw and government have accepted, at least in principle, to begin long-demanded political talks in pursuit of establishing a 'federal' system, and have shown some signs of commitment to finding a lasting solution at the negotiation table.⁵ Meanwhile, significant improvements to the well-being of civilians have been noted in ceasefire areas due to fewer human rights abuses by Tatmadaw soldiers, and far greater freedom of movement.⁶ Confidence is high too among some EAO leaders. This is largely because of broader reforms taking place in Myanmar and growing confidence in President Thein Sein and other key ministers, who appear to be trying to instill a change in attitude among old regime elites.

Meanwhile, this has opened space for talks between state and EAO-linked service providers to improve relations and take steps towards greater coordination and cooperation. Building on foundations for cooperation that often existed even during conflict, attempts have been made by state and EAO-linked service providers to develop stronger relations. In most cases, efforts to engage the government strategically to partner in social sector reform have been initiated by EAO-linked service providers with some international support. These efforts have been generally labeled

‘convergence’ activities, though the word appears to have different meanings, depending on the stakeholder, and thus will not be used in this paper as a universal term.⁷

In the context of this extremely fragile transition, huge increases in social sector aid spending will, unavoidably, have a significant impact on political dynamics in Myanmar. Aid, therefore, has significant potential to contribute to peacebuilding or to further drive conflicts.⁸

Objectives of the study

This is an exploratory study that aims to inform and stimulate wider discussion on how social service delivery in politically contested areas is related to conflict and peace in Myanmar. The objectives of this preliminary study were to:

- Provide a foundation for understanding how conflict dynamics relate to the social sectors in contested areas of Myanmar;
- Outline the various forms taken by ethnic national actors’ claims to governance and territory in contested areas;
- Give an overview of the social services provided by ethnic national actors in contested areas;
- Demonstrate how aid affects conflict dynamics, particularly through impacts on confidence in the peace process and the evolution of institutions;
- Provide examples and analysis of where state and EAO-linked service providers are taking steps to improve relations and enhance coordination and collaboration;
- Provide broad guidance on how state and EAO-linked service providers can develop stronger relations to aid in improving services and building peace;
- Provide broad guidance on how international aid interventions in the social sectors can avoid exacerbating conflict in contested areas and contribute to peacebuilding by enhancing coordination and collaboration among service providers.

Overview of the report

This study begins by demonstrating how social service provision relates to conflict dynamics in Myanmar (**Section 2**). It explores how patron-client relations and ethnicity have shaped conflicts and how social services have helped form between EAOs and populations. As wars have been fought over the rights to govern populations, and in resistance to attempts by the Burman-led state to foist a paternalist relationship between itself and ethnic societies, efforts to boost the government’s legitimacy through social service provision risk deepening conflicts at a time when peace negotiations show potential but are also still very fragile.

For international aid actors in Myanmar, the conflict dynamics related to social service provision in contested areas can be difficult to understand. **Section 3** presents a typology of the six main forms of territorial claims held by ethnic political actors, and then provides an overview of the main ethnic national service providers in the country’s main contested areas.

Section 4 explores the current and potential impacts of dramatic increases in aid on Myanmar’s ethnic conflicts. It first outlines the scope of new aid to the country, and then explores how aid can affect conflict dynamics through impacts on confidence in the peace process and on the evolution of institutions. The section also demonstrates how some aid committed to social sectors in a number

of Myanmar's conflict-affected areas has had negative impacts on both of these processes. The section concludes with a framework for determining how aid could be improved to contribute to peacebuilding through enhancing attempts by state and EAO-linked service providers to increase coordination and cooperation.

Section 5 explores how cooperation and coordination has taken place between the state and two key EAO-linked service systems. These are the Mon national education system, and a network of healthcare providers in contested Karen areas. As these cases demonstrate, the foundations for cooperation have often remained in place even throughout conflict, with social services overlapping on the ground and mutually enhancing delivery, rather than hindering it. Building on these grassroots foundations, some intentional efforts by service providers to improve coordination have strengthened the basis for collaboration.

Section 6 concludes by exploring the implications of the findings in Section 5, and provides guidance on how state and EAO-linked service providers can develop stronger relations to improve services and build peace. It also provides general guidance on how international aid actors can contribute to this process both through sectoral programming as well as specific objectives dedicated to peacebuilding.

Methodology

Interviews and focus groups were carried out by the author in early 2014, in both Myanmar and Thailand. Interlocutors were: 28 members of ethnic-national local non-governmental organisations (NGOs), civil society organisations, and EAO-linked service providers; 13 international aid workers, including representatives from four OECD DAC (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development-Development Assistance Committee) donors; political representatives from two EAOs; and six international and Myanmar-national academics and researchers.

This data was significantly enhanced by research earlier conducted by the author between May 2013 and February 2014 through interviews with: members of more than 50 EAO-linked service providers and ethnic national civil society organisations; around 15 political representatives of six EAOs; military commanders of three EAOs; conflict-affected communities in Karen, Kachin, and Mon areas;⁹ more than 40 international aid actors; two Myanmar government officials; and three staff of government-related agencies. This research also included a basic survey of national staff in international NGOs (INGOs) operating in Karen areas.

This approach provided adequate data for a thorough overview of the experiences and perceptions of Myanmar's non-Burman societies and related political and civil actors, but failed to effectively cover government actors. Attempts were made to contact relevant authorities, but these were stifled by bureaucratic impediments. Thus, further research aiming to better understand government perspectives on these complex and sensitive issues would be an important contribution to better understanding how aid in the social sectors impacts conflict dynamics, and how it can be allocated to effectively contribute to peace.

Clarification

This study focuses on the political and conflict-related elements of service delivery, rather than on those related to humanitarian and development aims and indicators. However, the service providers discussed are not primarily political agents with political agendas. Instead the activities of all the service providers are first, and foremost, carried out for humanitarian and development aims. This study has been driven by the need to address service delivery in the context of peacebuilding, which is inherently a political issue, but this has not been the primary motivation of service providers.

TWO: Social Services, politics, and conflict in Myanmar

The nature of contestation that drives armed conflict in Myanmar makes providing social services an uncharacteristically politically-sensitive issue. This section analyses the social dynamics and historical developments that have sustained conflict, and then looks at how these relate to social service provision. Finally, it examines how these issues could feature in the current peace process.

2.1 The fight for the right to govern

Subnational conflicts throughout Southeast Asia, 'are not a product of weak government capacity, poor economic growth, or under-development... [They] are political, usually involving contestation between the government (and national elites) and a local group of actors that are resisting central control' (Parks, Colletta, and Oppenheim 2013: 37).

Myanmar's ethnic conflicts, as elsewhere in the region, have been fought primarily over claims to governance roles. The core drivers of conflict are therefore related to legitimacy and power over populations, with those over territory and resources playing an auxiliary, albeit important, role. This makes interventions in the area of social services particularly sensitive, but also makes them critical for peacebuilding.

Most Myanmar societies are characterised by what social scientists have called 'patron-client relations'. In such arrangements, those with higher status in a relationship (patrons) are obligated to protect, succour, and effectively make decisions for those with lower status (clients). In return, the latter are expected to remain loyal and to defer almost entirely to their seniors. Responsibilities for decision making, and the provision of assistance, therefore imply a position of seniority as well as a burden for the provider, while the receiver is supposed to be grateful and avoid asserting their own expectations or opinions.

Such practices determine relations at the family level, within communities, and between political actors. Such relations exist between and within political and armed organisations, and perhaps most importantly, between armed or political actors and populations. In insecure contexts, the primary role of patrons is to provide security. Where there is a lack of universal protection provided by the state or other institutions, civilians become further dependent on such relations. Political conflicts and allegiances are therefore typically a function of compatibilities or incompatibilities with regard to expectations about deference or patronage.

Naturally, contestations related to incompatibilities in these expectations have developed between and within ethnic groups in Myanmar and largely characterise the country's contemporary armed conflicts. Even before nationalist movements were launched during the late colonial era, the patron-client systems which most people in Myanmar depended on for their security and social mobility were tied closely to their ethnolinguistic affiliations. As Walton (2008: 4) has described, these ethnic identities crystallised over the centuries, and became instrumental for people to establish their place in society and ensure their welfare.

By the time of independence, separate nationalist movements had formed to represent most major ethnic groups. As hopes for a federal union broke down in the following years, the Burman-led government aimed to bring all populations under the control of a centralised 'Burma'. In response,

marginalised non-Burman leaders with competing nationalist aims took up arms to claim a role in the leadership of their own 'ethnic nationalities'.

Essentially, while the Burman-led Myanmar state has sought to foist a paternalistic patron-client relationship between itself and other ethnic societies, elites within those societies have claimed their right to maintain autonomous patronage structures.

The state has damaged EAOs significantly by encouraging splintering within, often through reaching out to lower-ranking strongmen that have become disaffected with their leaders. Especially where these men have been from sub-ethnic or religious minorities within their ethno-nationalist movement, the state has been adept at presenting itself as a more suitable patron. This has typically amounted to purchasing loyalty through varying combinations of immunity, armament, territory, local political opportunities, and economic concessions. Such defections remove from EAOs not just the particular commanders and their troops, but also significant portions of their support base in the form of the client communities with which those actors have established relations.

Arguably, the numerous factions that have left the broader political struggle, and gone under the command of the Tatmadaw, have essentially assumed the position of clients to the state in order to secure their position as patrons in their own localities. Meanwhile, dozens of movements, mobilising tens of thousands of combatants, have persisted militarily to earn non-Burmans greater local autonomy and a stake in national-level politics, refusing to submit and become passive clients.

Conflicts have been shaped too by patron-client relations between armed actors and societies, as populations have become central to the ways that wars have been fought. Since these armed movements began, their main source of support came from the local people. The EAOs naturally assumed the position of patrons, as they were often led by educated and respected nationalist leaders, and were the primary providers of security and assistance to rural non-Burman populations. Strong relations formed and have remained between populations and EAOs, particularly where the latter are able to protect and provide, attaining loyal support often regardless of their specific political aspirations or policies.

In response, shortly after the Tatmadaw first took power in 1962, it adopted a population-centric approach to counterinsurgency dubbed the 'four cuts strategy'. The strategy focused primarily on cutting off insurgents from populations through 'scorched earth' campaigns and relocation decrees. Displaced civilians who were not successfully removed would often flee into strongholds or neighbouring countries where EAOs could provide protection and assistance. This shrunk the territories held by EAOs, but often strengthened their relations with the client societies they could access.

These various forms of contestation all revolve around armed actors' assertions of patron-client relations. While conflict in some areas evolved to degree in the 2000s to focus on securing key economic sites, claims to the right to govern populations remain the key drivers of conflict, and are thus central to peacebuilding.

2.2 The role of social services

The provision of social services has formed an important part of some EAO's governance efforts and represents a core element of their relations with communities of their ethnicity. EAO leaders interviewed for this study explained that they saw the provision of support to 'their people' as a key responsibility.¹⁰

While in some cases, relevant line departments were established by the groups shortly after armed movements began, many social service networks developed out of humanitarian responses to displacement. For example, in the 1990s conflicts in Kachin, Shan, Mon, and Karen areas sent hundreds of thousands of people fleeing to find sanctuary under EAOs or into neighbouring countries where EAOs were able to broker and manage assistance on refugees' behalf.¹¹

Out of these humanitarian initiatives, numerous ethnic-national social service institutions developed both as part of EAOs, and as independent affiliates. Naturally, these efforts have become entwined with the desires for self-determination and autonomy held by EAOs and non-Burman societies at large. Providing social services has also become central to EAO's efforts to maintain patron-client relations with societies in their areas, and thus bolster their legitimacy.

More broadly, the right to provide social services is viewed as central to nation building, following a centuries-old tradition of service delivery demonstrating authority, power and legitimacy. It is therefore closely related to ethnic nationalist struggles.

2.3 Social services and contested legitimacy in Myanmar's transition

Decades of counterinsurgency have brought almost all of the country's populations and territory under the state's control. Administrative departments of the government are able to access and govern even the most rural areas, and very few regions remain inaccessible to the Tatmadaw. However, nationwide, the state continues to face an extreme deficit in legitimacy, and is trumped in most areas by Aung San Suu Kyi and the National League for Democracy (Yawnghwe 2014: 44). In non-Burman areas, this is compounded by disdain for Burman rule, and entrenched patronage structures that link populations more closely with prominent figures of their own ethnicity.

Myanmar's top-down political transition appears to be largely aimed at improving domestic and international legitimacy, while ensuring that the Tatmadaw and its associates maintain a praetorian guardianship role (Egreteau and Jagan 2013).¹² The 2008 Constitution has ensured not only that the military maintains a stake in politics, but also that most governmental power remains highly centralised (Nixon *et al.* 2013). Achieving a balance between earning legitimacy and holding on to power, will be particularly difficult in non-Burman areas. Here, state institutions will likely have to accommodate alternative power structures and their associated patron-client formations, including EAOs, ethnic political parties, and local civil society groups.

When conflicts can be restrained, it is common for states to attempt to rebuild institutions and re-create social cohesion in order to achieve peace and stability. Peacebuilding literature frequently asserts the need for international actors to get behind the government during such periods and support it to provide tangible 'peace dividends' through social services in fragile areas.¹³ This is aimed at re-invigorating its legitimacy in the eyes of the people; generating support in the peace process

itself; and supporting the broader state-building agenda by strengthening state capacity to interact with society and to govern. However, the evidence that such efforts really contribute to state-society relations is patchy at best,¹⁴ and works off the implicit assumption that areas of weak state presence are blank slates that merely need to be occupied, which is rarely true (Chesterman *et al.* 2004: i).¹⁵

In Myanmar's ceasefire areas, where state presence and legitimacy have never taken hold, deep-set loyalties and hierarchies will not be swept aside through token social services, especially where the government's primary engagements are military operations, and most of its personnel are Burman infantrymen.

If not carefully sequenced with holistic improvements in the state's relations with the population, as well as with other parties to the conflict, expansion of the state into contested areas risks being viewed as an intrusion into political life, and a threat to local security. While armed hostilities have been curbed so that negotiations can take place, unwelcomed state expansion risks perpetuating tensions on the ground, and undermining the peace process.

2.4 The struggle for self-reliance

The importance of self-determination and self-reliance is emphasised at all levels of society in non-Burman areas. Educated elites often link this to federal and nationalist concepts, and cite it as the primary grievance driving conflict. At the grassroots level in conflict-affected areas, populations have demonstrated commitment to establishing community structures that provide basic services.¹⁶

Therefore, acceptance and facilitation of social services that are essentially provided—or at least fronted—by the central government can be felt to put non-Burman elites and populations in the position of clients, and implies subordination. Repeatedly, civil society and political actors in non-Burman areas have asserted the need for international support of endogenous programmes as a priority.¹⁷

An ethnic Karen community-based teacher put it simply:

*'Everyone wants to lead their own development. [People in my area] are scared of outside development coming too fast... now that we have a ceasefire we can do this ourselves; that's what we want to be allowed to do'.*¹⁸

As a Karen internally-displaced person (IDP) from Hpapun Township lamented, '[the Burmans] treat us like children, because they think we are incapable'.¹⁹ Such views were reflected by a Karen health official who has been involved in negotiations with government since 2013. '[The government] still underestimates our ability to run our own system, but they still can't demonstrate that they understand the reality of our health or security situation', he said.²⁰

Control over education policy remains a particularly sensitive area of contestation due to education's central role in nation building and cultural survival. Historically, Burman rulers have attempted to establish Burmese as the mother-tongue across all ethnic groups.²¹ Over the decades, non-Burman elites have endeavoured not only to preserve mother-tongue language and literacy through education, but also their history, national songs, symbols, and other cultural indicators.

In the past year, the state has taken small steps to introduce mother-tongue education in government education in some areas, but this has primarily been extra-curricular and shows potential to provide little more than basic language survival. Until protection of such markers of ethnic identity can be guaranteed through official institutions, it is likely that full unification with the state will continue to be resisted.

2.5 Negotiating for a role in governance

For EAOs, all of these concerns represent a key element of broader grievances over lack of local autonomy, political equality and rights to self-determination, and thus are a core driver of armed resistance. While a range of political-, economic-, and justice-related issues are often used to explain protracted conflict in Myanmar, from the perspective of most EAOs, they are all symptoms of a broader 'Burmanisation' agenda to undermine alternative nationalist movements, and augment the position of Burman leaders as supreme over other groups.

As with the realms of government administration, security and economics, the 2008 Constitution places almost all duties related to the provision of social services and development in the hands of the Union, and in some cases the Tatmadaw, and thus grants state/region governments only minimal authority over such affairs. Although state/region governments have local ministries for social affairs and development affairs, education and healthcare continue to be managed by local departments of their respective Union ministries. Also, local ministers are effectively appointed by the Chief Minister, who, in turn is selected by the President (Nixon *et al.* 2013: 13-14). Furthermore, local ministers have little real clout; as Nixon *et al.* (2013: 69) describe, 'the state and region government has ministers, but does not yet have its own ministries'.

The current peace process represents an effort on the part of most EAOs to gain a stake in the state-building process, and guide the state towards a more decentralised structure. Albeit rudimentary, a general understanding of these aims appears to be developing among some elements of the government and the Tatmadaw. On 23 May 2014, EAO negotiators announced that Tatmadaw representatives had accepted that peace talks would move on to political negotiations aimed explicitly at achieving a 'federal system, which would ensure the ethnics equality and democracy'.²² While many hurdles remain, current developments represent perhaps the biggest steps in decades towards a political solution to conflict.

In the short term, to decrease the chances of armed conflict re-igniting, maintain confidence, and allow space for deeper negotiations, this process requires negotiation on the EAOs' present role in governance and service delivery. Provisions for this have been included in EAO proposals under a chapter on 'interim arrangements' that lays the basis for independent social service structures to be maintained throughout political negotiations. Even if such provisions are not agreed upon by the government and Tatmadaw, in practice, EAO systems will continue to operate, at least in the near term.

In the long term, the achievement of a political solution implies the establishment of a single government across the country, and normalisation of state-society relations, with universal social services provided by the state. This will require the establishment of social sector institutions that reduce the potential for competition between elites, and address the grievances driving conflict. Some EAO-linked service providers have envisioned this structure being further decentralised and

'federal' in nature, with specific frameworks in place to ensure a level of local autonomy and respect for ethnic and cultural diversity.²³ Some have indicated that until the state is able to provide such a system, independent structures will remain preferable.²⁴

These short- and long-term progressions will inevitably be impacted by way aid is committed to these sectors. Therefore, attempts to simply boost state legitimacy through providing services in contested areas risks undermining the gains made at the negotiation table and diminishing confidence in the peace process. However, the potential for peacebuilding can be found in the social sector through support for increasing coordination and cooperation between government and EAO-linked service providers.

Progress of this kind has potential to improve service delivery and boost confidence in the peace process in the near term, while also contributing to the establishment of more effective institutions in the long term that promote peace and stability.

THREE: Mapping territories and existing services in non-Burman areas

For aid actors in Myanmar, the conflict dynamics related to social service provision in contested areas can be difficult to understand. Claims to territory are held by a wide range of ethnic national actors and take on various forms shaped by decades of conflict. This section provides a typology for the various forms of territorial claims held, and then gives an overview of the main endogenous service providers in the most contested regions.

3.1 Complex territory

The conflict dynamics explored in Section 2 have greatly shaped the territorial make-up of contested regions, creating a complex mosaic of territorial claims, and presenting complications for external actors wishing to engage in these regions.

Until the 19th Century, as state-building was focused primarily on patronage relationships with populations, conceptions of spatial geography in Southeast Asia were far less rigid than those in the West (Winichakul 1994). This gave birth to complex overlapping political structures where settlements at the periphery of numerous kingdoms that lacked clear boundaries could be forced to provide tribute, slaves, or warriors to multiple overlords.

In many ways, this trend has continued into the modern era, as countless armed movements maintain incompatible claims to patron-client relations with populations and rights to manage territories and resources. In addition, population-centric counterinsurgency and grassroots guerilla warfare have persisted, greatly complicating the political geography. Furthermore, the constant splintering of resistance movements and their ever-changing relationships with the state has added to the complexity.

Today, the key ethnic-national actors claiming the right to govern, or at least extract from local populations in non-Burman areas, are:

- More than 20 opposition EAOs, ranging in size from just a few dozen troops to up to approximately 30,000.
- 23 Tatmadaw Border Guard Force battalions (BGFs), spawned from EAOs but under the command and support structures of the Tatmadaw. These are numbered 1001-1023.
- Eight formalised *Pyithu Sit*, or 'People's Militia' (similar in structure to BGFs, but under less rigid control).
- Constitutionally-instated 'Leading bodies' of Special Administered Zones (SAZs) and Divisions (SADs), which in many cases are related closely with BGFs and *Pyithu Sit*.
- Countless smaller state-linked militias of varying levels of officialdom.
- Numerous but fewer armed criminal organisations (often splinter factions from other groups).

Naturally, claims over populations are often accompanied by assertions over territories and resources too. However, these are surprisingly fluid in most cases, with few territorial boundaries officially demarcated. In most contested areas, armed actors, including the Tatmadaw, effectively access populations wherever they can, and over the years, loose understandings have developed

regarding which territories are home to which groups. Where groups have splintered, communities typically become subject to multiple authorities. These processes have engendered a wide array of quasi-territorial arrangements between the state and various armed actors. These range from those that are enshrined in the constitution, to those that are maintained either through local arrangements with the state or militarily. In turn, these varied governance structures have generated a range of service delivery mechanisms. Where patron-client relationships with populations have overlapped, so have service delivery regimes, interacting in varied ways and becoming part of the dynamics of conflict.

Observers of Myanmar's conflict-affected areas often refer to black, brown, and white areas. These terms come from the Tatmadaw's 'four cuts strategy', which sets out to forcibly remove civilians from insurgent-held 'black' areas into areas more firmly under Tatmadaw control. Hundreds of relocation sites were designated over the years, mostly along frontier areas where the Tatmadaw was dominant, but often where EAOs also maintained a presence. These mixed areas were essentially designated 'brown', until they could be firmly consolidated under the state, at which point they would become 'white' (Maung Aung Myoe 2009: 25-26; Selth 2001: 91-92, 99, 163-164; South 2008: 34, 86-87). However, these terms are an oversimplification and bear limited utility for actors looking to engage in these regions.

The typology on the following pages provides a more detailed overview of the various forms of territory held by different types of ethnic actors. These are ideal types and provide a broad framework, but in actuality overlap with one another and change regularly.

3.2 Overview of endogenous social services in contested areas

This paper is primarily concerned with types three, four and five, where EAOs remain in opposition to the government, have maintained independent governance and social service structures and claims to governance are actively contested. Focusing on the groups most involved in the peace process, this report looks primarily at the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO), the Karen National Union (KNU), the Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS), the Shan State Progressive Party (SSPP), the New Mon State Party (NMSP), the Chin National Front (CNF), and the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP). The rest of this section will provide a basic overview of the various services and service providers linked to these EAOs and other ethnic armed movements in these areas, as well as ethnic-national civil society actors that are autonomous of EAOs. This is by no means a complete overview of all civil society actors in non-Burman areas, or even all areas dominated by armed actors.

Excluded from this study are a number of actors who maintain Type 1 or Type 2 territories and so are not entirely relevant to it. It also omits EAOs that maintain Type 3, 4, or 5 territories, but are smaller organisations, exercising governance over much smaller populations. The most notable omission is the United Wa State Party (UWSP), whose armed struggle is different in nature from other groups, and whose region is more difficult to access in order to gain solid data. A number of service providers operating autonomously of EAOs are also included here. These are mostly ethnic-national organisations, titled as such, and thus maintain similar values as EAOs and operate in coordination with them in their areas. These organisations are endogenous, and thus are key to their societies' struggles for self-reliance and self-determination. While they may not share the specific political aims of EAOs, the aspects of conflict sensitivity explored in this study largely apply to them too.

Type	Governing actors	Examples as of June 2014 (not comprehensive)	Territorial boundary
Type 1: Special Administrative Zones (SAZs) and Special Administrative Divisions (SADs)	Constitutionally-instated “Leading bodies” consisting of locally elected MPs, Tatmadaw appointees, representatives of other national races in those areas, and other members appointed by the body. (Some of these MPs have explicit affiliations with BGFs or EAOs). In some areas, influence is also held by non-mandated armed actors. ²⁵	Five SAZs - designated to Naga, Danu, Lahu, Pa-O, Palaung, and Kokang ethnic nationalities; one SAD, designated to the Wa.	Clearly demarcated - designated townships according to the 2008 Constitution.
Type 2: De facto state-sanctioned territories (incl. numerous former Special Regions that have dissipated over time.)	BGFs, <i>Pyithu Sit</i> , and various smaller militia under Tatmadaw command (some include or are affiliated with MPs) Many are former ceasefire groups who have deferred to command under the Tatmadaw.	BGFs 1001-1003 (Kachin); BGFs 1004-1005 (Karenni); BGFs 1011-1023 (Karen); Kachin Defence Army (KDA); Pansay Militia; Shan State Progressive Party /Shan State Army (3 rd &7 th Brigades); Monha Militia.	None. While a number of these areas were initially recognised ceasefire territories, armed actors have failed or chosen not to assert control and now have less-extensive and less formal local arrangements with the Tatmadaw to man checkpoints, patrol certain areas, maintain supply lines and at times oversee governance affairs.
Type 3: Ceasefire territories (including Special Regions)	Active	EAOs which signed ceasefires in the 1980s or 1990s in return for territories, and who remain armed and in opposition to government rule in their regions.	New Mon State Party/Mon National Liberation Army (NMSP/MNLA); Kachin Independence Organisation/Kachin Independence Army (KIO/KIA) (prior to 2011); Shan State Progressive Party/Shan State Army (SSPP/SSA) (1 st Brigade); KNU/KNLA-Peace Council (KNU/KNLA-PC); National Democratic Alliance Army (NDAA); UWSP/UWSA (northern command) ¹ .
	Faded	EAOs which signed ceasefires in the 1980s or 1990s in return for territories, but have largely dissipated and relinquished power, perhaps other than a few checkpoints or other concessions.	UWSP/UWSA (southern command); Kayan New Land Party (KNLP); Kayan National Guard (KNG).
Type 4: Territories held or accessed militarily by EAOs without ceasefires as of May 2014	EAOs who did not sign ceasefires in the 1980s or 1990s, or whose ceasefires have broken down since, and maintain territorial presence.	KIO/KIA (post 2011); Palaung State Liberation Front / Ta’ang National Liberation Army (PSLF/TNLA).	No demarcated boundaries. These include small pockets of absolute control that are warded off by mines and the sustained defence of transportation routes, as well as far greater areas where EAOs can roam and maintain relations with populations.
Type 5: Territories held or accessed militarily by EAOs with ceasefires	EAOs who did not sign ceasefires in the 1980s or 1990s, who have signed ceasefires since 2011, but have not been provided with Type 3 territories.	Karen National Union / Karen National Liberation Army (KNU/KNLA); Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS/SSA); Kholtoobaw Karen Organisation/Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (KKO/DKBA); Pa-o National Liberation Organisation / Pa-o National Liberation Army (PNLA/PNLO); National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Khaplang (NSCN-K).	No demarcated boundaries. As above (Type 4), but due to ceasefires, and resultant moratoriums on ambushes and laying of new mines, these boundaries become even more distorted. In some areas, they have been informally recognised by local state authorities as governed by EAOs, while in others they remain heavily contested.
Type 6: Enclaves dominated by armed criminal organisations	Often splinter groups of EAOs. Typically no more than a handful of personnel.	Mostly unnamed, known to operate in Shan, Mon, Karen, Chin states, particularly along rivers and mountainous areas.	None. These groups don’t typically control territory but man checkpoints on roads or rivers, and are able to enter settlements in rural areas to extract arbitrary taxes and labour.

¹ The KIO/KIA appears here in both Types 2 and 4. Prior to the re-emergence of conflict in 2011, it had relative control over its three Special Regions in Kachin State and continued relations with communities Laiza and Mai Ja Yang. Since the conflict resumed, the Tatmadaw has entered much of this territory and the boundaries have been broken down. However, there remains a basis for what could be claimed as their territory once again.

² The UWSP/UWSA maintains two ceasefire territories, in north and south Shan State. Its northern command is ‘Active’, while its southern command has ‘faded’.

Type Continued	Level of access of state security forces	Government's role in social service delivery	Level of active contestation between governing actor and the state
Type 1: Special Administrative Zones (SAZs) and Special Administrative Divisions (SADs)	High. Dominant in most areas, except the Wa SAD.	Public health and development affairs officially assigned to Leading Bodies, but significant overlap with central structures. Access dependent partly on security situation, thus presence of competing EAOs.	None.
Type 2: De facto state-sanctioned territories (incl. numerous former Special Regions that have dissipated over time.)	High. BGFs are themselves part of the Tatmadaw and include mainstream Tatmadaw personnel in command and support roles. <i>Pyithu Sit</i> and other militia here are effectively under the command of the Tatmadaw.	All social services officially the responsibility of the state under Union and State/Region governments. Some BGFs provide health services with support from Thailand-border based health networks. EAO-linked service providers have access to provide support in some areas.	Rare non-violent tensions between BGF / <i>Pyithu Sit</i> commanders and the Tatmadaw.
Type 3: Ceasefire territories (including Special Regions)	Active	Extremely limited. Agreements in the 1980s and 1990s typically stated that permission would have to be sought for personnel from either side to cross the boundary. In practice, the Tatmadaw has expanded access into some of these areas overtime as EAOs power has diminished.	Varies greatly, but government services typically sparser than adjacent areas.
	Faded	Varies greatly, but government services typically sparser than adjacent areas.	Varied. Often high throughout most areas, but with some areas remaining implicitly off limits.
Type 4: Territories held or accessed militarily by EAOs without ceasefires as of May 2014	Extremely limited - access only possible by force. Hindered by mines and guerrilla operations of EAOs. Tatmadaw camps beyond the front lines heavily restricted from moving around the area or connecting to supply networks.	Limited generally, and temporarily inactive during times of conflict as government teachers are unable to access.	Severe. Open armed conflict taking place regularly throughout strongholds of EAOs, Tatmadaw, and at times involving BGFs or <i>Pyithu Sits</i> .
Type 5: Territories held or accessed militarily by EAOs with ceasefires	Extremely limited, but increasing during the ceasefire period. These areas are heavily mined and dominated by EAO forces. Tatmadaw and BGF bases within these areas have expanded influence during the ceasefire, having gained more freedom to resupply and move around.	Extremely limited. Typically areas where government staff refuse to go. Some opening up in recent years as security situation improves.	High. Tatmadaw and EAO troop movements in contested areas a constant source of tensions. Violent clashes frequent despite ceasefires, often due to incompatible perceptions of rights to patrol, and hold territory.
Type 6: Enclaves dominated by armed criminal organisations	Limited. These groups flourish in areas where the state has limited control, due to geographic impediments or other armed actors.	Extremely limited, given lack of state presence.	Minor. Dependent on local relations between criminal organisations and Tatmadaw.

Colour code indicates level of risk of conflict over social service delivery

Light Grey – No significant risk

Medium Grey – High Risk

Dark Grey – Not applicable

Chin

Most of Chin State is under the control of the Myanmar government, contested militarily by only the CNF and its armed wing, the Chin National Army (CNA), which holds minor influence over small pockets of Type 5 territory in Htantlang, Madupi and Tiddim Townships. Reportedly, the CNF operates a few mobile clinics in its areas of influence, and has begun providing more stable health services near its new headquarters in Htantlang Township. There are also a number of non-CNF affiliated health volunteer organisations, largely funded by donations from international church groups. The Free Burma Rangers, a church-based relief organisation that works with EAOs to provide support to conflict-affected communities also supports two Chin teams in association with the CNF/CNA.²⁶

Villages often rely on community school structures, many of which have been augmented by the Ministry of Education (MoE) in recent years, often changing the language of instruction from Chin to Burmese.

Kachin

The main Kachin EAO remaining in opposition to the government is the KIO, which, to varying degrees, has governed four Type 3 patches of territory in Kachin State that were collectively designated as a Special Region through its 1994 ceasefire with the government. Through this period it also maintained Type 2 influence over Kachin communities in parts of northern Shan State. BGFs 1001-1003 (formerly of the National Defense Army-Kachin) hold significant Type 2 influence in the former Kachin Special Region 1 around Kampaiti and Pangwah, but government administration has been largely established in these areas. Since 2011, the KIO has been fighting the Tatmadaw and lost access to some territory, particularly in northern Shan State. The areas it has managed to hold militarily have therefore changed from Type 3 into Type 4 territories.

The KIO began opening schools in 1964, three years after it took up arms, leading to the foundation of the KIO Education Department (KIO-ED) in 1978.²⁷ By October 2013, the KIO-ED ran four high schools, 32 middle schools, and 243 primary schools in areas under KIO administration, providing education to over 23,000 students.²⁸ Though the data required for an entirely accurate comparison is unavailable, there are an estimated 310 government schools in these and adjacent areas, providing education for 13,811 students.²⁹

Since 1994, KIO-ED schools have used the MoE's curriculum, but with Jinghpaw as the language of instruction. Since 2011, Kachin languages and history have been added to supplement the MoE curriculum.

Since conflict broke out in 2011, 10 jointly-managed KIO-ED/MoE schools have been closed, while previous arrangements for KIO-ED students to take Basic Education Standard 10 Examinations have been discontinued. As a result, KIO-ED students are no longer able to move on to higher education in Myanmar, but can instead go on to the Kachin Baptist Convention (Kachin KBC) Theological College in Myitkyina, KIO military officer training school, or medical colleges in China.

Ten 'mission schools' have also been established by the Kachin KBC and Karuna Myanmar Social Services (KMSS). A number of early child care and development centres are also provided by the Kachin Women's Association (KWA), Kachin KBC, and KMSS.

The KIO Health Department operates 12 hospitals and 61 rural health centres, staffed by more than 1,000 people with various levels of formal and informal training.³⁰ These are all in Kachin State, as one hospital and 21 rural health centres in northern Shan State were abandoned due to conflict. Rural health centres provide diagnosis and treatment for common diseases such as malaria and tuberculosis (TB), maternal and child health services, water and sanitation programmes, immunisation, health awareness raising, and referrals to hospitals. Hospitals are able to provide minor surgery, X-rays, ultrasound, more advanced diagnoses, and HIV treatment and counseling, among other services.

Since 2011, two hospitals and 19 rural health centres have been established or adapted to provide free healthcare to more than 80,000 IDPs living in 19 camps in KIO areas as a result of conflict. Healthcare is not free in all other areas, except for treatment of HIV and TB.

There is also one Burma Medical Association-supported clinic in the KIO Special Region, administered by the Kachin Women's Association of Thailand (KWAT).³¹ The Backpack Health Worker Team supports four backpack teams in Kachin State (BPHWT 2013: 3), while the Free Burma Rangers supports 12 relief and health teams, in association with the KIO/KIA.³²

Following the KIO ceasefire in 1994, a number of Kachin-led initiatives were launched to develop KIO territories and rehabilitate conflict-affected communities (Jolliffe 2014: 14-16; South 2008: 190-194). One such initiative was the KIO's Kachin Relief and Development Committee (KRDC), which began large-scale agricultural and community-centred development initiatives in a number of fertile areas, as well as microfinance and other people-centred development schemes.

In the same period, two ambitious civil society organisations (the Metta Foundation and the Shalom Foundation) were founded by Kachin leaders with informal relations to the KIO, and began working in the conflict-affected regions. These organisations have since grown to become two of the largest Myanmar NGOs, with head offices in Yangon and operations in all states and regions. Given their long-term work in a wide range of social sectors in contested, ethnically non-Burman regions across the country, they also have a wider role to play in building relations between state and ethnic national social service regimes.

The Kachin KBC provides extensive support in both KIO and non-KIO Kachin areas in the sectors of IDP relief; development; youth and women's empowerment; and Christian education as well as other religious services.

Most other Kachin civil society organisations operating in KIO areas are currently focused on IDP relief and other support, but include many staff who have worked in other sectors in the past and would likely diversify if current humanitarian crises are brought to an end. These include BRIDGE, RANIR, KMSS, KWA, Kachin Development Group (KDG), and Wunpawng Ninghtoi (WPN).

A wide number of Kachin national organisations also provide various empowerment services in areas such as legal rights, legal and political awareness trainings, as well as various areas of community

support. These include the Kachin Development Worker's Network Group, Kachin Women's Association of Thailand, Kachin Women's Peace Network, Sut Zup Gindai Foundation, United Kachin Youth Union, Kachin Lawyers Group, Humanity Institute, Kachin Women's Union, Kachin Legal Aid Networking Group, Kindness Organisation, Htoi Development Foundation, Kachin Network Group, and Ninggam Social Network Group.

Karen (southeast Myanmar)

Rural Karen-populated areas in much of Kayin State, eastern Bago Region, parts of Mon State and northern Tanintharyi Region remain heavily contested following six decades of conflict. The main EAOs in these areas are the KNU and the Khlohtobaw Karen Organisation (KKO), which is better known by the name of its military wing, the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA). These EAOs administer no officially demarcated territory, but hold significant influence in a number of areas.

The KKO (DKBA) has Type 5 influence in Kyain Seigyi, Hlaingbwe, and southern Hpapun Townships of Kayin State, and Type 5 stronghold in southeast Myawaddy Township. The KNU/KNLA maintains Type 5 influence of varying degrees in at least 12 townships across Bago, Kayin, Mon, and Tanintharyi with numerous strongholds along the region's border with Thailand. Its largest strongholds are in Kayin's Hpapun and Thandaung Townships. Meanwhile the KNU/KNLA-Peace Council has a small Type 2 ceasefire territory in Kawkareik Township, and BGFs 1011-1023 have strong Type 3 influence across much of Myawaddy, Kawkareik, and Hlaingbwe Townships.

Social services in these areas are provided by a number of Karen national entities. The foundations for these systems were laid by the KNU, which has a Karen Education and Cultural Department (KED), established in the colonial era, and the Karen Department of Health and Welfare (KDHW), established in 1956. Its agricultural department, the KAD, also provides some basic livelihoods support, skills-based training and other services to help Karen people register their land with both the KNU and the government.

Today, the KED is a co-founding member of the Karen State Education Assistance Group (KSEAG), a network which also includes the Karen Teacher Working Group (KTWG) and an INGO called Partners Relief and Development. The group aims to provide equitable access to formal education for children across the Karen areas of the southeast, including non-KNU areas. Overall, KSEAG provides support to 1,294 schools, which are attended by 141,623 students spread across most Karen-populated areas in the region.³³ A total of 123,212 (87%) of these students are registered in Kayin State and Karen-populated areas of Mon State. For a loose comparison, the MoE administers 1,860 schools for 317,380 students in these areas.³⁴

Most of the KSEAG schools were established by, and receive support from, the local community, while hundreds of them are wholly or partly administered by the KED. Some of the non-KED schools are recognised to an extent by the government, and receive limited support from the state as well as KTWG. More than 50 schools are in DKBA and BGF areas, and receive varied levels of support from those groups and the state. Ten schools have also been built by the Karen Relief and Development Committee in the KNU/KNLA-Peace Council ceasefire territory.

The KDHW operates 48 mobile health clinics in KNU Type 5 areas, which serve a population of over 100,000 with basic primary healthcare. Further care is provided by the Backpack Health Worker

Team, which staffs over 50 teams of backpack medics in Karen communities in the region, targeting a similar number of people (BPHWT 2013: 3).³⁵ Four further clinics are provided for civilians in KNU territory by the KNLA's medical branch, with support from the Burma Medical Association.³⁶ Six Burma Medical Association-supported clinics are provided in KKO (DKBA) areas, two explicitly by the DKBA and four more that have been run by associated networks since before 1995, when the organisation split from the KNU. Similarly, two such clinics have been maintained by the Karen Peace Force (KPF), another splinter group that has since become a BGF. One other BGF, spawned from the KKO (DKBA), provides a clinic in central Kayin State. A further five clinics are provided by the KNU/KNLA-Peace Council in its ceasefire area with support from the Burma Medical Association.³⁷ Health and basic relief is also provided to conflict-affected civilians by 28 Free Burma Rangers teams, in coordination with the KNU/KNLA.³⁸

A number of other Karen national organisations operate primarily in KNU areas and maintain close relations with the group, while enjoying varying degrees of autonomy. These include:

- *The Committee for Internally Displaced Karen People (CIDKP)*: Food and relief distribution and basic rehabilitation for IDPs; and landmine victim support
- *The Karen Organisation for Relief and Development (KORD)*: Water and sanitation development; agricultural services; relief; and community development
- *The Karen Women's Organisation (KWO)*: Support for women's and children's health through 'baby kit' distribution and training for traditional birth attendants; nursery school support; emergency assistance (especially for women); and care for elderly IDPs
- *The Karen Youth Organisation (KYO)*: Adolescent reproductive health and HIV/AIDS awareness; basic relief, school construction and support for youth boarding houses in IDP communities; sports and physical education programmes; youth leadership skills development; and youth empowerment (including public speaking, and political and rights awareness) for youth in government-controlled areas
- *Karen Student Networking Group (KSNG)*: Vocational training; and training for IDP community schools
- *Karen Environmental Social Action Network (KESAN)*: Agricultural development and livelihoods support; environmental awareness; and land tenure support

A number of Karen national organisations operating openly in government areas, without any formal connections to EAOs, have gained increasing levels of access to conflict-affected areas over the years. The largest of these is Knowledge Dedication for Nation-Building (KDN), formerly known as the Karen Development Network, which provides health, education and support for IDPs. Others include KDN's mother organisation, the Karen Development Committee (KDC), Karen Women's Empowerment Group (KWE), Karen Baptist Convention (Karen KBC), Karen Literacy and Cultural Association (KLCA), Karen Youth Network (KYN), Karen Monk Association, and Karen Environmental Network.

Karenni and Kayan

The main Kayah State-based EAOs involved in the peace process are the KNPP and Kayan New Land Party (KNLP), both of which have ceasefires in place. The region is also home to at least six other armed groups, most of which splintered from the KNPP. The KNPP holds Type 5 influence in Hpasawng, Pruso and Shadaw Townships and a small part of northern Loikaw Township. The KNLP maintains influence over a 'faded' Type 3 Special Region in northwest Kayah State and Type 5 influence in adjacent parts of southern Shan State. Meanwhile, BGFs 1004 and 1005 (formerly Karenni Nationalities' People's Liberation Front-KNPLF) maintain Type 2 territories that were formally Special Regions, as do three *Pyithu Sit*, the Karenni National Peace and Development Party (KNPDP), the Kayan National Guard (KNG), and the Karenni National Solidarity Organisation (KNSO).³⁹

The KNPP's Karenni National Education Department (KnED) provides 460 primary schools, 33 middle schools, and 12 high schools in Kayah State, with 1,677 teachers and 50,351 students.⁴⁰ Meanwhile, the MoE provides education for 55,606 students through a total of 388 schools.⁴¹ Significant education services are also provided by Kayan New Generation Youth (KNGY), which maintains unofficial relations with the KNLP, but adequate data is not available.

Healthcare is provided by a consortium of Karenni and Kayan entities linked to the various armed actors called the Civil Health and Development Network (CHDN). A lion's share of the capacity and resources utilised by this network comes from the Karenni National Mobile Health Committee (KnMHC), which is the Myanmar-based wing of the KNPP's Thailand refugee-camp based Karenni National Health Department (KnHD). The KnMHC provides seven clinics and 20 mobile teams altogether, operating in Hpasawng, Pruso and Shadaw townships with a total of 107 trained health staff. The other members are the health wings of KNLP, KNPDP, KNSO, KNG and the KNPLF (BGFs 1004-1005), which administers a clinic supported by the Burma Medical Association. Further health and relief support is provided in the region by five Karenni and one Kayan Free Burma Rangers team,⁴² while the Backpack Health Worker Team supports seven Kayah and four Kayan backpack teams (BPHWT 2013: 3).

Other Karenni national organisations affiliated with the KNPP and operating in its territories include the:

- *Karenni Social Welfare and Development Committee (KSWDC)*: Relief and community development support for internally-displaced and other conflict-affected communities; and
- *Karenni National Women's Organisation (KNWO)*: Support for women's and children's health through 'baby kit' distribution and training for traditional birth attendants; nursery school support; emergency assistance (especially for women); and care for elderly IDPs

The KNGY also provides a range of services to primarily Kayan populations, including basic community development, and rights and political awareness training.

Mon

The NMSP administers two Type 2 ceasefire territories, one in southern Kayin State and another on the Mon State border with Thailand, and overlapping with southern Kayin and northern Tanintharyi.

There are a number of NMSP-linked social service providers operating in both NMSP and government territory, with varied levels of autonomy from the party. These are:

- *Mon National Education Committee and Department (MNEC/MNED)*: Provides support to 142 Mon national schools, with over 13,000 students in both NMSP and government territory and Mon teachers in 105 government schools, for around 17,000 students.⁴³ These schools are mostly in Mon State but some are in Kayin and Tanintharyi. In Mon State alone, the government provides education for over 340,000 people through 1,365 schools.⁴⁴
- *Mon National Health Committee (MNHC)*: Provides primary healthcare via nine clinics and two smaller facilities in NMSP territory, primarily in IDP areas.⁴⁵ There are no government health services in the NMSP area, but across Mon State the state provides one general hospital, 21 station hospitals, 62 rural health centres, and 295 sub health centres.
- *The Mon Women's Organisation (MWO)*: Skills and awareness empowerment programmes for women; Mon literacy, history, and Buddhism promotion
- *The Mon Relief and Development Committee (MRDC)*: Provides limited food and support for shelter construction for around 9,000 IDPs in NMSP territory; and assists with coordination of the health, education, and community affairs of IDPs
- *The Mon Youth Progressive Organisation (MYPO)*: Limited awareness and rights-based empowerment programmes
- *Mon Youth Educator Organisation (MYEO)*: Youth empowerment, organisation and networking
- *Remonhya Peace Foundation*: Community development; water and sanitation; and relief and rehabilitation for IDPs

Other key Mon national organisations working in NMSP and other conflict-areas but not affiliated officially with the NMSP, include:

- *The Civil Society Development Programme (CSDP)*: Civic education; domestic and household management skills; women's empowerment; legal, rights and political awareness; and community mobilisation
- *Magadu Development Foundation*: Land tenure services, aiding farmers to register land; community water and sanitation; school construction; agricultural development and training; vocational training; legal and land rights awareness

- *Mon Centara Development Foundation (MCDF)*: Micro-credit and income generation for women; agriculture training; ICT training; civil society capacity-building; and leadership training
- *Mon-region Social Development Network (MSDN)*: Community water and sanitation; school construction; agricultural development and training; environmental protection; and IDP support and rehabilitation

Traditionally in Mon areas, most villages have religious, youth, literacy, and cultural committees, some of which have become organised over the years, and receive support from Mon national civil society organisations.

Shan

Two main ethnic-Shan EAOs remain in opposition to the government, the RCSS and the SSP/SSA.⁴⁶ The SSPP administered a Special Region between 1989 and 2010 encompassing large parts of Kyethi, Monghsu, Mongyai, Tangyan, and Hsipaw Townships. The RCSS/SSA maintained a guerilla warfare campaign throughout this period, dominating large parts of southern Shan State, and patches of territory stretching throughout the state, and up to the China border. Conflict then broke out between the SSPP/SSA and the government in 2010, when its strongest unit, the 1st Brigade refused to form a *Pyithu Sit*. Its two other remaining units, the 3rd and 7th Brigades acceded to the demands.

Ceasefires were then signed in 2011 with both groups with the new government, but these have failed to bring an end to conflict, with regular clashes taking place throughout the state. Currently, the SSPP has maintained positions and operations in Kyethi, Monghsu, Mongyai, Lashio, Kyaukme, and Tangyan Townships of Shan State, among others, while the RCSS/SSA hold influence in rural areas of 17 townships of Shan State, particularly Mongton, Mongpan, Monghsat, Laikha, Kunhing, Hsipaw, Kyaukme, and Namkham.⁴⁷

The RCSS has been providing basic social services since the late 1990s, primarily to IDPs in five IDP camps along the Shan State-Thailand border. Until 2012, there were three main departments, the Shan Health Committee, Shan Education Committee and Shan Relief and Development Foundation, which then merged to form the Shan State Development Foundation (SSDF). SSDF currently provides five mobile clinics in each of the IDP camps and one more in Kali sub-township, Kunhing. Furthermore, the Backpack Health Worker Team supports six teams in these areas.⁴⁸ Health and basic relief is also provided to conflict-affected civilians by four Free Burma Rangers teams, in coordination with the RCSS/SSA.⁴⁹

The SSDF supports around 200 schools in RCSS Type 5 areas, primarily through contributions towards teacher stipends, running costs, and materials. Most of these are community-based, and some receive some support from MoE. Many of these teach the Shan language, though reportedly still do so secretly in many cases for fear of local authorities. Basic food and relief is also provided to IDPs in the five camps.

Limited data is available on the social services provided in SSPP areas, though the military administers at least one clinic for civilians with support from the Burma Medical Association, in Mae Set.⁵⁰ Further, it should be clarified that Shan State is home to a large number of ethnic groups other than

the Shan, as well as armed groups other than the RCSS/SSA and SSPP/SSA, which maintain Type 3, 4 and 5 territories and thus might be relevant to the guidance laid out in this study.

A number of organisations not linked to armed groups also provide informal education services, as well as legal and rights awareness in EAO and government areas. Among others, these include New Generation Shan State, the Kanbawza Youth Library and Reading Club, Shan Women's Action Network, Shan Youth Power, and Shan Farmer's Group.

FOUR: Aid as a driver of conflict or peace

Since Mary B. Anderson's seminal work 'Do No Harm' was published in 1999 (Anderson 1999), it has been broadly accepted that aid impacts conflict dynamics and that responsible programming should avoid exacerbating conflict at all times and, where possible, contribute to peace. This section explores the impacts of dramatic increases in aid in Myanmar. It first outlines the scope of new aid to the country, before exploring two key ways in which aid can impact conflict—by affecting levels of confidence in peace processes, and by contributing to the establishment of institutions conducive to peace. The section then demonstrates how some aid committed to social sectors in a number of Myanmar's conflict-affected areas has had negative impacts on these processes, and ends with exploring how the provision of aid could be improved to contribute to peacebuilding.

4.1 Myanmar's new aid paradigm

Through decades of military rule and isolation from the international community, Myanmar received very little aid—in 2004 the level was 15-20 times less than most of the country's neighbours (International Development Committee 2007:16). Sanctions in the European Union (EU), United States of America (USA), Canada, and Australia restricted almost all assistance to the government, and barred international financial institutions, while even UN agencies operated under heavily-restricted mandates (ICG 2008: 12). During this period, the little aid that was provided to conflict-affected areas was channeled primarily via EAO-linked service providers and other organisations operating under their protection, with funds typically dispersed from Thailand.⁵¹ The large majority of funding to these organisations came from USA, United Kingdom (UK), and Canada as well as Norway, Sweden, and Denmark, and to a lesser degree, the EU.

In response to domestic reforms starting in 2011, international aid to Myanmar increased rapidly. Between 2011 and 2012, totals for overseas development aid from OECD-DAC members rose more than 25% from \$US 374 million to \$US 504 million. Though comprehensive data is not available, this has grown significantly since. For example, in 2013, the EU alone committed around \$US124 million (EUR 90 million) per year to be spent over the next six years,⁵² while in just the first quarter of 2014, Japan signed off on grants totaling around \$US 174.5 million to add to loans of around \$US 490 million agreed in 2013.⁵³ At the same time, allocations from most other OECD-DAC countries have continued to rise, with significant grants being committed to ceasefire areas with implicit or explicit peacebuilding aims.

Much of this has been allocated to large funding pools for development initiatives. These are in the hands of consortiums of donors rather than the government, but are ostensibly designed around development strategies put forward by the government, such as those detailed in the Nay Pyi Taw Accord. Key funds that impact the delivery of social services include the:

- Three Millennium Development Goal Fund (3MDG) of around \$US 300 million over 5 years which focuses on a) maternal, newborn, and child health; b) HIV, tuberculosis, and malaria; and c) strengthening the Ministry of Health's (MoH's) health systems capacity.⁵⁴
- Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria, which has allocated \$US 432.9 million in grants to the UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS), UNDP and Save the Children.⁵⁵

- Multi-donor Education Fund (MDEF) managed by UNICEF. The MDEF is currently in Phase II, named 'Quality Basic Education Programme' and is valued at \$US 86 million for four years, supporting formal and informal education for 0-17 year olds.⁵⁶
- Myanmar Education Consortium (MEC), which aims to spend \$US 50 million over 4 years to support non-state education actors to improve children's access to education.⁵⁷
- Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund (LIFT), a multi-hundred million dollar fund that supports livelihoods and food security.⁵⁸

Further, between 2012 and 2014, the World Bank signed off on loans of \$US 620 million to various government agencies, while in 2013 alone, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) committed \$US 642 million.⁵⁹ Small portions of these funds have been allocated to the social sectors. For example, 30% of the World Bank's commitments for Community Driven Development have been earmarked for education and healthcare, adding to around \$US 80 million it is providing to the MoE to support the decentralisation of education funding.⁶⁰

These developments represent not just significant increases in aid but also a transformation in the ways aid is committed and the assumptions that guide aid spending. Mainstream, large-scale assistance of this kind is driven by the collective strategic interests of OECD countries. This does not mean that aid is committed in relation to specific selfish aims of those countries. Rather, it means that aid is structured primarily around international norms and agendas such as reducing 'state fragility', achieving the Millennium Development Goals, or contributing to regional priorities such as economic integration and regulating migration. It also means there is an explicit emphasis on promoting the national government as the leading actor of development strategy.⁶¹

This has led to vast increases of aid going through state-sanctioned channels, often for projects implemented by government agencies, alongside notable decreases in funding for groups requiring aid to be funneled through neighbouring countries. In effect, this has amounted to a depletion of funds available to EAO-linked service providers, as many continue to rely on infrastructure and bank accounts in neighbouring countries, particularly Thailand.

Aligning with the government immediately constrains donors' conflict-sensitivity efforts, as their overt commitment to the priorities of one party is pre-determined. While for donors, the space available to normalise aid engagements in Myanmar is seen as a positive step towards a more sustainable development agenda, this is generally viewed by competing ethnic national actors as a strategic effort on the part of the international community to promote the Myanmar government's state- and nation-building visions over their own.

Donors are further constrained when engaging in subnational conflicts due to an inherent resistance to engaging with non-state armed groups (NSAGs). In the international policy guidance on peacebuilding and statebuilding, there is very little about the role of NSAGs. Where they are mentioned, the focus is usually on how to undermine them or coerce them to adapt, with very little about supporting them to play a positive role in the statebuilding process.⁶² Resistance to supporting Myanmar's EAOs increased among donors in the late 2000s, when criticism emerged over the role of the KNU and KNPP in the refugee camps in Thailand, and led to donor withdrawals.⁶³

4.2 In aid of conflict or peace

Building on guidance laid out in the World Bank's seminal contribution to peacebuilding policy, *World Development Report 2011*, The Asia Foundation has explored in detail how aid can support or undermine peaceful transitions in the subnational conflict environments of South and Southeast Asia. This analysis points to two key areas of change: 1) levels of confidence among all stakeholders in transitions from conflict to peace, and 2) the establishment of stable, legitimate institutions that make a lasting contribution to peace and stability, such as by regulating intra-elite competition or dealing directly with grievances that have driven conflict (Parks *et al.* 2013: 52-55).

The Asia Foundation framework explains that in 'fragile transitions' such as those in Myanmar today, aid should be directed to 'bolster confidence in the transition' as a priority, and to demonstrate 'clear commitments to support crucial actors, such as combatants or conflict-affected communities, during the transition.' Alongside these efforts, it argues, steps should also be taken to 'Establish and strengthen transitional institutions' and 'Promote institutional change (at the level of contestation) through supporting key governance reforms' (Parks *et al.* 2013: 54). These efforts would then move forward as the broader transition (i.e. the peace process) becomes more stable, with an emphasis on establishing or strengthening more permanent institutions that address core grievances (Parks *et al.* 2013: 54).

This basic framework can be usefully applied to social service delivery in contested areas of Myanmar. In the short term, there is a basic need to ensure that aid is supporting confidence in the peace transition and not undermining the uneasy progress being made. Further, there is potential for the gradual reform of service delivery institutions to improve relations between parties to conflict, and establish a basis for transitioning towards more permanent service delivery structures. Such structures would ideally benefit from the experience and capacities of all service providers, regulate the potential for contestation, and aim to directly address the grievances driving conflict.

4.3 Threats to confidence in the peace process

Despite its positive potential, aid is just as capable of having a deleterious impact on confidence and institutional development at all stages of a peace transition. Prior to looking at the potential for peacebuilding, key lessons can be gleaned from a review of some of the negative impacts that some aid has had, thus far, particularly on confidence in the peace process.

New projects driving local tensions

In contested areas, requests for materials or services and offers of support or benefits from one authority will often be contested by another, leading to tensions within the community, between authorities, or between community leaders and authorities. New aid coming to these areas without clear procedures in place to manage how projects are implemented in contested areas has added to such confusion and anxiety, even in cases where aid is ostensibly being committed in support of the peace process.⁶⁴

In a number of cases, target communities' first reactions to new projects have been to appeal to EAOs or their associates to ensure that they have their permission first. In other cases, community leaders had stalled decisions to approve interventions and approached the providers themselves.⁶⁵

Service providers have expressed frustration at the frequent lack of effort on the part of international actors to consult them, even in cases where they had long-established relations in place.⁶⁶

According to a group of KNLA commanders consulted in June 2013, the construction of state schools was often a cause of contestation. They admitted that, at times, they pushed back against developments of this type, even when the respective communities had accepted them. The commanders stated that during the peace process, development needed to be slowed down to allow space for political dialogue to begin, before the balance of power was shifted through development. Most importantly, as one commander said, there needed to be a clear process for negotiation of these plans, including local village committees and present armed actors.

The case of the Hpayarthonesu hospital

There are conflicting narratives about events in Hpayarthonesu Sub-Township, Kawkareik Township, concerning the construction of an internationally-funded hospital by the MoH. The area is a predominantly Buddhist region, and has been heavily contested for decades by KNU, KKO (DKBA), a BGF, and government authorities, and last saw armed conflict in 2011.

Plans for the hospital were initially discussed between government authorities and the local monastic order. This soon led to some local disputes involving the KNU, before the authorities finally announced they had gained consent from the community and that the hospital would go ahead.

Sources close to the KNU claim that the government authorities bypassed the local *Sayadaw* (head abbot), purposely working with younger and more eager monks to override the requests of community elders to stall the project, and instead gained approval through an invitation-only 'show of hands' referendum.

A source from an NGO working closely with the government on the project told a different story—that the *Sayadaw* had approved the project, but the KNU had rejected it, and the people were too scared to argue with the organisation. This source claimed that the project only became possible once the *Sayadaw* publicly criticised the KNU and they acceded.

Similar cases have been recorded across Karen areas, to add to two in Mon areas where the NMSP has had a role in governing local populations and has pushed back against government-backed projects that have not been officially approved by their organisation.⁶⁷

Such cases demonstrate most vividly how politicised aid interventions in these areas can become, and how the complex political dynamics at play can be perceived differently by different actors. The legitimacy of specific political actors or their agendas is extremely difficult for outsiders to determine. Rather, efforts must be made by donors and INGOs to ensure they are mainstreaming inclusive and transparent decision-making processes. More broadly, stand-alone programmes could be supported that bring together conflicting parties in order to determine joint processes for decision making in contested areas.

Fears of state expansion

Given the sudden increase in government support, some sceptics in these communities see such efforts merely as part of a strategy to dominate them 'by other means'.⁶⁸ Consistently, civil society actors interviewed in Kayin, Mon, Shan, and Kachin areas explained that local people felt threatened by INGOs who are being closely directed by the government.⁶⁹ As a 'Lessons Learned' review by the Myanmar Peace Support Initiative (MPSI) found in 2014, 'there is a widespread concern that assistance in conflict-affected areas could promote the government's perceived economic and political agendas.'

Overall, these developments appear to be damaging confidence among non-Burman stakeholders, particularly in Type 5 areas, as they are seen as threatening on two main levels:

1. **Immediate** – In the short term, while ceasefires remain fragile, and the state has yet to earn political legitimacy, the government is being strengthened to take control of new territories/populations and push through political agendas, while existing community or EAO structures are undermined.
2. **Systemic** – In the long term, aspirations for self-determination and greater local autonomy are being undermined as the state is dominating the discourse on development, without engaging local populations and elites.

Concerns appear particularly prevalent in contested Karen Type 5 areas, where the first ceasefire in 60 years has rapidly transformed the security environment, and foreign aid is being used by the state to secure control over territory and populations. Such issues were raised consistently in consultations held in government, mixed authority and KNU territories with civil society actors and CBO leaders; KNU officials; KNLA commanders and their education and health staff; as well as with national staff members of the INGOs themselves.⁷⁰ These developments have damaged confidence in the peace process and led to disputes between armed actors, and between armed actors and communities.

Nine sub-townships designated for extensive development are attracting a large number of NGOs, and have been linked with potential plans for refugee return, heightening local suspicions of strategic intentions.⁷¹ At the same time, local civil society organisations operating in government territories explained that they had failed to secure government permission to work in such areas.⁷²

Cases from eight townships were provided by interviewees of government attempts to encourage INGOs to enter contested areas where state administrations did not yet exist to implement projects.⁷³ INGO staff involved in these projects and civil society actors stated that they believe that the main intention of government in these cases was to open space for state administration, and then security apparatuses to follow.⁷⁴

While most rural areas are neglected, EAO strongholds are off-limits and certain contested areas appear to be inordinately prioritised by the government. National INGO staff reported that they had been given the option by the government of Kayin State to work in just a few rural areas, all of which were highly contested. One INGO staff member claimed 'the government sends us to mixed administration areas. This is mostly so we can help them spread their administration and access to territory.'⁷⁵ Another explained that as they had to be escorted by the military-run Ministry of Border Affairs 'the people were scared of us because we appeared to be working for the government.'⁷⁶

A national staff member of one INGO explained that they had been told by management that the current period ‘was mostly about building trust with the government’, indicating that ‘target communities’ needs came second.⁷⁷ Another said that the government ‘is our boss, and we are empowering them... they can limit everything we do and are also suspicious of any work with [local organisations].’⁷⁸

Government clinics are being constructed by INGOs in a number of Type 5 territories where the government has limited stable control, without consultation with EAO-linked health providers.⁷⁹ In two of these cases, a lack of local trust has led to these being rarely used by local people. In two others, they are reported to have become ‘ghost clinics’, as government staff have chosen not to stay in the area, and supplies and equipment have failed to be delivered.⁸⁰ Meanwhile, some heavily EAO-influenced areas in Myawaddy and Hlaingbwe Townships, where EAO-linked service providers have operated for decades, appear to have attracted overlapping programmes of numerous INGOs, all guided by government towards specific areas.⁸¹ One similar case was documented in a KNPP Type 5 territory in Shadaw Township, where an internationally-funded 50-bed hospital has been built but lays dormant, untrusted by local communities.⁸²

Further, since 2013, Karen and Mon national education entities have lost dozens of teachers to government schools which offer higher salaries. There have also been reports from KNU Type 5 territories of the MoE entering community schools that receive support from KSEAG and putting up government signs with no discussion. In some cases, government teachers have also arrived temporarily, but have not stayed due to language barriers and general difficulties in settling in. In two cases, it was said that local communities had been suspicious of the newcomers and not receptive to them, while in other communities, relations had developed between teachers on the ground due to the mutual benefits of cooperation.⁸³

These poorly coordinated changes have led to intra-communal disputes and have further driven fears that ceasefires are being used by the government to spread its influence prior to political negotiations.⁸⁴ More broadly, people consulted in Mon, Karen, and Shan states explained that such changes during the ceasefire period were making their endogenous societal structures weaker, and increasing their dependence on the government at a time when ceasefires would not hold. As one Karen woman explained, ‘if this is all a lie, and they attack us again next year, or even in 17 years [referring to the KIO’s 1994–2011 ceasefire], we will be even weaker, and this time we won’t survive.’⁸⁵

There are examples too from Mon, Karen, and Shan areas where aid actors’ prioritisation of cooperating with the government over other actors was highlighted as a core grievance by members of numerous EAOs, and to some represented an immediate threat to the sustainability of ceasefires.⁸⁶

As the above findings confirm, in the context of conflicts experienced in Myanmar, ‘confidence building’ will not be achieved merely by overt efforts to increase confidence in the state.⁸⁷

Much has been written elsewhere about the potential for aid to exacerbate horizontal inequities that fuel conflict (e.g. by benefiting one politically-dominant ethnic group over another).⁸⁸ When applying this logic to Myanmar, it is crucial to understand that the primary inequities driving conflict are inequities in the rights to governance roles and authority held by societal leaders. Therefore, even if

aid directed to the government is able to address inequities in access to services, it risks exacerbating those that actually drive conflicts.

4.4 Peacebuilding – building confidence in the ceasefires

While overt state expansion risks fueling contestation, international assistance that supports cooperation between the state and EAOs in aid of meeting the social needs of conflict-affected communities has the potential to signal meaningful progress towards peace. Even through times of conflict, relationships have been maintained between service providers on the ground, naturally overlapping and often harnessing rather than hindering each other's aims.

Furthermore, increasingly formal meetings have begun to take place between state and EAO-linked service providers, often instigated by the latter. In some cases, detailed strategies are being developed for engagement, often labeled as 'convergence' activities. The potential here for international aid actors to help provide near-term 'peace dividends' far outweighs that of INGO-implemented programmes.

First, active collaboration at the grassroots level can improve relations between combatants and related authorities, while communities participate and benefit from the process. This also decreases the usual anxiety experienced by communities when having to deal with multiple authorities at the constant risk of aggravating the others. It will also allow mechanisms for dispute resolution to develop between authorities that ideally can counter potential contentions before they reach the grassroots level.

Achievements of this kind were recently noted in a review of pilot projects supported by the Myanmar Peace Support Initiative, which noted that state-EAO collaboration to facilitate assistance demonstrated 'a significant symbol of ceasefires having real substance' (MPSI 2014: 11-12).

At higher levels of administration, coordination between service providers (and potentially political/armed actors from either side too) can increase confidence among parties to conflict in the peace transition. Essentially, while fears that the ceasefire and new support for social services are undermining their role in society, and thus risk diminishing confidence in the peace process, there is potential for coordination to have a positive effect. Synergy at this level too is crucial to building confidence at the community level as it mitigates the potential for disputes or confusion on the ground.

Cooperation of this kind can also directly address grievances that drive conflict, giving ceasefires more substance. For example, communities that have long persisted to provide their own funding to local service regimes (such as education actors providing mother-tongue education) will be far more encouraged by efforts of the government to legitimate and empower their existing systems, than those which effectively undermine them.

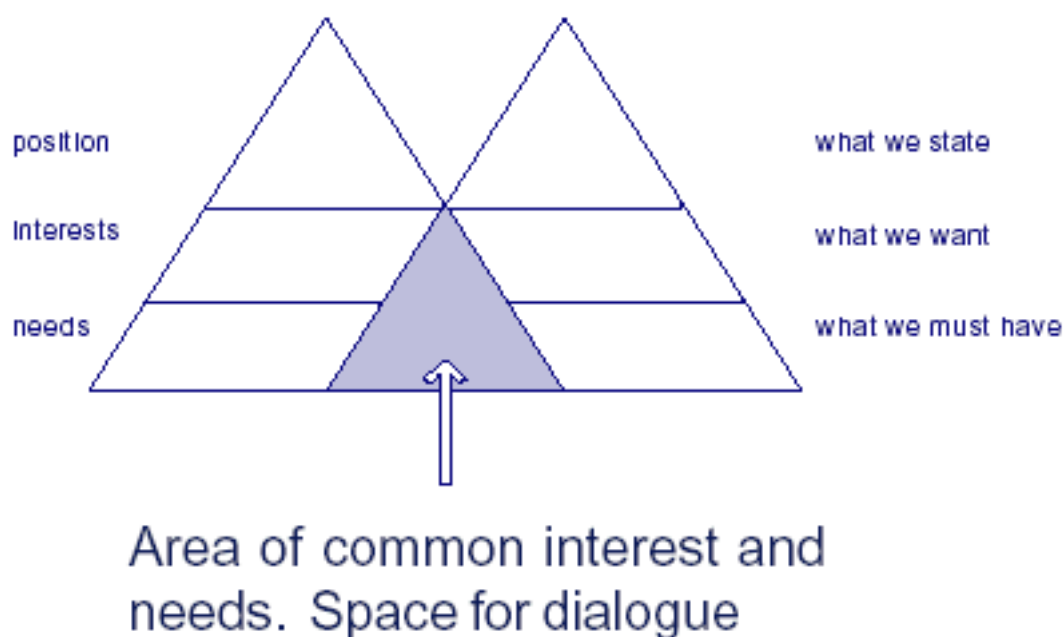
Government and international efforts to cooperate with and enhance existing social services demonstrate a clear break in the paternalisation and patronisation felt among non-Burman communities that is consistently noted as a core grievance. Recognition of the capacities of communities and their local elites to provide for themselves and self-develop would represent a

genuine step towards ethnic equality, and discourage an ethos where non-Burmans are perceived merely as clients in need of support from the Burman-dominated state.

Participation of all stakeholders is crucial to ensure conflict sensitivity and avoid unnecessary tensions and confusion at the community level. Where conflicts have persisted for generations, such norms will take time to establish. However, attempts to bypass such processes in favour of pushing projects through pose great risks to the current peace process. Even when the extent or local legitimacy of EAO-linked services is difficult to determine, donors and INGOs should be aware that where competing authorities exist, social service provision is a sensitive area of engagement.

4.5 Peacebuilding – Institutional transformation

Greater coordination and cooperation between service providers also opens space for progress towards institutional transformation. Through various policy contributions, an initiative of the World Health Organization (WHO) called, Health as a Bridge for Peace (HBP) shows the potential for health policy to support peace processes. As the diagram below shows, HBP recommends an approach where health actors focus firstly on cooperation on their base mutual needs, and then move on to areas of less crucial ‘interest’ where some overlap still exists, while maintaining separate ‘positions’ on broader issues.



A. Ackland

Source: WHO⁸⁹

While the peace transition in Myanmar remains fragile, the emphasis should be on transitional structures that enhance relations between service providers and lay the foundations for the establishment or reform of more stable long-term social institutions.⁹⁰ In line with the model above, this approach avoids the risk of pushing service delivery structures into committing to extreme transformations too quickly such as total convergence, and ensures that progress in this area does not get ahead of the peace process.

While successes so far in the peace process have hinged on their potential to eventually provide EAOs with a legitimate and stable role in the state-building process, it is crucial that aid is sequenced in such a way that it does not undermine those aims. If EAOs continue to lose influence in their localities while waiting for political dialogue to become a reality, sceptics within their ranks will further lose patience. Greater coordination among various sides that provide local EAO leaders with a stake in local governance, without relying on armed activity, should greatly decrease the likelihood of conflict.

If progress continues at the political level through the peace process, the foundations will then be in place to aid the establishment of appropriate service delivery structures. In aid of both peacebuilding and development aims, these would ideally utilise the practical capacities and experiences of all service providers to strive to:

- Provide equitable access to services in all areas, for all populations;
- Mitigate the potential for contestation and competition between providers and associated armed and political actors; and
- Support an ethos of equality among the elites of various ethnic groups.

FIVE: Lessons from the ground

There are number of examples of coordination and cooperation taking place between government and EAO-linked social service providers. Indeed, the foundations for cooperation have often remained in place even during conflict, with social services overlapping on the ground, and mutually enhancing delivery rather than hindering it. Some intentional efforts to improve coordination between service providers have strengthened the basis for collaboration. This section examines two cases—Mon national education and healthcare in contested Karen areas—to show how collaboration occurs in practice.

5.1 Case one: Mon national education

The Mon National Education (MNE) system provides education to over 13,000 students through its own Mon national schools, including 127 primary schools, twelve middle schools and three middle/high schools, which are staffed by more than 800 teachers.ⁱ Over half of these schools are in areas governed entirely by the Myanmar government while the others are in NMSP ceasefire territories (Type 3). Through arrangements with the MoE, since 1996, 311 MNE high school students have completed Basic Education Standard 10 Examinations and been awarded official high school diplomas. Most have gone on to university in Myanmar or other countries.

At the primary level, Mon is the language of instruction and Mon curriculum is used, with Burmese as a second language. So students are able to continue their education in the Union system, in which middle and high schools teach the full Burmese-language government curriculum, but with Mon often as the language of instruction. Mon literacy and history are now additional subjects in middle schools and will soon be introduced in high schools.

The MNE system trains, pays and provides curriculum for 174 teachers who teach Mon literacy and history to around 17,000 students in 105 Mon-government partnered schools or ‘mixed schools’.

Teachers and administrators in Mon national and mixed schools receive similar basic training, much of which is conducted during the summer holidays, and includes:

- 1) Child-Centred Approach (CCA) Training
- 2) Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking (RWCT) Training
- 3) English Upgrading Training
- 4) English Language Teachings Methodologies
- 5) Headmaster Training
- 6) Education Policy Training (for district, township, and central administration)
- 7) Monitoring and Evaluation Training
- 8) Organisational Development (office staff)
- 9) Child Development

ⁱ Data was collected for this case study in February 2014 through long detailed interviews with three Mon National Education Committee (MNEC) leaders and five Mon National Education Department (MNED) district administrators all from different districts. This was enhanced by interviews carried out with members of four Mon-national civil society organisations, members of five INGOs, one international humanitarian consultant and one donor, all familiar with the organisation. Unless cited otherwise, all the information here came from these interviews.

10) Detail in Subject Teaching (by UNICEF)

The MNEC also coordinates two training-of-trainer (ToT) initiatives in CCA and RWCT.

Teachers are paid Myanmar kyat (MMK) 20,000 per month during term-time and most receive further donations from target communities which range from MMK 1,000 or less, up to MMK 20,000. Following raises in government salaries in 2011, 2013 and 2014, in southeast Myanmar, MoE teacher salaries now exceed MMK 100,000 are paid in and out of term-time.⁹¹

Detailed studies of the MNE system can be found in Lall and South (2012) and Lall and South (2013), which also cover some aspects of the cooperation between the MNE and MoE.

Background

The New Mon State Party (NMSP) is the principal EAO representing the Mon and was formed in 1958 out of existing Mon nationalist armed resistance movements. In 1972, while still fighting against the socialist military government, the organisation formed MNED. In line with its nation-building aims, the department was setup to ensure children in areas governed by NMSP could gain an education, and promote Mon language, history, and culture. Bringing in some Mon education professionals with experience working in government schools and universities, the MNED essentially built on and systematised capacities already active through existing monastic systems and ad hoc community structures.

The department provided only primary and middle school education until 1992 when its first high school was established. That same year, the Mon National Education Committee (MNEC) was set up to develop policy as well as handle relations with donors and other domestic education actors. In 1995, the NMSP signed a ceasefire with Myanmar's military government, which remained more or less intact until 2012, when a new agreement was signed with the Thein Sein government.

Through war and peace

The foundations for coordination between the MNEC/MNED and MoE were established as far back as the colonial era. Mon teachers in many areas were allowed to teach Mon language and history in addition to the mainstream curriculum taught in the national Burmese language education system established by the British. This continued after independence and even during times of conflict.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, while Tatmadaw campaigns against the NMSP were at their peak, MNED supported Mon language teachers in dozens of government schools, and coordinated Mon national schools in government-controlled areas. Teachers in these schools had to travel discreetly to NMSP areas for training and supplies at significant risk.

In contested areas, Mon language teachers were often arrested or otherwise harassed for simply teaching the Mon language, and Tatmadaw raids on schools were frequent. However, even with these security obstacles, at the township level, limited relations continued between MNED and government education officials in some areas, providing space for coordination and systematisation of Mon education in government schools.

The ceasefire in 1995 brought a number of benefits for Mon education as the NMSP was provided with ceasefire territories (Type 3) that restricted Tatmadaw access, and because relations between the MNEC/MNED and local government education officials were able to develop. The main improvements in following years were:

- Greater overall safety, security and freedom of movement for Mon teachers in all areas, including being able to tell authorities on checkpoints who they work for and where they are going. However, some harassment and extortion persists.
- Formal establishment of Mon national schools in some government-controlled areas.
- Establishment of stable, stationary, and safe Mon national schools in NMSP ceasefire territories.
- Incremental formalisation of the role of Mon teachers in mixed schools.
- Admission of students at Mon national high schools into government matriculation exams.
- Greater space for Mon monastic education organisations to expand extra-curricular Mon literacy education (Lall and South 2012: 13).
- Freedom for MNEC/MNED members to travel within Myanmar and establish relationships with other civil society groups, INGOs, and donors.
- Access to more internationally-funded training opportunities.
- Permission for donors to visit the NMSP region, and some government-controlled areas to oversee and validate Mon education projects.

Thus, the ceasefire enabled strengthening of MNE, both as a system in its own right, and as a more integrated element of mainstream education. However, such changes were not just a direct impact of the ceasefire. They also depended on a history of coordination at a community level between various authorities, and religious or political actors to improve education generally.

2012-present: new opportunities, new challenges

In 2012, relations further improved following the signing of a new ceasefire between the government and NMSP, and the MNEC was able to open its first official office in Mawlamyine. Also, in recent years, the government has provided ID cards for previously-undocumented Mon children, and in townships where government and MNE relationships are strong, the government has been providing mobile phone SIM cards for teachers in Mon national schools.

Relations between individual teachers in mixed schools have improved too, despite MNED teachers typically being considered junior to their government-certified and -employed counterparts, and greater respect has boosted confidence and morale. Other positive changes include an increasing number of government schools designating Mondays and Fridays as days for students and teachers to wear Mon National dress. For reasons that are unclear, the government has offered funding of MMK 300,000 per year to some Mon National schools.

Though irregular but formal meetings have recently begun between MNEC and the Mon State Chief Minister, the strongest relations between government and MNE staff continue to exist at the township level. However, there have been no institutionalised arranged coordination meetings between township level staff, and administrators interviewed ascribed the changes primarily to their own efforts to build relations with local head masters, and at times, local government authorities. Interviewees explained that this was possible because their counterparts are Mon, and that it is

harder to build strong relationship with Burmans, who, in general, are less enthusiastic about Mon national education.

Overall, relationships between the Mon State government and NMSP-linked service providers and other Mon national civil society organisations were said to be strong. Numerous interlocutors said this was enhanced significantly by the Chief Minister's personal enthusiasm for social development in the region and recognition of the role that other actors could play. Some interlocutors also noted that this was partly because he is a Mon himself.⁹²

However, although space for coordination and cooperation has improved, there are new challenges to the MNE system. The most detrimental are a decline in funds—a direct impact of donors' new priorities. Specific challenges currently faced by the MNEC/MNED include:

- At a time when aid-based funding in Myanmar provides MNEC/MNEC with lower budgets for teachers' and administrators' salaries, those provided by the MoE have risen dramatically. As a result, MNED has lost at least 23 fully-trained Mon teachers. MNED administrators also blame these resignations on lack of official recognition for Mon national teachers.
- In a number of cases, international donors and NGOs working with government have attempted to support MNE schools too, but have been blocked by government. Also in some areas, INGOs only construct and repair government school buildings, and not Mon national schools.
- In at least six cases, government offers to repair Mon national schools have been used to attempt to convert them into MoE-supported schools, with no consultation with communities or MNEC. In one case, this took place just inside the NMSP ceasefire area, leading to a heated, ongoing dispute. In another case, when disputes arose, the government and its INGO backer built a new school in the same village tract, further fueling tensions and confusion in the community.

Independent systems to continue

For the time being, MNE actors are committed to maintaining an independent education system, and this appears mutually beneficial to maximise access to education and achieve other key benefits. Despite ongoing altercations, greater coordination and trust building between government and Mon national education actors presents clear potential to aid peace-building efforts.

The challenge going forward will be institutionalising such achievements. Improvement of relations between MNE actors and government is hampered by the absence of formal coordination at various levels of administration, and lack of official recognition for teachers and other MNED staff. Such steps could also alleviate outstanding security threats to MNE teachers, and provide space for greater coordination over staffing disputes and school construction and renovation plans.

Greater coordination and more regular discussions would likely open space for more actors on either side to see the benefits of greater coordination. In their interviews, MNED district-level administrators explained that regular meetings with their MoE counterparts would be a positive step for both immediate and long-term coordination efforts. 'This would be very good,' one administrator explained 'so we can share challenges, solve problems and learn to understand each other better.'

In April 2014, the Mon State government passed a bill to formalise the teaching of Mon language and literature in MoE schools, with Burmese as the language of instruction, for students of grades one to four. This could open opportunities for the MNE system to have a more formal role in state education in Mon State, which would benefit from their experience and the rich Mon curricula. However, in government schools where Mon has been taught as an extra-curricular subject, the MoE has shown little enthusiasm to elicit support or even guidance from the MNE.

Opinions vary within the MNEC/MNED over how the institution should approach relations with the Mon State Government. Such varying levels of enthusiasm and trust are inevitable, given the long history of the conflict, but they demonstrate that while increased coordination and collaboration are crucial, to avoid conflict, this should not move too fast.

5.2 Case two: Health Care in contested Karen-populated areas

Primary and secondary healthcare is provided in contested Karen areas by a collaborative community-based health service provision network made up of KNU's health department, the Karen Department for Health and Welfare (KDHW); the Backpack Health Worker Team (BPHWT); the Burma Medical Association (BMA), and the Mae Tao Clinic, an institution in Mae Sot, Thailand, that provides healthcare for Myanmar migrants, refugees, and others.ⁱⁱ

KDHW was founded in 1956, nine years after the KNU first took up arms against the government. BMA was formed in 1991 under the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB), and BPHWT was formed in 1998 as a formalisation of outreach primary healthcare services being provided by Mae Tao Clinic. Support offices for this network are in Thailand, through which much of their funding is filtered, and some training is carried out. In this section, the term Karen health services (KHS) is used for these services.

The main health providers are the KDHW, which oversees 49 village tract health centres (VTHC) and over 1,000 health workers in KNU Type 5 areas,⁹³ and BPHWT, which provides over 50 mobile backpack teams and over 360 staff to Karen areas across the region.⁹⁴ KDHW's VTHCs were until recently set up as 'mobile health clinics', designed to provide outreach healthcare in fragile and underdeveloped areas, and able to change locations when villages were displaced. The VTHCs also support outreach to villages surrounding a clinic's location. Based on similar principles, the KNLA's medical branch also provides four civilian-targeted clinics near the Thai-Myanmar border.

Six BMA-supported clinics are provided in KKO (DKBA) Type 5 areas, two explicitly by the DKBA and four more that have been run by associated networks since before 1995 when the organisation split from the KNU/KNLA. Similarly, two such clinics have been maintained by the former Karen Peace Force (KPF), another splinter group that has since become a BGF and holds Type 2 territory in Kayah State. One other BGF, spawned from the DKBA, provides a clinic in central Karen State. A further five clinics are provided by the KNU/KNLA-PC in its Type 3 ceasefire area, with support from BMA. While

ⁱⁱ For this case study, long and detailed interviews were carried out with managers of the service providers; staff from one supporting local NGO; four of their INGO partners; and one of their donors. This was supplemented by the author's experience; data gathered from visiting health facilities in KNU and KKO (DKBA) areas on numerous occasions; and interviews with health staff and KNU leaders. Unless cited otherwise, all the information here came from these interviews.

this case study does not examine the role of these groups specifically, the benefits of greater coordination and cooperation between the health actors discussed would likely apply to these structures too.

Prior to the KNU ceasefire in 2012, KHS staff operated under severe security conditions, not only because of the armed conflicts, but also because of specific threats from the state as they were viewed as illicit health professionals. As recently as November 2011, two backpack medics were arrested while attending to a patient in northern Karen State, and were only released following the signing of the ceasefire. Further, between 1998 and 2010, BPHWT report that nine backpack medics and one birth attendant were killed by gunfire or landmines.⁹⁵ As a result of these conditions, there was no cooperation or even contact between KHS and MoH until very recently.

Steps towards greater coordination

The foundations for convergence of KHS with other structures were established in 2007, with the formation of the Health Information System Working Group (HISWG). This brought together ethnic health organisations (departments of EAOs), and associated independent local NGOs, to begin coordinating their activities and improving health information systems through population-based surveys, health data mapping, and the standardisation of various terms, documentation methods, and indicators. Member organisations view this as a stepping-stone towards a ‘federal health system’.⁹⁶

Following the inauguration of the Thein Sein government and subsequent ceasefires in 2011 and 2012, HISWG members began discussing ways to engage with government. KHS actors see such engagement as necessary to become proactive agents in the progression of the region’s fast developing health sector, in light of the new space opened up by the ceasefire.

Moves were tentative at first, as KNU policy barred new development and aid strategies until political dialogue had begun and a political solution to conflict was within reach. However, this policy has not been upheld by the organisation in practice and as the government pushed ahead with national and regional development strategies, KHS actors recognised that they had to engage the Ministry of Health (MoH) if they wanted to become stakeholders in the progression of health services in the region and gain official recognition.

In 2012, HISWG formed the Health Convergence Core Group (HCCG) bringing four ethnic health organisations, and four local NGOs together to formulate a strategy for increasing coordination and cooperation with the MoH.⁹⁷ The group has developed a framework for engaging the MoH to develop ‘[h]ealth programming and policy [that compliments and supports] the federal aspirations of the ethnic peoples throughout the peace process.’⁹⁸

As of May 2014, KHS actors have had nine state-level meetings and one Union-level meeting with the MoH. These efforts were initiated by KHS actors but have been facilitated to some extent by the International Rescue Committee (IRC).⁹⁹

These engagements have been enhanced through health seminars convened by KHS actors in Thailand. Two in 2012 and 2013 were attended by ethnic health organisations, and associated LNGOs and NGOs from urban areas of Myanmar, opening discussions around ‘convergence’. On April 31st –

May 1st 2014, a seminar bannered as 'Health as a Bridge for Peace' was held by KHS actors and their technical partners on the Thailand-Myanmar border. The event was attended by 96 participants including MoH Kayin State Department officials and others from central Myanmar such as the NLD Health Network, Myanmar Medical Association, and Myanmar Health Assistance Association.¹⁰⁰

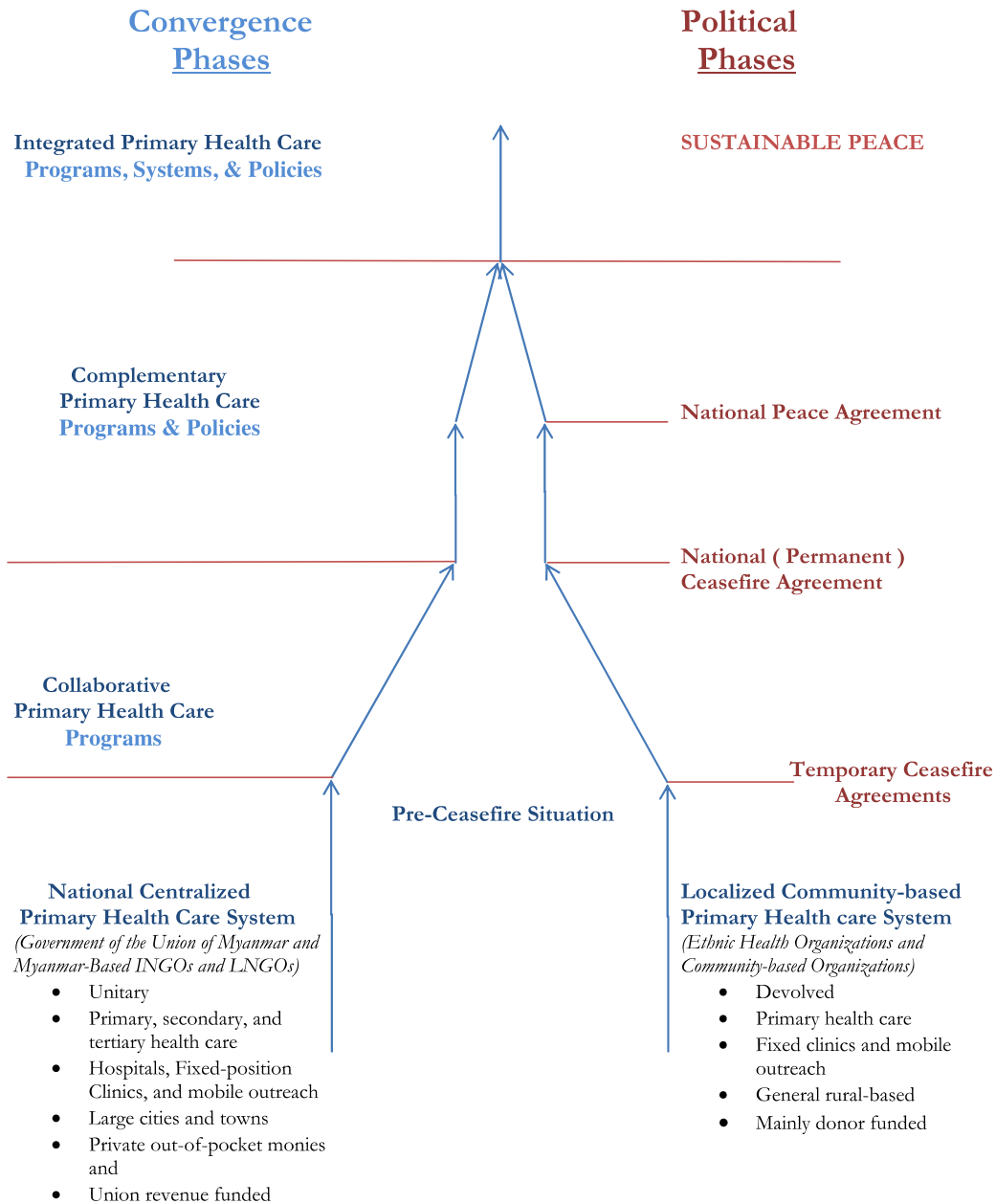
Interviewees for this study considered the Union-level meeting with the Deputy Minister of Health to be a big breakthrough towards achieving greater coordination. While no big decisions were made, given the highly centralised nature of the ministry, the Deputy Minister's endorsement opened much greater space for coordination at the state level. This also boosted the confidence of INGOs and donors to openly support coordination and cooperation between EAO-linked service providers and the state.

The HCCG has outlined policy for engagement that would see them maintaining, for the time being, a health system that is fully independent of the MoH, and making steps towards convergence only in line with political progress. This is for both practical as much as political reasons, as ceasefire areas remain hard for external actors to reach due to lack of roads, landmines, and complex governance systems. Further, health providers must have local knowledge, contacts, languages, relevant experience, and much dedication. Therefore, the KHS are committed to maintaining, strengthening and expanding existing structures that train locally-selected individuals to provide primary health care in their own communities. Further, as long as ceasefires remain fragile, KHS actors are wary that conflict could resume, rendering any dependence on government as too risky.

More broadly, KHS actors aim to only support total integration with the MoH if the healthcare system is greatly decentralised, and 'federal' in nature, so that healthcare policy, management, and practice is placed in the hands of local governments. Having provided healthcare in their respective areas for decades, with the state often an obstacle to improving services, a long process of trust building will be necessary before a single health system becomes possible.

As the HCCG convergence diagram in the below figure demonstrates, prior to signing a comprehensive nationwide ceasefire, the group envisions cooperation with government being limited to 'collaborative primary health care', which they define primarily as information sharing and discussion of their needs at the program level. While this has helped develop a broad direction for engagement among HCCG members, they have also taken steps as individual organisations to collaborate with the government, depending on their needs and priorities.

Health Convergence Core Group (HCCG)
Primary Health Care Convergence Model for Burma/Myanmar
Draft – March 2014



So far, there are seven main areas of cooperation:

1. Establishment of a KDHW coordination office in Hpa'an;
2. Greater freedom for KHS provision in areas of mixed or government authority;
3. Sharing of information on numerous areas of mutual interest, such as malaria control;
4. Project design and proposal submission for a joint MoH/KDHW immunisation programme;
5. Discussion of extending and enhancing KHS Maternal and Newborn Health Care;
6. Discussion on standardising health information systems; and

7. Steps towards official recognition of KDHW and BPHWT staff, and more tentative steps towards standardising certification and accreditation.

As well as reduced threats to staff security, some of the most practical achievements concern recognising and accrediting KHS professionals. KHS actors consider this area of coordination important so staff are no longer at risk of arrest, and are recognised as equals to MoH healthcare professionals. It is also seen as an early step towards convergence, and a joint approach toward healthcare development in Karen areas. According to KDHW's Chairman, Eh Kalu Shwe Oo:

[Gaining recognition] is important to feel that we are equals. Both sides have to recognise each other. If [staff from either system] work in the same areas, it is important they feel the same and are seen as equals.

Steps in this direction have been taken with the support of IRC, which has helped to form a partnership between ethnic health organisations, Myanmar's University of Community Health (UCH), and Thammasat University in Thailand. Through this partnership, KDHW and BPHWT 'community health workers' should soon be able to take UCH courses to earn a Thammasat University Certificate of Public Health. Discussions are underway too for providing training to EAO-linked health staff alongside MoH staff in Hpa'an.

According to some KHS members, the UCH training material system seems highly medicine-focused, centering on the biological sciences and patients as individuals. The approach to primary health care developed in conflict-affected contexts by KHS actors is felt to be more hands on and direct. Decisions to prioritise earning MoH accreditation are therefore seen to potentially involve a trade-off of immediate practical benefits in favour of more long-term convergence aims.

However, KHS actors claim that they have in the past hired staff with government-training, and thus feel the technical difficulties shouldn't be insurmountable. One step in this direction is a pilot project to accredit BPHWT auxiliary midwives based on their existing training and experience, which will not require them to retrain.

Similar deliberations are made over broader structural issues, particularly related to the new aid environment. The KHS approach to primary healthcare has long taken a horizontal programming approach, based on the range of healthcare needs of the community. International aid committed to vertical programmes targeting specific diseases, therefore has limited compatibility with the established systems and practices.

While steps towards greater coordination are seen as important, KHS actors emphasised that the priority has to remain on ensuring 'that the result maintains or increases skills and quality of care'.¹⁰¹

Challenges to improved relations

Despite the evolving relationship between KHS actors and the MoH, the latter's development strategies, backed by international donors and INGOs, appear to be moving ahead, with little space for KHS' inputs. While top-down health systems strategies are developed without KHS at the table, MoH expansion on the ground has been noted in numerous contested areas despite causing tensions on the ground (see Section 4.3). While steps towards convergence are significant milestones, given

the political climate, if the state continues to expand rapidly, it could present a number of risks to peacebuilding.

KHS actors noted that they had not been invited to a number of key meetings convened by international aid actors on health development strategies for their areas, including 'convergence', and this has fueled feelings of disenfranchisement. Although the topic has been raised by KHS actors in talks with government, these have yet to lead to a solution, and demonstrate a key area for improvement. Despite gains being made elsewhere, these concerns have reduced KHS actors' confidence in the transition.

The case of health coordination in Kayah

While a full case study was not carried out, positive lessons can be learned from the mutual benefits being experienced through collaboration between state and EAO-linked service providers in Kayah State. There, a joint programme has been underway since November 2013 by the MoH and a consortium of the health wings of six EAOs called Civil Health and Development Network (CHDN).

The project supports a team of ten or more MoH and CHDN health staff to provide seven villages with immunisations and basic healthcare. Operating on a monthly cycle, this involves walks of 2-4 days to reach each village. While CHDN is best placed to mobilise the community and knows the terrain, MoH health staff are able to provide healthcare of a quality that few people in remote areas have ever accessed. IRC is supporting the programme in six of the seven villages, and explained that there are plans afoot to expand the programme.

According to the IRC, both partners have reported significant impacts in the building of confidence in the peace process, both among their staff and the communities. The programme was also said to have doubled the numbers of children being vaccinated and people accessing healthcare. In particular, communities reported that they were no longer apprehensive in approaching government staff, as they had been in the past.

Significant steps have also been taken in Kayah State towards accreditation of EAO-linked health staff, including a MoH certification programme in Loikaw.

Despite these extremely positive signs, CHDN remain committed to maintaining an independent healthcare system and are seeking funding for beyond 2015. The benefits of increased collaboration are great, and provide the foundations for what could lead to greater integration as the transition moves forward. Being able to enjoy these benefits without the need for irreversible institutional changes is crucial to sustaining the momentum of peacebuilding through such activities.

SIX: Lessons learned and implications

This section explores the implications of the findings detailed in Section 5. It first provides advice on how service providers can develop stronger relations in aid of improving services and building peace. This section also includes broad ideas on how relations between service providers can be structured to contribute to confidence building and institutional transformation. It then looks at the ways that international aid actors can contribute to this process.

6.1 Considerations for national service providers

Establishing the foundations for coordination

Well-established social service structures linked to EAOs will likely continue to operate independently for the foreseeable future, as so many of their long-term aims, institutional characteristics, and priorities remain out of sync with those of the state. However, the mutual aims held by state and EAO-linked service providers have allowed mutual goals to be established at the grassroots and institutional levels. Relations have also been strengthened by a common will to take steps towards greater coordination and cooperation.

The long-term aims of EAO-linked and state service providers continue to differ greatly. For example, the government's apparent commitment to the 2008 Constitution remains incompatible with EAO-linked providers' desire for decentralised service delivery institutions. Such incompatibilities should not be seen as obstacles, nor should they be brushed aside.

In the near term, where efforts are being made to find common ground for cooperation, confidence will be achieved if providers are able to experience the immediate benefits of building relations, while still having the space to remain committed to their individual long-term aims.

While political disputes between the government and EAOs continue, service providers from both sides will benefit from carefully sequencing their activities in line with the stages of the peace process. For example, if negotiations over military codes of conduct are successful, there will likely be greater space for service providers to collaborate on the ground. Also, if a nationwide political dialogue begins, it could be enhanced by multilateral discussions between service providers on how institutions could be reformed. Trying to implement such activities at the wrong stage would hamper their success and could disrupt the peace process itself.

Furthermore, if service providers are seen to be disrupting the political agendas of their related institutions, they could garner resistance from their leaders. It is crucial that institutions evolve in ways and at a speed that fits with progress on the peace talks, and, more broadly with future changes to governance structures. Progress on coordination around service delivery will only be sustainable if it develops in sync with progress on finding solutions to other political issues.

The development of clear and transparent strategies such as those put forward by the HCCG, or others proposed by Karen and Karenni education actors,¹⁰² provide a good basis for structuring service providers' collaboration in synchronisation with progress being made through the peace process. Where relations are strong enough, EAO-linked and state service providers might benefit from agreeing on basic objectives to work towards at different stages of the peace process.

Importantly, steps towards cooperation should build on existing capacities and processes. This should include looking for instances where service providers already maintain channels of communication or even jointly coordinate activities on the ground. For example, in most areas, relationships exist between EAO-linked MoE school systems that could be formalised and built on more systematically.

Confidence building: mitigating tensions between service providers

In the near-term, a number of outstanding obstacles to confidence building remain that could potentially be addressed through negotiations between service providers and their associated authorities. If managed well, progress on the obstacles below could instead demonstrate meaningful change and contribute to confidence building, both within communities and among parties to the conflict. These are:

- Staff of EAO-linked service providers, as well as non-affiliated civil society actors, continue to face security threats in some areas through surveillance, harassment, and demands for bribes by state security forces.
- Development strategies are being pursued in some areas by government—at times with donor and INGO backing—that ignore existing service providers, including those linked to EAOs. Such exclusion holds back progress towards development targets in EAO territories, and represents a core grievance of EAOs, and thus a threat to the peace process.
- Projects are being implemented in contested areas without validation by all stakeholders, and are thus leading to disputes. While claims to authority over such decisions will be forever debated, in the short term, joint decision-making mechanisms should be established to avoid conflicts and confusion.
- There are also ongoing disputes and sources of broader tension that require mechanisms to address them. For example, the mass transfers of staff from EAO-linked education entities to the better-paying MoE needs to be discussed and solved bilaterally, before this becomes a flashpoint for renewed conflict.

Institutionalising relations

Over time, steps should be taken to formalise and institutionalise relationships and set up forums for discussion among all relevant service providers. Although informal discussions are often a natural first step towards relationship building and play an important role, loose understandings between individuals are not sustainable. Regular discussions are key to developing trust, as is the formalisation of agreements in writing.

While Myanmar's ministries remain as centralised as they are, engagement between EAO-linked service providers and Union-level officials is critical for opening up space for meaningful local-level coordination and cooperation. Where Union-level staff have given their blessings, state and region authorities have gained significantly greater confidence in working with EAO-linked providers. However, cooperation on the ground will also benefit from building strong relations at lower levels. For example, awareness trainings to improve teacher-to-teacher relations would contribute to synergies at that level, building trust and establishing foundations for increased cooperation.

As relations develop and space opens for closer negotiations, some potential areas for collaboration might include:

- **Establishing processes for joint policy making.** The types of policies vary from sector to sector, but could include a joint policy for encouraging child-centred learning at the primary level, or on approaches to tackling malaria (e.g. eradication vs control).
- **Establishing mechanisms for official recognition of EAO-linked staff.** Standardising certification and accreditation systems is the most obvious aim here, but other options should be explored as long as practical obstacles remain. Accreditation for EAO-linked service provider staff that recognises their previous experience and training, rather than requiring them to undergo extensive new training, would be particularly beneficial to trust-building and save time and resources too.
- **Actively seeking out mutual aims in order to initiate joint state/EAO-linked pilot projects.** In some cases, ground-level staff might be more in tune with mutual aims as they are involved in everyday operations. Implementing joint activities on the ground has significant potential to contribute to confidence building within communities. There may also be mutual aims to achieve that do not directly concern service delivery (e.g. identity card distribution).
- **Standardisation of terminology and systems, and sharing location information.** This could be a key first step towards greater collaboration on policy and implementation.
- **Development of joint training programmes, structured so that service providers benefit from their counterparts' experience and skills.**¹⁰³

While the peace transition remains fragile and coordination activities are in their early stages, there is a need for transitional institutions that are mandated to monitor and build on progress towards greater cooperation. The HCCG is a good example of such an institution among EAO-linked providers, setup to develop workable, long-term social service delivery strategies in areas with multiple providers.

Where there is enthusiasm among all stakeholders, more formal bilateral or multilateral committees could be established by government and EAO-linked providers to convene at regular intervals, develop joint positions and policies, and reflect on progress.

Each region/state government has a health committee that convenes once a month to support health strategy, and may have similar ones for social sectors. These forums should explore options for the participation of EAO-linked actors too. In areas where hundreds of thousands of people depend on these services, EAO-linked providers' contributions to developing coherent and sustainable development strategies will be invaluable. Government structures developed to coordinate with other types of non-state service providers could be utilised too.

More general lessons for this kind of institutional cooperation could be learned from existing initiatives aimed at greater coordination among EAO-linked service providers. Institutions such as HISWG, the Eastern Burma Community Schooling Project (EBCSP) and the Myanmar Indigenous Network for Education (MINE) have experience in bringing together diverse entities to standardise terminology, learn from each other's approaches to service delivery, coordinate policies and activities, and mitigate potential for overlap or competition among providers.

Looking ahead to institutional reform

As bilateral ceasefires have opened space for two-way talks between service providers, the achievement of a nationwide ceasefire accord could allow formal multilateral engagement between providers from around the country. If progress is made at the political level towards broader reforms, such collaboration will be key to addressing national-level social policy issues. This would ideally lay a basis for establishing permanent social service institutions that are able to:

- Provide equitable access to services in all areas for all populations;
- Mitigate the potential for contestation and competition between providers and associated armed and political actors; and
- Establish an ethos of equality among elites of various ethnic groups.

The establishment of such institutions would likely involve increased integration of service delivery, or even convergence of delivery systems, in the event that political developments make this appropriate. However, the particular ways in which this would take place depend primarily on the nature of the political settlement and other aspects of the country's broader transition, so institutional forms should not be pre-supposed.

6.2 Guidance for aid actors

Tangibly improving access to services in ways that also enhance relations between parties to conflict can contribute to peacebuilding in Myanmar's contested regions. This final section outlines some suggestions for how aid actors could commit peacebuilding resources to support such efforts, and structure broader service delivery assistance around these aims.

Conflict sensitivity

At a minimum, an awareness of the sensitivities outlined in this study need to be reflected in the design choices and implementation practices of aid programmes. This applies not only to ostensible peacebuilding programmes, but also to those aimed at bolstering 'development' and improving services. Developing sets of principles that guide how aid functions in contested areas, and against which aid practices can be measured, would be a useful starting point.

All social service delivery projects in contested areas have an impact on confidence in the peace process—either positive or negative. In regions where ceasefires have allowed greater space for aid interventions, the impacts of new programmes will be seen by local stakeholders as a direct result of those ceasefires. Where aid improves service delivery, while strengthening relationships between state and non-state structures and elites, confidence in the peace process can be improved. In contrast, where aid causes local tensions or confusion, or is seen to solely support the state, confidence in ceasefires is diminished. Thus, understanding how to deploy aid in conflict sensitive ways is key.

The impact on confidence building is particularly strong at the local level where projects are being implemented in contested areas. Therefore, where a state school or clinic is to be constructed by an INGO, for example, consultations with all authorities and communities should be ensured as a first step. In communities where EAO-linked service providers have provided support for decades, they

should be consulted in advance, and communities should be ensured that the programme has been approved by all authorities. International aid actors should take steps to develop mechanisms for handling such processes, particularly in Type 5 areas, where tensions remain high and there is little clarity over which actors have authority over which territories or populations. The aim here should be to deal with potential conflicts before they reach the 'ground level' and cause tensions and confusion.

Meetings related to long-term strategies for service delivery systems affecting contested areas should ensure that all existing service providers are at the table, including those linked to EAOs. Where international agencies are working with local governments in conflict-affected regions or states to establish development plans, they should take some responsibility to make sure this is being done. This is crucial to both maintaining confidence among all stakeholders, and to helping institutions to develop in a manner that contributes to peace in the long term.

Large aid commitments aimed at strengthening service delivery systems have an unavoidable, transformative impact on institutions nationally. Safeguards and specific considerations must be made early on to ensure that aid is not helping institutions to evolve in ways that are detrimental to the achievement of peace and stability. As there appears to be potential for the peace process to lead to a negotiated solution to conflict, and potentially involve governance and other political reforms, space for such reforms needs to be reflected in the evolutionary processes of social service institutions. This requires a broad awareness of how aid is affecting the evolution of these institutions at the macro-level to ensure that they will remain compatible if political negotiations lead to greater decentralisation of related sectors.

This will require aid actors to question some of their core assumptions about approaches to conflict-affected and fragile states and regions. In particular, this relates to concepts of 'national ownership' and 'alignment' with the Myanmar government's priorities. In contested environments, approaches need to expand these concepts beyond government ownership to ensure that strategies are inclusive of the most locally-legitimate political actors, as well as a stronger-than-usual emphasis on the priorities of communities themselves.

Increase aid to EAO-linked services in the near term

In the short run, bypassing existent EAO-linked service providers risks reducing the confidence of ethnic elites and communities in the peace process. In contrast, increasing support to such providers, would boost confidence considerably. EAO-linked providers remain the only entities able to provide critical services to hundreds of thousands of conflict-affected civilians. If they continue to struggle to secure adequate funding, all other confidence-building efforts will be deeply undermined.

Aid commitments to Myanmar over the decades have helped establish EAO-linked service providers as the mainstay of support to millions of people. Many donors are enthusiastic about the normalisation of aid relations with the government, and the clear benefits that this could provide to the country at large. At the same time, if support to the state comes at the expense of support to EAO-linked service providers, it risks strengthening fears that the peace process serves primarily to make the government stronger, while generally weakening EAO- and non-Burman societal structures.

In particular, as donor funds have depleted, EAO-linked providers have lost staff (in many cases, directly to the higher-paying government). In addition to the damage done to service provision, this has added to local tensions and increased scepticism among communities and EAOs regarding the benefits of ceasefires.

During the transition period, options for funding the core functions and programme activities of providers should be explored, and should remain adaptable so that support can be sustained if there is a return to conflict.

In relation to southeast Myanmar and southern Shan State, there appears to be a growing understanding among the Myanmar and Thai governments that assistance to border areas via Thailand needs to continue.¹⁰⁴ Potential appears to exist for multi-partite negotiations, including those involving these governments, EAO-linked service providers, and international donors, to establish a more stable and transparent framework for allocating funding.

More generally, donors should cooperate to develop a coherent and sophisticated approach to working with EAOs that ensures a level of consistency and aims to establish modes of best practice. Due to the lack of global policy guidance, the perception of risk around such engagements is amplified significantly, despite the reality that numerous mainstream donors have supported EAO-linked networks for decades. A reconceptualisation of relations with EAOs that accepts them as important actors but pays due attention to the risks associated with overly boosting their legitimacy, as well as fiduciary concerns, would provide a basis for establishing safeguards against these dangers.

Enhance relations between state and EAO-linked service providers

The report has shown how collaboration already occurs in some areas between state and EAO-linked service providers. Increasing support for the improvement of coordination and cooperation between state and EAO-linked service providers would substantively contribute to peacebuilding. Progress in this area would demonstrate a tangible 'peace dividend' for communities in contested areas, boost confidence in the peace process among political actors, address some ethnic grievances, and set the foundations for institutional reform in line with the peace process.

Aid agencies can collaborate with state providers, EAO-linked providers, or both, to develop specific 'cooperative' or 'convergence' programme objectives that specifically aim to build confidence and/or help to develop institutions that contribute to peace and stability. These objectives can be *integrated* into sectoral programmes, by including specific components dedicated to 'cooperation' or 'convergence'; they can also be used to develop *stand-alone* projects geared directly towards these aims. While, the term 'convergence' is often being used for these activities, different stakeholders might have different perceptions of what that means, or pre-determines. Therefore, in some cases, 'cooperation' might be a more useful label.

While ceasefires in Myanmar remain fragile, and progress towards a more comprehensive settlement is slow, the key focus of such activities should be on *confidence building* among communities, parties to conflict, and their associated service providers. Programmes *integrating* these objectives include, for example, immunisation programmes that ensure that implementation in contested areas is being carried out through partnerships between MoH and EAO-linked health providers. An example of a *stand-alone* project that aims to build confidence could be a seminar on the future of mother-tongue

education hosted by the MoE or EAO-linked education providers, with speakers and attendants from all service providers in the region.

Objectives contributing to institutional reform could also be *integrated* into sectoral programmes or used to develop *stand-alone* projects. An example of *integration* could be for international agencies training MoE staff to include training components on awareness of other providers, and the need to stimulate free discussion around their potentially-valuable role in developing the education sector. One example of a *stand-alone project* aimed at institutional reform is an ongoing programme that funds and provides technical inputs for discussions between state and EAO-linked service providers.

With all programmes aimed at these objectives, aid actors must be aware that what sometimes seem to outsiders as small steps, such as initial informal discussions between state and EAO-linked providers, are likely to feel like daunting leaps for local actors, given the long history of conflict and related negative attitudes and fears.¹⁰⁵

Type	Example	
	<i>Confidence building</i>	<i>Institutional reform</i>
<i>Integration of components aimed at 'convergence'/'cooperation'</i>	An immunisation programme that jointly partners with MoH and the health department of an EAO, and evaluates how relations have improved.	Training initiative with MoE staff that includes a segment on awareness of other providers and stimulates discussion around their potential role in the development of the education sector.
<i>Stand-alone projects aimed entirely at 'convergence'/'cooperation'</i>	Supporting EAO-linked education providers or MoE to hold a seminar on the future of mother-tongue education, inviting speakers and attendants from all service providers (national or regional).	A programme that funds and provides technical input for negotiations between service providers that links different parties to conflict, and identifies options for eventual joint programming.

Work to be done

All of these options require a deeper understanding of conflict and power dynamics in the contested regions, the role service delivery plays in shaping these, and how aid programmes interact with local realities. As such, there is a need for more *on-the-ground research* and monitoring aimed at understanding risks, opportunities, and monitoring progress. There is need also to find ways to further *draw on local knowledge*. For this, hiring local staff can be important, as can the benefits of consulting widely.¹⁰⁶

Effective monitoring should aim to track:

- Levels of confidence among all stakeholders
- Who is benefiting politically
- How institutions are developing
- The status of conflict in relevant localities

- How these factors are interacting, for better or worse

This paper has provided some initial ideas on issues around service delivery in Myanmar's contested areas and how aid actors can best use their programming in the social sectors to contribute to peace. Working out how this can be done in practice requires more research, analysis and reflection and will depend primarily on sustained efforts to work with service providers to understand the steps already being taken towards greater cooperation in contested areas and how they can be enhanced.

Bibliography

Anderson, Mary B. (1999), *Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace – or War* (London: Lynne Reiner)

Backpack Health Worker Team – BPHWT (2013), 'Provision of Primary Healthcare among the Internally Displaced Persons and Vulnerable Populations of Burma: Mid-year report 2013'; available at: <http://www.backpackteam.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/BPHWT-2013-Mid-Year-Report.pdf>

Burma Medical Association – BMA (2012), 'Annual Report – 2012'; available at: <http://www.bmahealth.org/2013/06/18/bma-annual-report-2012/>

Callahan, M. (2007), 'Political Authority in Burma's Ethnic Minority States: Devolution, Occupation and Coexistence' (Washington DC: East West Center)

Chandler, David (2012), '*Resilience and human security: The post-interventionist paradigm*' *Security Dialogue* June 2012 vol. 43 no. 3 pp. 213-229

Chesterman, Simon; Ignatieff, Michael; and Thakur, Ramesh (July 2004), '*MAKING STATES WORK: From State Failure to State-Building*', International Peace Academy of the United Nations University; available at: <http://www.ipacademy.org/publication/policy-papers/detail/140-making-states-work-from-state-failure-to-state-building.html>

Dudouet, Véronique; Giessmann, Hans J. and Planta, Katrin (2012) '*From Combatants to Peacebuilders*', Berghof Foundation; available at: www.berghof-conflictresearch.org/.../Policy_Paper_dudouetetal.pdf

Egreteau, Renaud and Jagan, Larry (2013), '*Soldiers and Diplomacy in Burma: Understanding the Foreign Relations of the Burmese Praetorian State*' (Singapore: NUS Press)

Grävingholt, Jörn; Hofmann, Claudia; Klingebiel, Stephan (2007), '*Development Cooperation and Non-State Armed Groups*', German Development Institute – DIE; available at: www.die-gdi.de/uploads/media/Studies_29.pdf

Guelke, Adrian (2003), 'Negotiations and Peace Processes', in Darby, John and Macginty, Roger (Eds.) *Contemporary Peace Making: Conflict, Violence, and Peace Processes* (Gordonsville: Palgrave Macmillan)

Hoffman, Claudia and Schneckener, Ulrich (2011), '*Engaging non-state armed actors in state- and peace-building: options and strategies*', *International Review of the Red Cross*, Vol. 93 No. 883; available at: <http://www.icrc.org/eng/assets/files/review/2011/irrc-883-schneckener.pdf>

Horstmann, Alexander (2010), 'Confinement and Mobility: Transnational Ties and Religious Networking among Baptist Karen at the Thailand-Burma Border; Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, MMG Working Paper 10-16; available at: <http://asiafoundation.org/resources/pdfs/ContestedCornersOfAsia.pdfs>
http://www.mmg.mpg.de/fileadmin/user_upload/documents/wp/WP_10-16_Horstmann_Confinement-and-Mobility.pdf

Igboemeka, Adaeze (2005) '*Aid Effectiveness in Burma/Myanmar: Study on Development Agency Perceptions*', A study commissioned by the UK Department for International Development; available at: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+www.dfid.gov.uk/mdg/aid-effectiveness/newsletters/burma-report.pdf>

International Development Committee (2007), *'DFID Assistance to Burmese Internally Displaced People and Refugees on the Thai- Burma Border'*; available at:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmselect/cmintdev/645/645i.pdf>

International Crisis Group – ICG (2008), *'Burma/Myanmar after Nargis: Time to Normalise Aid Relations'*;

available at: http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-east-asia/burma-myanmar/161_burma_myanmar_after_nargis_time_to_normalise_aid_relations.pdf

Jolliffe, Kim (2011), *'Dilemmas of Burma in Transition'*. Forced Migration Review

Jolliffe (2014), *'Ceasefires and durable solutions in Myanmar: a lessons learned review'*, UNHCR PDES New Issues in Refugee Research, Research Paper #271; available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/533927c39.pdf>

Karen Human Rights Group – KHRG (2014), *'Truce or Transition: Trends in Human Rights Abuse and Local Response in Southeast Myanmar Since the 2012 Ceasefire'*; available at:

<http://www.khrg.org/2014/05/truce-or-transition-trends-human-rights-abuse-and-local-response>

Keenan, Paul (2012), *By Force of Arms: Armed Groups in Burma*, (Chiang Mai: ENC Press)

Lall, Marie and South, Ashley (2012), *'Education, Conflict and Identity: Non-State Ethnic Education Regimes in Burma'*; available at: [http://www.ashleysouth.co.uk/files/Non-state Education in Burma-Myanmar - full.pdf](http://www.ashleysouth.co.uk/files/Non-state_Education_in_Burma-Myanmar_-_full.pdf)

Lall, Marie and South, Ashley (2013), *'Comparing Models of Non-state Ethnic Education in Myanmar: The Mon and Karen National Education Regimes'*, *Journal of Contemporary Asia*

Lanjouw, Stevel and Aye, New Nwe (2013), *'SDC Health Assessment in Southeast Region of Myanmar'*, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation Office (SDC)

Lim, Andrew George; Stock, Lawrence; Eh Kalu Shwe Oo; Jutte, Douglas P. (2013), *'Trauma and mental health of medics in eastern Myanmar's conflict zones: a cross-sectional and mixed methods investigation'*, *Conflict and Health*, Vol. 7 No. 15; available at: <http://www.conflictandhealth.com/content/7/1/15>

Mallet, David and Slater, Rachel (2012), *'Social protection and basic services in fragile and conflict-affected situations'*, briefing paper, Secure Livelihoods and Research Consortium of the Overseas Development Institute; available at:

http://securelivelihoods.org/publications_details.aspx?resourceid=146

Maung Aung Myoe (2009), *Building the Tatmadaw: Myanmar Armed Forces Since 1948*, (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies)

McConnachie, Kirsten (2012) *'Rethinking the 'Refugee Warrior': The Karen National Union and Refugee Protection on the Thai–Burma Border'*, *Journal of Human Rights Practice* Vol 4, No.1 pp. 30–56

Myanmar Ministry for Planning and Economic Development - MMPED (2013), *'Nay Pyi Taw Accord for Effective Development Cooperation'*; available at:

https://www.mnped.gov.mm/images/stories/pdf_file/FERD/nay%20pyi%20taw%20accord%20for%20effective%20development%20cooperation.pdf

Myanmar Peace Support Initiative – MPSI (2014), *'Lessons Learned from MPSI's work supporting the peace process in Myanmar'*; available at:

<http://www.peacedonorsupportgroup.com/mpsi-lessons-and-reflections.html>

Nixon, Hamish; Joelene, Cindy; Kyi Par Chit Saw; Thet Aung Linn; and Arnold, Matthew (2013), 'State and Region Governments in Myanmar', The Asia Foundation; available at:
<http://asiafoundation.org/resources/pdfs/StateandRegionGovernmentsinMyanmarCESDTAF.PDF>

Norwegian Church Aid – NCA (2012), '*Do no Harm: Cross-Border and Thailand Based Assistance to Refugees, IDPs and Migrants from Burma/Myanmar – Report on Findings from Consultancy*'; available at:
http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NCAMyanmar_consultancy_report-public-ocr-red.pdf

Parks, Thomas; Colletta, Nat and Oppenheim, Ben (2013), '*The Contested Corners of Asia: Subnational Conflict and International Development Assistance*', The Asia Foundation; available at:
www.asiafoundation.org/publications/pdf/1226

Secure Livelihoods Resource Consortium – SLRC (2012) '*Social protection and basic services in conflict-affected situations: what do we know?*' Briefing Paper No. 2; available at:
www.odi.org.uk/resources/docs/7860.pdf

Selby, Jan (2008a), 'Peace Processes: A Genealogy and Critique', Presented to the Department of International Relations, University of Sussex on 7 January 2008; available at:
<https://www.sussex.ac.uk/webteam/gateway/file.php?name=rip-peace-processes&site=12>

Selby, Jan (2008b), '*The Political Economy of Peace Processes*' in Pugh, Michael; Cooper, Neil and Turner, Mandy (Eds.) '*Whose Peace? Critical Perspectives on the Political Economy of Peacebuilding*' (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan)

Selth, Andrew (2001), '*Burma's Armed Forces: Power Without Glory*'; (Norwalk: East Bridge)

South, Ashley (2008), '*Ethnic Politics in Burma: States in conflict*'; (New York: Routledge)

South, Ashley (2007) '*Karen Nationalist Communities: The 'Problem' of Diversity*', *Journal of Contemporary Southeast Asia* Vol. 29 No.1, pp. 55–76.

South, Ashley (2012) '*The Politics of Protection in Burma*', *Critical Asian Studies*, Vol. 44 No.2, pp. 175–204

Stott, Noel (2007a), '*Negotiating in Practice What is Non-Negotiable in Principle: Development Policy and Armed Non-State Actors*'; available at: www.issafrica.org/uploads/negotiatingpracticenstott.pdf

Taydas, Zeynep and Peksen, Dursun (2012) '*Can states buy peace? Social welfare spending and civil conflicts*', *Journal of Peace Research* Vol. 49 No. 4 pp.273-287

Taylor, Robert. H (1987), '*The State in Myanmar*' (Singapore: NUS Press); first edition (1987) '*The State in Burma*', (London: Hurst)

Thant, Myint-U (2006) '*The River of Lost Footsteps: A Personal History of Burma*', (Farrar, Straus and Giroux; New York)

Thawngmung, A. M. 2008. *The Karen Revolution in Burma: Diverse Voices, Uncertain Ends*. (Singapore: East-West Center)

The Border Consortium – TBC (2012), '*Changing Realities, Poverty and Displacement in South East Burma/Myanmar*'; available at: <http://theborderconsortium.org/idps/report-2012-idp-bu.zip>

Transnational Institution – TNI (2009), *Neither War nor Peace: The Future of the Ceasefire Agreements in Burma*; available at: www.idpc.net/publications/2009/07/tni-report-ceasefire-agreements-burma

UN Economic and Social Council (2006), 'Definition of basic concepts and terminologies in governance and public administration;' available at: <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/un/unpan022332.pdf>

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees – UNHCR (2006) *Analysis of Gaps in Refugee Protection Capacity – Thailand*; available at: <http://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?docid=472897020>

United Nations Peace Building Support Office – UNPBSO (2010), *UN Peace Building: An Orientation*; available at: http://www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/pbso/pdf/peacebuilding_orientation.pdf

United Nations Peace Building Support Office – UNPBSO (2012), 'Peace Dividends and Beyond: Contributions of Administrative and Social Services to Peacebuilding'; available at: http://www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/pbso/pdf/peace_dividends.pdf
Vol. 37, pp.15–16.

Walton, Matthew J. (2008), *Ethnicity, Conflict, and History in Burma: The Myths of Panglong*, Asian Survey, Vol. 48 No. 6, pp. 889–910

Winichakul, Thongchai (1994) 'Siam Mapped: The History of the Geo-body of a Nation' (Chiang Mai: Silkworm)

Yawnghwe, Harn (2014), *Burma - National dialogue: armed groups, contested legitimacy and political transition*, Accord, Issue 25, pp. 44–49

Endnotes

¹ The term ‘social services’ is often attributed only to government services. Adapted from a common dictionary definition, to include other governing actors, social services are therefore defined here as: *Services provided for the benefit of the community, such as education, medical care, or housing by any governing actor.*

² This study works with the following 1997 United Nations Development Programme definition of governance: *‘The exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country’s affairs at all levels. It comprises the mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences’* (UN Economic and Social Council 2006: 3). Crucially though, governance may not apply to an entire country and may relate to the affairs of political spaces in isolation of the rest of the country. This also means that governing actors need not be official governments, but can be anyone with the necessary economic, political and administrative authority, including EAOs.

³ Such as the Paris Declaration for Aid Effectiveness, the Accra Agenda for Action, the New Deal Framework for Fragile States, and the Busan Partnership. Discussed more in Section 4.

⁴ The concept and practice of peace processes were pioneered by Henry Kissinger in the 1970s for managing hostilities peripheral to the USA’s struggle with the Soviet Union (Selby 2008a: 2). Prior to this, wars had typically ended with a decisive military victory or occasionally by simple agreements based on territories, or distribution of other spoils. A growing understanding that stability was central to all other foreign policy objectives led to the conception that trust was no longer a prerequisite to engage belligerents in practical discussions (Guelke 2003: 53), and instead placed the emphasis on developing well-orchestrated, carefully timed and stagnated ‘processes’ that allowed hostilities to be brought down and other objectives to be met without a necessary end to the initial antagonism (Guelke 2003: 55). These are typically domestic enterprises (Selby 2008b: 14), as is the case with the Myanmar peace process, which has been influenced very little by outside involvement.

⁵ See May Kha and Lawi Weng, *‘Nationwide Ceasefire to Include ‘Federal System’ Clause: Ethnic Leader’*, The Irrawaddy, 22 May 2014; <http://www.irrawaddy.org/burma/nationwide-ceasefire-include-federal-system-clause-ethnic-leader.html>

⁶ TBC (2012), p.2; KHRG (2014).

⁷ The term ‘convergence’ has become the primary label used by international agencies and domestic service providers for all efforts involving improved coordination and cooperation between state and EAO-linked service providers in Myanmar. This study intentionally refrains from the use of a blanket term for such activities, as these efforts evidently represent extremely different aims and aspirations in the eyes of different actors. The term convergence is problematic in itself as it means different things to different people. For some it implies total integration of EAO-linked service provision structures into those of the state, while for others it relates simply to trust building. Such ambiguity may have benefits for galvanising the efforts of diverse actors to come together in search of common ground, but has little utility for academic enquiry.

⁸ Peacebuilding is quite a different concept than peace processes, but refers to processes that normally take place alongside peace processes, usually through aid programmes. This study will work with the UN definition: *‘Peacebuilding involves a range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management, and to lay the foundations for sustainable peace and development’* (UNPBSO 2010: 49).

⁹ This report will use terms for ethnic groups that are most commonly used by members of that group in the English language. Myanmar government terms reflect transliterations of Burmese language terms, which are sometimes then the same as terms used by the groups in their own language, but not those used in English. As this study is largely about the ethnic-nationalist movements of these groups, it is appropriate to use the English language terms associated with those movements. Meanwhile all geographic and administrative references will use official government terms, including names of states, regions and townships. As a result, the use of Kayin State, for example refers only to the administrative State as defined by the government.

Meanwhile, 'Karen areas of southeast Myanmar', refers to all Karen-populated areas in that region and thus spans multiple states and regions. It should be noted that government states, regions and townships do not correspond entirely with locally-defined districts and townships in most ethnic areas but have been used for consistency

¹⁰ Interviews carried out by this author with KIO leaders in September 2013; NMSP leaders in September 2013; RCSS leaders in November 2013; KNU leaders in June and July 2013; and a former NMSP leader in March 2014.

¹¹ For documentation of these developments in Mon and Kachin areas, see Jolliffe (2014).

¹² Egreteau and Jagan (2013) explores the military's leverage over the state in contemporary Myanmar.

¹³ See for example, see UNPBSO (2012).

¹⁴ Through its Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium, the Overseas Development Institute has reviewed the impacts on state-society relations of improved service delivery and found that, while it has a 'compelling narrative', there is little evidence of its success. See Mallet and Slater (2012) and the related editorial article at: <http://www.odi.org.uk/opinion/6884-service-delivery-state-building-conflicted-affected-states>; the project also plans to finalise a global survey of target communities' perspectives on these impacts.

¹⁵ As Chesterman *et al* ((2004), p. i) describe, in such contexts 'basic questions of how best to ensure the physical and economic security of oneself and one's dependents do not simply disappear when the institutions of the state break down... [Therefore] even where non-state actors exist as parasites on local populations, political life goes on.'

¹⁶ Based on consultations in 2013 and 2014 with communities from EAO- and BGF-controlled territories in Kayin, Mon, and Kachin states.

¹⁷ Similar views were expressed by civil society leaders and conflict-affected communities in interviews in NMSP-controlled and government-controlled Mon areas (October, November 2013; February 2014); KIO and government-controlled Kachin areas (September, November, 2013; February 2014); KNU-controlled, DKBA-controlled and government-controlled Karen areas (August 2012; June, December 2013; February 2014); and in Thailand (in March and May 2014).

¹⁸ Interviews with a KED teacher (Kayin State, June 2013).

¹⁹ Interviews with Karen IDP (Kayin State, June 2013).

²⁰ Interview with Karen health official, Mae Sot, Thailand, April 2014.

²¹ When Myanmar was brought under a single state for the first time in 1943, the Japanese-backed Burman regime outlawed the teaching of non-Burman languages, and began using the slogan of 'one voice, one blood, one nation' (South 2008: 23) via (Taylor 1987). Similar measures were re-imposed in 1962, and re-asserted following the 1988 coup, as the new regime began cracking down on teachers of ethnic languages even outside of the mainstream education system.

²² See May Kha and Lawi Weng, 'Nationwide Ceasefire to Include 'Federal System' Clause: Ethnic Leader', The Irrawaddy, 22 May 2014; <http://www.irrawaddy.org/burma/nationwide-ceasefire-include-federal-system-clause-ethnic-leader.html>

²³ EAO health networks have developed a strategy in line with this aim. See the Health Core Convergence Group (HCCG) policy paper, 'A Federal, Devolved Health System for Burma/Myanmar'.

²⁴ General conclusions from interviews with Mon and Karen community development actors (Mawlamyine, February 2014; Hpa'an, December 2014; Thailand, March-April 2014).

²⁵ In the Wa SAD, for example, the United Wa State Party/United Wa State Army (UWSP/UWSA) is effectively in control of four out of six townships through its northern command.

²⁶ This information was collected during interviews with two Chin civil society actors (Thailand, March 2014) as well as email correspondence with one more.

²⁷ All the information on education in KIO areas was provided by the KIO Education Department via a local NGO partner.

²⁸ The number of students rose by at least 3,000 by February 2014, though comprehensive data for this period is not yet available.

²⁹ See Myanmar Information Management Unit (MIMU) document entitled 'BaselineData_MIMU_All_State_Region_2011-2012_Jul13.xlsx'; available at:

http://www.themimu.info/sites/themimu.info/files/documents/BaselineData_MIMU_All_State_Region_2011-2012_Jul13.xlsx

Entirely accurate figures for MoE schools in KIO-claimed areas are unavailable due to the overlapping of these territories with government-designated townships. However, this estimate is based on the numbers of schools and students listed by the government for the five main townships that overlap with KIO territory, namely Mansi (70 schools), Momauk (79 schools), Waingmaw (117 schools), Tanai (31 schools), and Sunprabum (13 schools). It should also be noted that significant portions of western Mansi, and Waingmaw townships have been in government hands for decades.

³⁰ All the information on the KIO Health Department was provided by the entity by email.

³¹ Data provided by the Burma Medical Association.

³² Free Burma Rangers' website, 'Team Statistics': <http://www.freeburmarangers.org/about/teams/team-statistics/>

³³ Figures from the 2013-201 school year are available in a KSEAG PowerPoint presentation at: ktwg.org/Library/KSEAG_Oct_2013.pps

³⁴ Myanmar Information Management Unit (MIMU) document entitled 'BaselineData_MIMU_All_State_Region_2011-2012_Jul13.xlsx'; available at: http://www.themimu.info/sites/themimu.info/files/documents/BaselineData_MIMU_All_State_Region_2011-2012_Jul13.xlsx. It should also be noted that 431 of these schools (75,432 of students) are from Hpa'an Township, where KNU presence is limited.

³⁵ In BPHWT (2013), p.3, see rows four to twelve in the table provided for Karen areas.

³⁶ Data provided by the Burma Medical Association

³⁷ Interviews with BMA members (Thailand, April 2014); these figures are also available in BMA (2012).

³⁸ Free Burma Rangers' website, 'Team Statistics': <http://www.freeburmarangers.org/about/teams/team-statistics/>

³⁹ This data has been collected over the years by the author through conversations with members of the armed groups, Karenni civil society organisations and other observers. Useful, but in some cases outdated guidance, can also be found in South (2008), TNI (2009), TBC (2012), and Keenan (2012).

⁴⁰ EBCSP, 'Karenni Education Graguated to 6th 3rd Standard System' (sic), not dated; available at: http://ebcsp11-eng.blogspot.com/2012/07/karenni-education-graguated-to-6th-3rd_26.html

⁴¹ See Myanmar Information Management Unit (MIMU) document entitled 'BaselineData_MIMU_All_State_Region_2011-2012_Jul13.xlsx'; available at: http://www.themimu.info/sites/themimu.info/files/documents/BaselineData_MIMU_All_State_Region_2011-2012_Jul13.xlsx

⁴² Free Burma Rangers' website, 'Team Statistics': <http://www.freeburmarangers.org/about/teams/team-statistics/>

⁴³ Data provided by MNEC/MNED.

⁴⁴ Myanmar Information Management Unit (MIMU) document entitled 'BaselineData_MIMU_All_State_Region_2011-2012_Jul13.xlsx'; available at: http://www.themimu.info/sites/themimu.info/files/documents/BaselineData_MIMU_All_State_Region_2011-2012_Jul13.xlsx

⁴⁵ Data provided by MnHC.

⁴⁶ Note, the armed wings of both groups are called the Shan State Army. For simplification, some observers refer to the RCSS/SSA as SSA-South, and the SSPP/SSA as the SSA-North.

⁴⁷ This data has been collected over the years by the author through conversations with members of the armed groups, Shan civil society organisations and other observers. Useful but in some cases outdated guidance can also be found in South (2008), TNI (2009), TBC (2012), and Keenan (2012).

⁴⁸ Interview with an SSDF representative (Thailand, April 2012), corroborated through discussions with international partners.

⁴⁹ Free Burma Rangers' website, 'Team Statistics': <http://www.freeburmarangers.org/about/teams/team-statistics/>

⁵⁰ Data from Burma Medical Association

⁵¹ For more on ‘cross-border’ aid from Thailand to Myanmar, see NCA (2012), pp. 2-3; International Development Committee (UK) (2007) pp. 27-34; and South (2012), pp. 188-191

⁵² European Commission, ‘Commissioner Piebalgs in Myanmar to reinforce development cooperation’, 13/11/13; available at: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-1071_en.htm

⁵³ January – 10 billion for ‘ethnic minority areas’:

<http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702304887104579305631470920244>; March – 7.75 billion yen: http://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press4e_000244.html

⁵⁴ See the 3MDG homepage: <http://www.3mdg.org/index.php/about-3mdg>

⁵⁵ See Global Fund’s Myanmar portfolio: <http://portfolio.theglobalfund.org/en/Country/Index/MMR>

⁵⁶ See UNICEF, ‘What is the UNICEF-Multi-Donor Education Fund (MDEF) partnership?’;

http://www.unicef.org/myanmar/overview_20839.html

⁵⁷ See ‘Myanmar Education Consortium’ at:

https://www.burnet.edu.au/system/asset/file/1292/MEC_brief_note.pdf

⁵⁸ Total allocations unavailable. More info, see: <http://lift-fund.org>

⁵⁹ For list of World Bank projects, see: <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/myanmar/projects/all>; For an overview of ADB’s commitments from 2013, see ADB-Myanmar Factsheet:

<http://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/pub/2014/MYA.pdf>

⁶⁰ World Bank, ‘Community Participation Planning Framework (CPPF) For Myanmar Decentralizing Funding to Schools Program - DRAFT’

⁶¹ It is established common practice for aid agencies to follow and support development strategies determined by recipient governments. Enshrined in the 2005 Paris Declaration for Aid Effectiveness and the 2008 Accra Agenda for Action, which have been endorsed by the world’s leading aid-giving countries, development banks and other key agencies, the concept of ‘national ownership’ provides that aid is directed to support ‘partner countries’ national development strategies’, align aid with their ‘priorities, systems and procedures and [help] to strengthen their capacities’(The Paris Declaration for Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action, p.4). In 2011, the New Deal Framework for Fragile States was endorsed, providing specific guidance on how to engage in countries affected by weak governance and conflict, further emphasising the need for ‘country-led and country-owned transitions out of fragility’. In 2012, the Busan Partnership was promulgated, further reiterating an emphasis on ‘strengthening national institutions under the leadership of developing countries.’

⁶² Amongst the many policy frameworks referred to by international aid agencies regarding peacebuilding and statebuilding, very few even mention the role of what are most typically known as non-state armed groups (NSAGs). Where NSAGs are mentioned, it is often assumed that their impact on the development process will only be negative and thus efforts to undermine them will automatically contribute to peace (Stott 2007; Grävingsholt *et al.* 2007; Dudouet *et al.* 2012). Even where guidance is provided on engaging armed actors—a radical concept in itself—the discourse typically surrounds ways to coerce them to adapt their role (Hoffman and Schneckener 2011). Notably, the attitudes driving these contributions differ drastically from the narratives of government ownership and leadership, even in the case of authoritarian or otherwise problematic regimes.

There is therefore little guidance for aid agencies to rely on to ensure best practice in engaging EAOs in Myanmar, making it seem even more risky. Aside from the risks related to maintaining relations with the government, the most prominent are fiduciary concerns, such as fear of corruption and the potential for funds to be diverted for military uses. This is particularly high due to the difficulties of monitoring implementing partners’ activities in hard-to-reach areas. More generally, there is resistance to supporting the development of parallel exclusive service provision systems, particularly where they rely on delinked funding channels (e.g. through Myanmar and Thailand). Finally, when considering the political implications of aid, donors often find the actual legitimacy of armed political movements difficult to ascertain.

⁶³ Criticism of the provision of assistance via EAOs arose in the late 2000s, when scholars began questioning the role of the KNU and the KNPP in Thailand’s Karen and Karenni refugee camps. A good literature review outlining this discourse is provided in McConnachie (2012). Also see, for example, UNHCR 2006: 24; South 2007; Callahan 2007: 37; Thawngmung 2008: 22; Horstmann 2010. Since the formal establishment of the

camps in the late 1980s, they have been managed by refugee committees setup by the EAOs. Particularly before the UNHCR was permitted access in 1996, the EAOs also took primary responsibility for security. Among other concerns, fears were raised that the EAOs were manipulating the refugee camps for strategic gains, relying on them as safe havens and recruiting young refugees, presenting risks to aid recipients and potentially sustaining the conflict.

These contributions led to a sharp response from donors providing assistance to the Karen camps, leading to ostensible efforts among local refugee agencies to separate themselves from the KNU (McConnachie 2012: 44). However, these changes have been largely cosmetic (e.g. name changes) while more real progress towards civilianisation of camp management structures and other Karen organisations has taken place organically. As the capacity of these groups has developed, they have become more autonomous from their mother organisations, and increasingly recognised by the EAOs as rightful authorities over refugee affairs. On reviewing this debate, McConnachie (2012) has highlighted the positive role played by the KNU in the Karen camps, explaining while there appears to have been little if any misappropriation of funds, and that KNU governance and aid facilitation has had 'benefits for the wider refugee population' (McConnachie 2012: 46). South has discussed the KNU's role in assistance to conflict-affected populations still in Myanmar, also emphasising the apparent lack of embezzlement, though noting that aid delivered this way unintentionally builds the legitimacy of armed actors (South 2012: 188-189). Similarly, the KIO and the NMSP have played an undoubtedly crucial role in the provision of humanitarian and development assistance to displaced populations (Jolliffe 2014).

While this discourse has broadened the debate surrounding the role of EAOs in aid provision, donors have yet to establish coherent institutionalised policies or guidelines on engagement with EAOs and their networks. The lack of an established set of norms for this kind of engagement, or even a consensus among mainstream donors of how EAOs relate to their broad aims in the country, heightens the perception of risk significantly.

Similar questions remain regarding the legitimacy of groups that are seemingly based in Thailand, but that operate in Myanmar, or at least claim to represent communities therein. These groups are often misrepresented to be in 'exile', even if the majority of their staff are in Myanmar, because of where they hold offices and bank accounts.

⁶⁴ Interviews with civil society leaders (Thailand, July 2013, March 2014, April 2014; Mawlamyine, November 2013, February 2013; Kayin State June 2013, December 2013, February 2013; Shan State November 2013; Kachin State November 2013).

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Mon civil society workers (Mon State, November 2013, February 2014), NMSP officials (September 2013) Karen civil Interviews in Mawlamyine (February 2014); Thailand (March-April 2014).

⁶⁷ Interviews with civil society leaders in Mawlamyine (November 2013, February 2013), Kayin State (June 2013), Thailand (March-April 2014); and INGO staff (Yangon, April 2014; Thailand April – May 2014).

⁶⁸ Interview with Mon CSO worker (Mon State, February 2014). Ideas reflected by Karen civil society (interviews in Hpa'an, July 2013 and December 2013); Karen communities (focus groups in rural Kayin State, June 2013); KNLA commanders from all KNLA brigades (focus group in Kayin State, June 2013); and RCSS officials in Shan State (November 2013)

⁶⁹ Interviews with civil society leaders (Thailand, July 2013, March 2014, April 2014; Mawlamyine, November 2013, February 2013; Kayin State June 2013, December 2013, February 2013; Shan State November 2013; and Kachin State November 2013).

⁷⁰ Karen civil society (interviews in Hpa'an, July 2013 and December 2013; and Thailand March-April 2014); Karen communities (focus groups in rural Kayin State, June 2013); KNLA commanders from all KNLA brigades (focus group in Kayin State, June 2013). INGO international and national staff (Yangon, July 2013; Hpa'an, July 2013, December 2013; and Thailand July 2013).

⁷¹ These are Leik Tho, Wawlay, Sukali, Thandauggyi, Bawgali, Paing Kyon, Karmamaung and Hpayarthonesu and Shanywarhit sub-townships of Myawaddy, Hlaingbwe, Thandaung, Hpa'an and Papun townships of Kayin State, all of which are heavily contested, with the KNU and sometimes also the KKO (DKBA), maintaining Type 5 claims to territory through military presence.

-
- ⁷² Consultations in Hpa'an and Mawlamyine, late 2013.
- ⁷³ These townships were Myawaddy, Hpa'an, Kyain Seigyi, Kawkareik, Hlaingbwe, Thaundaung townships in Kayin State, Bilin Township in Mon State and Yebyu Township in Tanintharyi Region. Based on interviews and focus groups with Mon civil society workers (Mon State, November 2013, February 2014), NMSP officials (September 2013) Karen civil society (interviews in Hpa'an, July 2013 and December 2013; and Thailand March-April 2014); Karen communities (focus groups in rural Kayin State, June 2013); KNLA commanders from all KNLA brigades (focus group in Kayin State, June 2013). INGO international and national staff (Yangon, July 2013; Hpa'an, July 2013, December 2013; Thailand July 2013).
- ⁷⁴ Karen civil society (interviews in Hpa'an, July 2013 and December 2013; and Thailand March-April 2014); Karen communities (focus groups in rural Kayin State, June 2013); KNLA commanders from all KNLA brigades (focus group in Kayin State, June 2013). INGO international and national staff (Yangon, July 2013; Hpa'an, July 2013, December 2013; Thailand July 2013).
- ⁷⁵ Myanmar national, management staff of an INGO (interviewed Kayin State, July 2013).
- ⁷⁶ Myanmar national, management staff of an INGO (interviewed in Thailand, August 2013).
- ⁷⁷ Karen Myanmar national, INGO staff member (interviewed in Kayin State, July 2013).
- ⁷⁸ Myanmar national, management staff of an INGO (interviewed Kayin State, July 2013).
- ⁷⁹ Five such cases have been confirmed and corroborated by a number of stakeholders in Thandauggyi, Hlaingbwe, Myawaddy Kawkareik, and Kyain Seigyi townships of Kayin State. Karen civil society (interviews in Hpa'an, July 2013 and December 2013; and Thailand March-April 2014); Interviews with two INGOs (Hpa'an, July 2013; December 2013); Interview with local NGO staff (Thailand, April 2014); Interviews with KNPP (June 2014)
- ⁸⁰ Karen civil society (interviews in Hpa'an, July 2013 and December 2013; and Thailand March-April 2014); Karen communities (focus groups in rural Kayin State, June 2013).
- ⁸¹ Interviews with two INGOs (Hpa'an, July 2013; December 2013); Interview with local NGO staff (Thailand, April 2014).
- ⁸² Interviews with INGO staff (not involved in case), May 2014; KNPP representatives (June 2014).
- ⁸³ Interviews with two INGO staff (Thailand, April 2014; May 2014); focus group with Karen communities (focus groups in rural Kayin State, June 2013).
- ⁸⁴ Interviews with civil society leaders in Mawlamyine (November 2013, February 2013), Kayin State (June 2013), Thailand (March-April 2014); and INGO staff (Yangon, April 2014; Thailand April – May 2014).
- ⁸⁵ Middle-aged education administrator, speaking in a focus group in Northern Kayin State, June 2013.
- ⁸⁶ Consultations held with KNLA commanders from four regions; KIO officials; RCSS officials; NMPS officials.
- ⁸⁷ As The Asia Foundation has previously argued of elsewhere in South and Southeast Asia in (Parks *et al*: 53).
- ⁸⁸ For the leading work on this issue see Anderson (1999).
- ⁸⁹ See: http://www.who.int/hac/techguidance/hbp/about_which/en/
- ⁹⁰ This approach is guided again by Parks *et al*. (2013).
- ⁹¹ Official data not available. As well as discussions with MNEC/MNED (November 2013, February 2013), this general figure was confirmed by community actors in Kayin State (June 2013), civil society worker in Thailand (March-April 2014); and three INGO staff (Yangon, April 2014; Thailand April – May 2014).
- ⁹² Interviews with other Mon civil society members and NMSP-linked organisations (Mawlamyine, November 2013, February 2014).
- ⁹³ Data provided directly by KDHW.
- ⁹⁴ BPHWT (2013), p.3; Karen area totals calculate by adding up rows four to twelve in the table provided. Backpack teams operate in other ethnic communities in the region and elsewhere in Myanmar too, but are not focused on here.
- ⁹⁵ See Physicians for Human Rights, 'Backpack medics released', 23 January 2012 and Karen News, 'Burma Army arrest Health Workers', 11 November 2011.
- ⁹⁶ Interview with BMA staff (Thailand, March 2014).
- ⁹⁷ These were KDHW, MNHC, SSDF-health, KnMHC, BMA, BPHWT, Mae Tao Clinic and the National Health and Education Committee (NHEC).

⁹⁸ Health Convergence Core Group, *'Building Trust and Peace by Working through Ethnic Health Networks towards a Federal Union'*, March 11th 2013.

⁹⁹ Interview with IRC (Thailand, May 2014)

¹⁰⁰ Health Information Systems Working Group, *'Statement on the Health System Development Seminar'*, April 2nd 2014

¹⁰¹ Eh Kalu Shwe Oo, (Thailand, May 2014)

¹⁰² See, *'Durable Education Solutions for Refugees along the Thailand – Myanmar/Burma Border: Strategic Plan towards Education Convergence'*, 23 May 2014, developed by KED, KnED, KTWG and the Karen Refugee Council Education Entity (KRCEE), with support of a consortium of INGOs; also see the Health Core Convergence Group (HCCG) policy paper, *'A Federal, Devolved Health System for Burma/Myanmar'*.

¹⁰³ In Kayah State, training has been carried out by KNGY to help the MoE develop their capacities to teach in local languages. (Interview with INGO staff, Thailand 2014).

¹⁰⁵ Donors could facilitate this kind of fluid approach by providing small, and flexible grants for programmes aimed at these objectives. Evaluation processes could then be undertaken with a view to establishing new transformative objectives for following programmes. Alternatively donors could explore options for committing aid to long-term transformational objectives reflective of the necessary time to affect institutional reform. Broad programmes of five or more years could be implemented by INGOs or collectives, partnering with multiple service providers. Long-term commitments to ensuring social sector reforms in contested areas include all stakeholders and supporting peace would boost confidence in the transition among struggling service providers and improve coordination between programmes.

¹⁰⁶ The most crucial resource for understanding conflict dynamics is local knowledge and experience. Aid agencies should hire local people and encourage them to reflect on the impact of their programmes on their environment. To the contrary, examples were found in this research of junior-level local staff being ignored – or in one case reprimanded – by their Burman or international managers when raising concerns over the nature of their interventions in contested areas (Interview in Kayin State, July 2013). Furthermore, aid organisations should encourage international staff to spend time informally getting to know people in target communities or at least in communities where they are based, and to reflect on their programmes in the context of the broader environment. Previous experience in Myanmar, particularly that spent working with non-Burman communities, should be considered a key requirement when recruiting staff to work on programmes in contested areas.

International agencies should actively commit resources to building closer relations with local civil society and community based organisations. While an awareness of local groups' potential biases is important, their first-hand knowledge and nuanced insights are unparalleled. Furthermore, the development of close reciprocal relations with such groups should be seen as a crucial investment to ensure a positive reputation among communities, over whom local organisations have immeasurable influence through entrenched patron-client relationships. Also, international researchers with long-term experience and strong personal relationships in specific contested areas can provide crucial viewpoints that usually benefit from a more objective outside perspective.

Internal and external conventional conflict analyses are also crucial. In particular, they should pay attention to the impacts of aid on inter-elite contestations, and who is benefiting not just on the ground, but politically too. The earning of social capital through aid to support patron-client networks by various political actors is inevitable. During the fragile stages of a transition, this should not be automatically seen as a problem and in certain cases could support confidence building and discourage the use of violence. What is important is that these dynamics and the impacts on the peace process are firmly understood by aid actors and that they are contributing to, and not undermining the transition.



The Asia Foundation

No. 21, Bo Yar Zar Street
14 Ward, Kyauk Kone
Yankin Township
Yangon, Myanmar